IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES BANCO COURT

SPIGELMAN CJ AND THE JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT

Monday 7 June 2010

SWEARING IN CEREMONY OF THE HONOURABLE PETER GARLING RFD SC AS A JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

1 **GARLING J:** Chief Justice, I have the honour to announce that I have been appointed a Judge of this Court. I present to you my Commission.

(Commission read)

(Oaths of office taken)

- SPIGELMAN CJ: Justice Garling, on behalf of all of the judges of the Court I congratulate you on your appointment. You come here after many years of practice at the New South Wales Bar. You were a distinguished Silk and I look forward to serving with you on this Court, as I am sure all your colleagues do.
- 3 THE HONOURABLE JOHN HATZISTERGOS MLC, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF NEW SOUTH WALES: Your Honour, on behalf of the State of New South Wales and the Bar, it is my pleasure to congratulate you on your appointment to the Bench of the Supreme Court. You bring with you a most distinguished career. The Bench and indeed the people of New South Wales will greatly benefit from your wealth of experience, your passion for the law and your prodigious knowledge.
- You graduated from the University of Sydney with degrees in Law and Arts and have maintained your ties there as a member of the Law Faculty since 2004. Most recently, you participated in the University's Distinguished

Speaker Program – a program featuring lectures by leading experts from across the globe.

- Your Honour was admitted to the Bar in 1979 after a brief period of practice as a solicitor. It is clear that you had a preference for the drama of the courtroom, opting as a vocal but succinct advocate for your clients. In 1994, you were appointed as a Senior Counsel.
- For over three decades as a barrister you have worked in both the private and public spheres and have been involved in a large number of significant cases. Your penetrating and analytical mind has assisted the courts, including the High Court, to clarify important points of law such as in the areas of: negligence; public liability; product liability; insurance law; administrative law, and in health. You have been no stranger to large class actions with some cases involving monetary claims in the range of tens of millions. You have also appeared in many criminal cases of note.
- You have not only worked in New South Wales. I understand you can lay claim to have practised in all the states and territories in Australia, including Norfolk Island. You are admitted to practice in our close neighbour, New Zealand.
- Another illustrious aspect of your career is your involvement in a number of significant royal commissions and public inquiries. To mention just a few examples, you have appeared in the inquiries into: the Sydney bushfires in 1994; the Thredbo landslide in 1997; the Glenbrook rail accident in 1999; the collapse of the HIH Insurance Group in 2001; the Waterfall rail accident in 2003; the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation in 2004; and the Pacific Highway road collapse in 2007. Clearly, you have been the counsel of choice when things go wrong. Apart from the inquiries I have just mentioned, there were also a number of inquiries in which you took part at the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

- Because of your extensive knowledge and demonstrated forensic skills, in 2008, you were appointed by the New South Wales Government to conduct the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals. The Inquiry was the most comprehensive of its kind ever seen in this State. Over the ten months of the Inquiry you and your team visited sixty-one public hospitals, reviewed over 1,200 submissions, held thirty-nine public hearings, and analysed over 30,000 documents. You conferred with twenty-seven peak bodies, including specialist medical colleges and professional associations, and received extensive briefings from New South Wales Health and representatives of the state's eight area health services.
- 10 You have also convened two separate conferences of experts to consider issues relevant to the terms of reference, with one dedicated solely to do with the provision of health care to children and adolescents. The rigour with which you undertook this Herculean task and the respect in which the results of your work is held are reflected in the fact that, of the 139 recommendations you have made, the Government has accepted 134.
- 11 Your significant contribution on this Inquiry alone has the potential to significantly improve our public hospital system.
- However, your Honour's immense contribution does not end there. You have also served as a judicial officer in New South Wales. You were appointed as an Acting District Court judge between 1989 and 1991. Your professionalism in administering justice has garnered you much respect from colleagues who often remark on your dry but amiable manner.
- Apart from being a legal practitioner, a judge and a commissioner, you are also known for your work as an academic. I have mentioned that you were a Distinguished Speaker at the University of Sydney, but you are also a prolific writer of papers covering a great breadth of topics. You have delivered seminars at a variety of gatherings including: the New South Wales Bar Association; the Medico-Legal Society of New South

