

The Hon Justice John Robson

John Robson SC was sworn in as a judge of the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales on 5 July 2016.

The Hon Justice Robson grew up in country towns in New South Wales and then Tasmania, followed by a move to Sydney's northern beaches. He graduated BA, LLB from the University of Sydney, with a short stint as associate to District Court Judge George Smith, and was admitted as a solicitor in 1982. At Gadens he became one of the firm's youngest-ever partners in 1983.

His Honour was called to the bar in 1989 and took silk in 2004. After reading for a time on 10 Wentworth Selborne he found his professional home on 12 Wentworth Selborne, where he has been described as one of the pillars on which the floor was built and was a highly effective and energetic head of chambers for a time. His Honour referred to the enormous support, friendship and encouragement that he had enjoyed from his colleagues and clerk, which had provided a workplace without compare.

With a practice in administrative law, commercial law and equity, his Honour developed a leading specialty in land and environment law and has appeared in leading cases in those fields, the most recent being for the victorious objecting parties in *Warkworth Mining Ltd v Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association Inc*.

The attorney general of New South Wales, Hon Dr Gabrielle Upton, speaking for the bar, said that in chambers his Honour had been 'a sounding board, a dispenser of sage advice, a peacemaker and a godfather in the very best sense of the word ... approachable, razor smart and practical, ... an exceptionally hard worker ... easy to work for and with ... a man of generous spirit – that extends to sharing your time and expertise with your colleagues'. These qualities he shared, not only with floor members, but also with the dozen or more readers he mentored during his time as junior counsel, with enduring impact from their own description, and more widely at the bar where he was popular and respected. To these encomiums Mr Gary Ulman, speaking for the solicitors of the state, added by reputation and from his personal experience 'debonair, urbane and witty', with a style of advocacy at once concise in presentation and forthright while courteous and tactful.

His Honour throughout his life has been an accomplished and versatile sportsman, in swimming including ocean swimming in many parts of the world, running, rugby, skiing and tennis. The Attorney reported that his fitness has merited the attribute from envious colleagues 'ageless and in glowing good health'.



Mr Ulman described the centrality to his Honour's life of his close family – 'not just a sanctuary but a point of outreach' extending kindness and hospitality to those around who were struggling.

Mr Ulman stated that his Honour's approach to life would be reflected on the bench and was expected 'to bring out the very best in counsel, an attribute that can only come from the true mastery of the area in which your Honour will adjudicate'.

His Honour, with his customary charm and modesty, paid tribute to his late parents, who had died while he was in his late teens, as the source of the values of kindness, hard work and respect for all, and to his wife Penelope, their children and his wider family.

His Honour concluded by quoting the late Sir Harry Gibbs on his swearing-in as chief justice of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1981, as 'sufficient guidance' for a new judicial officer: 'It is the proper role of the courts to apply and develop the law in a way that will lead to decisions which are humane, practical and just ... But it would be destructive of the authority of the courts if they were to put social and political theories of their own in place of legal principle'.