

Eric John Shields QC (1926–2016)



Eric John Shields QC passed away on 14 September 2016. He was the son of Wollongong school teacher and later headmaster, Eric William Shields. In order to avoid confusion, or to avoid unwanted monikers like 'Little Eric', he adopted the name John Shields.

The family moved around New South Wales spending time in various school locations at Granville Central, Forster Public School, Ashfield Public School, Molong Public School, St Peters Public School, Lidcombe, Belmore, Canterbury and Campsie.

John Shields excelled at school from an early age, being dux of Molong Public School in December 1938 and learning the piano. He attended Canterbury Boys High School and soon after set his sights on a career in the law. He graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Laws in 1948.

On leaving University John worked in the New South Wales Public Trust Office for two years as a clerk and then moved on to become an article clerk,

in which he served for three years. On 9 February 1951 he was admitted as a solicitor and moved to Condobolin in western NSW where he practised in the firm of DGC Driffield, Hodby and Shields for 11 years. In 1954 he married Margaret Dorothy Ludowici and had four children: Dimity Margaret (1956), Earle William John (1958), Merrillee Anne (1960) and Kylie Rhonda in (1964, deceased).

On 10 March 1961 John was admitted as a barrister and the family returned to Sydney and set up home in Pymble. He continued in private practise until October 1971, when he was appointed the fourth public defender for NSW. In 1973 John Shields became the country public defender.

On 20 December 1974 he married Beryl Muriel Gapes at Holterman Uniting Church in Crows Nest.

On 1 December 1976 John was commissioned as a queen's counsel and subsequently became deputy senior public defender (country). He was appointed senior public defender for NSW in 1982 until 1986, when he retired from this position.

In 1977 John was appointed the legal member of the Public Accountants Registration Board and remained in this position until 1985. About 1980 he was appointed a member of the Helsham Inquiry into the Appointment of Liquidators.

From 1982 until his retirement John was a member of, and at times, on the Council of Australian Academy of Forensic Sciences.

John's funeral was held at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Wentworth Falls

on Saturday, 24 September 2016. One of the eulogies was delivered by his second daughter, Merrillee Chignell. She spoke of John's love of the law.

First and foremost he loved the law- This is what drove him, inspired him and fired him. It kept his mind sharp and he was tenacious in a battle. He would fight a legal cause or injustice to the end. He also had the skills to argue black was white. I believe he was known as 'fine-tooth comb Shields'.

...

Dad's other great love was his car. His Citroen C5 was his pride and joy. He regularly took friends on the drive to Wollongong citroen where he had it serviced and he kept it immaculate. He also kept a camera in the car for the procuring of evidence in the case that some other person illegally infringed his rights as a driver. No accident was dad's fault and he was always able to prove it. Unfortunately AAMI did not agree. This led to an extensive battle with AAMI.

You may be shocked and stunned to know that our father was stubborn and single minded. Not a little bit but extremely.

...

I can say that I am so proud of the strength of this great man, I admire and respect the way dad conducted himself for his steely resilience. I have whispered to him at a quiet moment that he has not let himself or anyone else down. Most importantly he remained in control of all the decisions in his life to the end and we can be well proud of this wise and just man.