Wales; and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians Open Forum. Recently, you gave the John Beveridge Oration at the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

- One of your admirable traits is your generosity in sharing your knowledge and insights with others so that they may better understand the law. No doubt you will continue to do so in your role as a Supreme Court Justice.
- 15 Your commitment to working for the good of the community is also reflected in the diverse responsibilities you have taken on outside the legal profession. You were a serving member of the Australian Army Reserve from 1970 to 1996. In that time, you reached the rank of company commander for the Sydney University Regiment. Not many people can lay claim to being a defender of justice as well as defender of the peace.
- Indeed I have it on good authority, that during your leadership of the regimental platoon you showed great grace under fire. Apparently you braved many an ambush of leeches on hikes in the Singleton rainforest without loss of life I might add, except on the part of the leeches I suppose.
- I understand that you were also a member of the School Council at Loreto Kirribilli from 2002 and from 2004 you became Chair of that council, demonstrating your commitment to education. Your membership of the NSW Rugby Union Appeals Tribunal and the Australian Rugby Union Appeals Tribunal, and your role as the Appeal Tribunal of the Australian Paralympic Committee are also worthy of mention.
- As for legal professional ties, you have held many roles at the New South Wales Bar Association. You were a member of its Council and Rules Committee, and Chair of its Common Law Committee and Practice Development Committee.
- 19 From 2005 to 2007 you were also a member of the Legal Profession Advisory Council which was responsible for reviewing the structure and

regulation of the legal profession. It seems you were also the counsel of choice in ensuring the legal profession conducted itself properly.

- Your Honour, your appointment to the bench was all but inevitable given your outstanding ability, wisdom and knowledge. Today is a great day for the judiciary and for the people of New South Wales. I have every confidence that your Honour will preside with a rod of fairness and a mantle of integrity. I wish you well and, once again congratulate you for answering your call to the bench. May it please the court.
- MRS M MACKEN, PRESIDENT, LAW SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES: May it please the court. All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players. So begins Jacques oft quoted monologue in William Shakespeare's As you Like It, "one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages". On the basis of that theory, your Honour is now entering age five, that of the justice where one is considered to have amassed considerable wisdom by virtue of their life experience.
- Your Honour, I am privileged to welcome you to the Supreme Court stage on behalf of the solicitors of New South Wales and we congratulate you on your appointment. It is an appointment that has been welcomed by all sections of the profession. Your Honour has been described as a gentleman and devoted family man possessing a down to earth, unflappable demeanour with a reputation for excellence, a Master of Law, a wonderful mentor to junior barristers, a true professional and a leader of the Bar in all respects. Your Honour is renowned for your disciplined approach to document control and documentation and your capacity to control big litigation. There is no doubt that your Honour's elevation to the bench will leave an enormous hole at the Bar; likewise as preferred counsel for both the Law Society and the Bar, your expertise will be sorely missed.

- Loreto Kirribilli School Council, which the Attorney noted your Honour has chaired since 2005, will also be tight put to fill your shoes. Your annual reports provide such an in-depth history of the school that they should be bound. Your Honour has lent his legal expertise to assisting with the College Constitution and the structure of the school. Perhaps the only glimmer of light for the board members is that there may be some respite in the need to be exhaustively on top of every single detail in order to keep up with the Chair. Principal Janet Freeman, who is with us today, is reportedly devastated at the prospect of your departure from her board after six years as the Chair. I also note that there are many here today who have thought or still think that blue and gold were Loreto colours.
- As noted by the Attorney, your Honour is a descendent of Frederick Garling, one of the first solicitors admitted to this Court who was appointed in 1830 as the first Crown Prosecutor in New South Wales. Your Honour's family also tips the scales in terms of numbers of legal practitioners. Your three brothers completed law degrees. Eldest Max gave up practising in favour of becoming a mining entrepreneur. Anthony is a New South Wales District Court Judge, Kim is in private practice and is a former President of the Law Society. Your Honour's wife Jane, also a solicitor, currently lectures at the University of Technology and your eldest daughter Antonia is a solicitor at Freehills. Uniquely, daughter Lucie appears to have escaped the long arm of the law and is an accountant with Price Waterhouse in Sydney.
- 25 Your Honour was the youngest son born to Max and Patricia in Kuala Lumpur which, at the time was still under British rule and the Malayan emergency was in full swing. Your father was the District Officer, a role that involved some magisterial duties. Your Honour attended Alice Smith Primary in Kuala Lumpur, a school that prided itself in providing young people with an outstanding British education preparing them for a successful international future. Perhaps that's why it has the acronym Klass, class with a capital K.

On your family's return to Australia, your Honour attended St Ignatius College Riverview, a school that has produced other esteemed judges of this Court, including their Honours Michael Slattery, Michael Pembroke, Peter Johnson and Derek Price. Like your brothers before you your Honour attended Sydney University and graduated in Arts Law in 1977. At the firm of David Landa Stewart your Honour continued to work there after your admission before going to the Bar in 1979. Your Honour was subsequently appointed SC in 1994 and elected to the Bar Council in 2006.

As the Attorney has noted, during your university years your Honour joined the Sydney University Regiment following in your father's footsteps, but then took on a more significant role in the Army Reserve, where you were second in command of the Commando Company and spent your spare time jumping out of planes and off cliffs. Amidst these thrills and spills, your Honour was appointed as aide-de-camp to Kevin Murray QC who was then the major general in charge of the Army Reserve Second Division. Your Honour was awarded a Reserve Force Decoration in recognition of your long service with the reserve forces.

As the Attorney has noted your Honour's career has encompassed a variety of common law and commercial litigation cases and numerous Commissions of Inquiry dating back to the 1983 inquiry into poker machines. I could not list them all and the Attorney has touched on some of the high profile ones including the Thredbo Landslide and the HIH Insurance Group collapse. I understand that the only courts in Australia in which your Honour has not appeared are the Supreme Courts of Western Australia and Northern Territory and the residential tenancy tribunal. Echoing the Attorney's comments, your Honour has also been considered to have brought the first class action commenced in the Federal Court in the case of *Fischer v Bridgelands Securities Limited* in 1990. The legislation creating group proceedings in Australia at a federal level was not enacted until 1992.

I note that your Honour built up a practice on Norfolk Island which occupied quite a number of solicitors. You appeared in the only two murder trials on the island, one for the prosecution, the other for the defendant. On one occasion when your Honour was due to appear in court on the island and had booked a flight on East West, the only carrier to the Island at the time you checked in only to be advised that because of wind conditions you would have to wait until the next day. Demonstrating a quiet determination your Honour calmly persuaded the Managing Director that East West would be wiser to charter a Lear jet to fly you to the island rather than inconvenience the court. Your daily ritual on the Island, as barrister Jeremy Morris can confirm, involved an early morning walk of some 7 kilometres to prepare for the day ahead followed by a further 7 kilometre trek in the evening to talk through the day's proceedings and plan strategies for the next day.

30 Perhaps this trial was the build up to tackling the Kokoda Trail in 2008 accompanied by Jeremy and your two daughters to honour your father's war service at Kokoda. Preparation for this trek included 16 weeks climbing hills around Berowra and the staircases at chambers. Despite your Honour battling a severe chest infection and coughing and spluttering throughout the journey, I am told that a 100 kilometre trek was completed in record time. It is also rumoured that your Honour was duly awarded the GlaxoSmithKline trophy for the highest consumption of antibiotics of any Kokoda Trail person.

Kokoda and parachute jumping aside, your Honour is a devoted, confident father, very close to your daughters who will drop everything to go and fix a light bulb, Lucie's of course. Antonia's flatmates are amazed at your home handyman skills particularly your penchant for erecting shelving. However, I am told that your Honour's recent skills in removing the curtains in readiness for house painting have left some scars.

Your interests outside the court extend to indigenous art and travel which invariably manages to coincide with the World Rugby Cup, tennis played

with the same group every Saturday for the last 10 years and bike riding every Sunday around Homebush Bay. Of course, your Honour is no stranger to the judicial role having been previously appointed as an acting judge of the District Court. Your Honour has also sat, as the Attorney noted, as a member of the Australian Rugby Judiciary and the New South Wales Rugby Judiciary Appeal Committee. Importantly your Honour has been a show jumping equitation judge in which role you were qualified to judge show jumping style in a manner probably more of an equitable jurisdiction. A development of this expertise was possibly the result of daughter Lucie exacting a promise from her grandfather at the age of five that he would buy her a horse when she turned 12. The promise was delivered which lead your Honour to becoming President of the Forest Hills Pony Club traipsing around the countryside with Lucie and horse to attend various competitions and events. Your Honour's qualifications to design show jumping courses should stand you in good stead in leading counsel through and over the many hurdles that they face.

- Your Honour, centre stage awaits. Let the show begin and on behalf of the solicitors of New South Wales we trust act five will be a fulfilling and rewarding one. As the court pleases.
- 34 **GARLING J:** Chief Justice, your Honours, Members of Parliament, colleagues, family and friends.
- Thank you all for your attendance here today on this important occasion for me. In particular I am honoured by the presence of Justices Gummow, Heydon and Bell of the High Court of Australia.
- Also present today is Justice Bernard Bongiorno of the Victorian Court of Appeal. I have known his Honour since 1983 which was the year in which his Honour's second team, Hawthorn, won the premiership. In a matter in which we were appearing at the time, his Honour insisted on displaying a poster celebrating Hawthorn's win on an easel immediately behind the witnesses. Some of them, particularly Essendon supporters, were quite

put off by such display. We have been firm friends since that time. His Honour has interrupted the sitting of a Full Bench at the Cour de L'Etude Bleue in Paris to be here today and I am deeply honoured by his presence.

I want to thank the Attorney General and Mrs Macken, President of the Law Society of New South Wales for their remarks. It is only possible to regard their remarks today as analogous to an unsworn statement from the dock. That is to say, one possible version of the facts which is not subjected to cross-examination and is not the subject of the laws of perjury. I am however flattered and somewhat overwhelmed by the generosity of your remarks and the diligence of your research.

My forebear Frederick Garling, in 1824, no doubt heard the public reading of the Third Charter of Justice, by which this Court was founded, from the Georgian School House in Elizabeth Street, opposite where the Francis Greenway building, which this Court occupies, stands. I have wondered whether he thought to himself that he was witnessing the creation of an institution which, 185 years later, would have his descendent as a member.

Frederick (as you have just heard) was one of the first, although according to Garling family folklore, the first, solicitor of the Colony. He was paid 300 pounds by the Government to come to Australia and to serve its citizens. In February 1816 he was appointed an Acting Judge Advocate and presided over the Court of Criminal Jurisdiction in the Colony of New South Wales or, as it is described in the Charter of Justice, "the island of New Holland." Later, in 1824, he became Commissioner to the Court of Civil Jurisdiction known as the Court of Requests. Thereafter, he served as a Clerk of Peace, and he became the first Crown Prosecutor of the Colony. He subscribed as one of the original shareholders for the establishment of the Colonial Bank which became known as the Bank of New South Wales, he provided articles of clerkship to a smart young man

called George Wigram Allen, who went on to found Allen Allen & Hemsley, and, by all accounts, Frederick was quite a civil minded person.

- 40 Unfortunately, history does not adequately reveal what happened to the 1200 acres of land which was granted to him by Governor Macquarie in the area where Blacktown now is.
- After Frederick, there were then only one or two lawyers in the Garling family until my three brothers and I came along.
- My late parents set me on the path to the law by ensuring my education. They were strong believers in the super powers of education with the Jesuit Fathers. I think that they must have been right, as today I join seven other judges of this Court who all benefited from an education from the Jesuits at St Ignatius College, Riverview. My parents also believed in the benefits of a broad university education and strongly encouraged me to attend University and participate fully in all it had to offer. It is a sadness that they are not here today to witness the swearing-in of a second child as a judge in New South Wales.
- I was exposed to the law on a very regular but informal basis by listening to my three elder brothers around the dinner table as they recounted incidents in their studies and professional lives. I think I knew the case of R v Dudley & Stevens and the gruesome fate of the unfortunate cabin boy well before I reached the Law School.
- I have had cause recently to pause and wonder quite how all four of the Garling boys came to be lawyers. I have not found a satisfactory explanation unless it be that advanced by my wife Jane, namely, that it simply shows a singular lack of imagination.
- My brothers whom I am pleased to see here today, have been great mentors and friends. I owe each of them, and their wives, a very great debt of gratitude for all that they have done for me.

- Whilst in practice as a solicitor, my brother Tony was a great supporter of mine. We did many interesting cases together. I learnt much from him. I am very pleased that at long last he is obliged to do what I tell him, instead of the other way around. I would hope that I could be as fair and efficient a judge as he has been whilst on the bench of the New South Wales District Court.
- Having graduated from Law School, I spent a short time as an articled clerk and solicitor at David Landa, Stewart & Company. Working there brought me into contact with the late Abram Landa who was a fascinating source from whom to learn about the development of the common law in New South Wales, in particular in the area of employer and employee. He was one of the handful of solicitors who were at the vanguard of the development of that area of the law. David Landa, his son, was very kind to me at the firm and also after I went to the Bar including when he became the New South Wales Ombudsman. I commenced under his time there a professional relationship with that office which lasted over 20 years and ended only last week with a final brief from them.
- 48 At the Bar I was always helped by and learnt from many people in many different ways.
- I read with Cal Callaway who was the master of chamber work efficiency, and concise oral argument. He was a fine teacher. My first chambers on 8th floor of Garfield Barwick Chambers were arranged by the late Kevin Murray QC with whom I was serving in the Army Reserve. I also had the privilege of appearing with him. I learnt from him the techniques of cross-examination and of forceful advocacy for every client, no matter who they were or what they had done.
- I was also fortunate to have appeared with both the late Frank McAlary QC and Alan Abadee QC, a retired judge of this Court, whose presence here today gives me great satisfaction.

- Frank taught me that careful analysis of and attention to the law was of critical importance. He taught me persistence was an important feature of an advocate. Alan Abadee and I appeared together for many government departments and bodies who were accused of the breach of common law. Through his good offices I developed a lengthy and fascinating professional relationship with a variety of government institutions.
- I was also fortunate to have appeared in many civil and criminal trials with Linton Morris QC. Linton is a formidable advocate who taught me that being a good advocate is about meticulous preparation and seeking to understand the why of a case as much as the how. He is a very fine jury advocate from whom I learnt the skill of addressing a jury. He recently celebrated his 50th year as a barrister. I am indebted to him.
- After initially commencing practice in Garfield Barwick Chambers, I moved to the second floor of Wentworth Chambers. The floor was a good, perhaps even a robust, common law floor. From the members of my time there, I am the sixth to be appointed as a judge, only one of whom Jim Burchett, escaped the common law. Bill McCarthy and then Kim Sams tried to keep the floor in check. They were good clerks who did their best to look after me.
- It was during that time that I spent some years as a acting judge of the District Court of New South Wales on a part time basis. I thought back to my time as a District Court Judge when considering how I might discharge my duties in this office.
- I immediately recalled an incident which has taught me how not to discharge my duties as a judge. In my first case, counsel called the plaintiff, after about six questions he asked what seemed to me to be an outrageously leading question. I immediately objected. Fortunately, I did not rise to my feet. A stunned silence fell over the courtroom, I upheld the objection and invited the counsel to ask his next question.

Later in that week I had occasion to be in the presence of Chief Justice Gleeson who was then the Chief Justice of this Court. I thought that I would obtain the benefit of his wisdom on this thorny issue of objections. His Honour was at that stage presiding over a murder trial in the St James Road Court. After asking after his Honour's health and welfare, I asked him how he found dealing with objections with a jury present. He looked at me rather quizzically, he then said "I don't find objections difficult at all". He said "When an objection is made I look intently for about 15 seconds at either the questioner or the objector. Either the question or else the objection has been withdrawn. After two weeks it has not been necessary to give a ruling".

57 Emboldened by this I returned to the District Court for the next case. I was determined to follow the Chief Justice's guidance. A question was asked, I thought it was plainly objectionable, an objection was taken, I stared at the questioner. He didn't seem to react. I looked at the objector, he didn't seem to react. I looked back at the questioner and after an undue pause, a voice came from the objector, "Does your Honour propose to give a ruling on the objection?" Clearly I had failed where Chief Justice Gleeson succeeded.

For nearly 20 years I have been on the 5th floor of St James Hall. We are a small floor in chambers, originally consisting of the learned President of this Court, Justice Allsop, Justice Lindsay Foster of the Federal Court, Walker SC, Meagher SC and Hutley SC. All of them closet common lawyers. I cannot remember having a cross word with any of my colleagues on the floor. I have benefited enormously from their friendship, support, encouragement and intellectual stimulation.

I could not have imagined a better place to be in chambers than I have been. To each of them, I owe a debt of gratitude. As time passed, we were joined by Justice McColl, Alan Robertson SC and more recently

Kieran Smark SC. They have all been congenial companions in chambers and I have very much enjoyed their company.

We have been attended in chambers by Paul Daley as our clerk. Paul Daley has been everything that I could have wished for in a clerk. An efficient practice manager, a close advisor, a confidante and a friend. I am sorry that he is not here today at this ceremony in person to see off yet another one of his charges. But I could not have wanted a more loyal and dedicated clerk.

In more recent times in my practice I had the pleasure of conducting the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals. I was supported in that task by a fantastic group of practitioners. Tobin QC, Kelly Rees and Georgina Wright of the Bar assisted me. Cate Follent and Clare Miller led the solicitors' team provided by the New South Wales Crown Solicitor. I learned from that inquiry not only the techniques of good investigation and discernment of competing well articulated views, but also the extraordinary dedication of many outstanding clinicians who have spent their lives in generous service for the public good in the New South Wales health system. I came to very much admire what they do and I do hope that as a Judge, I will be as dedicated in public service as those clinicians are. I continue to watch which great interest the reform process of New South Wales Health.

My greatest regret in leaving the bar is that I will no longer have the benefit of appearing with junior counsel, nor as I did in earlier days, the benefit of having readers.

I had 12 young barristers read with me. I found interactions with readers and with juniors to be intellectually stimulating, genuinely rewarding, and a great benefit of practice. I continue to be amazed at the academic achievements and skill of junior barristers. I regard the skill and competence of the junior Bar as a great indicator of the strength of the Bar

as an institution for the future and I express to my readers past and my juniors regrettably now past, my gratitude for our relationships.

In recent times I have learnt much from the Loreto Sisters. The Loreto Sisters are a remarkable group of women who for the last 400 years have been dedicated to the education of women. Their founder, Mary Ward, encouraged young women to be "...seekers of truth and doers of justice...". Although expressed in a somewhat different context, I thought it an apt phrase to keep in mind in my new role. The Loreto Sisters also teach their pupils that it is important that they do the ordinary things well. I will also bear that in mind.

Today represents a significant change for me. And I recognise it, like Charles Darwin did, that unless one adapts to change, one is apt to become extinct. I recognise that I must change by listening rather than talking. By reflecting, discerning and balancing rather than advocating and persuading. And I need to always keep in mind that the citizens of New South Wales have and are entitled to have high expectations of the judiciary.

I thought it appropriate in reflecting on my transition from Bar to Bench or "transfiguration" as Tobin QC insists on calling it, that I should remind myself of the hierarchy of the courts so that I might well understand the appropriate application of the doctrine of precedent.

In that refresher study, I failed to recognise that, in my family, there is a higher and more binding authority than any Court. In my final draft of this speech, I had penned an original poem to read, expressing my deep affection and love for my wife and children. In an act of industrial espionage over the weekend the draft was read by the girls and the poem discovered. They immediately lodged an appeal against the poem to Jane who ruled that it was unnecessary, contrary to marital harmony and quite inappropriate for me to say anything at all about my wife and daughters. I

am obliged to comply with that ruling. They however more than anyone else know how central they are to my life and everything I do.

- Attorney General thank you for the confidence you have placed in me by inviting me to become a member of this Court.
- In 1817 Frederick Garling was described by Governor Macquarie as having conducted himself as judge advocate with zeal, impartiality and integrity. If I succeed in my judicial career in fulfilling that description, I will be well pleased.
- I again express my gratitude to you all for doing me the honour of attending here today.
