



SUPREME COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

David Malcolm Justice Centre
28 Barrack Street
Perth WA 6000

24 October 2023

MEDIA STATEMENT – SENIOR COUNSEL APPOINTMENTS 2023

The Chief Justice of Western Australia, the Hon Justice Peter Quinlan, today announced the appointment of six Senior Counsel for 2023, after 27 applications were received.

The appointments are Mr Paul Edgar, Ms Tina Jowett, Mr Seamus Rafferty, Ms Teresa Farmer, Mr Michael Sims and Mr Robert Owen.

Appointment as Senior Counsel is based on eminence in the practice of law, especially in advocacy, unquestioned integrity, availability and independence. A committee advises the Chief Justice on applications for appointment.

The Committee, chaired by Chief Justice Quinlan, comprised the President of the Court of Appeal (the Hon Justice Buss), the acting Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court (the Hon Justice Bruno Fiannaca), the President of the State Administrative Tribunal (the Hon Justice Pritchard), a judge of the Federal Court (the Hon Justice Banks-Smith), the Chief Judge of the Family Court (the Hon Justice Sutherland) and the Chief Judge of the District Court (Chief Judge Wager).

The consultation process conducted by the Chief Justice included a significant number of members of the legal profession and the judiciary. In that regard, in addition to the opinions of all of the superior court judges communicated by the Committee, the Chief Justice met with:

- a committee of currently practising Senior Counsel in Western Australia, who communicated the opinions of practising Senior Counsel;
- the President of the Law Society, who communicated the opinions of a committee of the Law Society;
- the President of the WA Bar Association, who communicated the opinions of a committee of the Association;
- the President of the Women Lawyers of Western Australia;
- the President of the Family Law Practitioners Association, who communicated the opinions of a committee of five members of the Association;
- representatives of the Australian Lawyers Alliance and Australian Insurance Law Association;

- the President of the Criminal Lawyers' Association;
- the Chief Commissioner of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission;
- the Solicitor General; and
- the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Senior Counsel appointed are as follows.

Mr Paul Edgar SC

Mr Edgar was admitted to practice in Queensland in 1989 and has practised as an independent barrister since 2011. He currently practises from Quayside Chambers. Prior to joining the Bar, Mr Edgar practised as the principal of Edgar & Co and as a partner of Hely Edgar.

Mr Edgar is a leading counsel in the field of insolvency law, in which he has practised for over 30 years. He appears at all levels of the superior courts in Western Australia.

Ms Tina Jowett SC

Ms Jowett was admitted to practice in New South Wales in 1995 and has practised as an independent barrister since 2003. She currently practises from Francis Burt Chambers and Sixth Floor Windeyer Chambers.

Ms Jowett conducts a national practice in the area of native title and regularly conducts native title litigation in the Federal Court of Australia, at trial and on appeal. She has also presented and published widely in the area of native title law.

Mr Seamus Rafferty SC

Mr Rafferty was admitted to practice in Western Australia in 2002. He practises as an independent barrister from Geoffrey Miller Chambers, which he established in February 2023. Prior to joining the Bar, Mr Rafferty practised on his own account and as a State Prosecutor within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Rafferty practises in criminal law, in all courts in Western Australia, accepting instructions both as prosecutor and defence counsel. He has also served as a member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Liquor Commission of Western Australia (including as Chairperson).

Ms Teresa Farmer SC

Ms Farmer was admitted to practice in Western Australia in 2003 and has practised as an independent barrister since 2007 from John Toohey Chambers. Prior to commencing practise at the Bar, she practised as a solicitor with Paterson & Dowding.

Ms Farmer practises in family law, both at trial and on appeal. She has served as President of the Family Law Practitioners' Association of WA (Inc) and, in 2016, was recognised as Woman Lawyer of the Year by Women Lawyers of Western Australia.

Mr Michael Sims SC

Mr Sims was admitted to practice in New South Wales in 2006 and has practised as an independent barrister since 2015. He practises from Quayside Chambers. Prior to joining the Bar, Mr Sims practised as a partner of Chew + Matthews and with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Mr Sims conducts a broad practice in the field of commercial law, including banking, corporations, insolvency and professional liability. He appears at all levels of the superior courts in Western Australia.

Mr Robert Owen SC

Mr Owen was admitted to practice in Western Australia in 2008. He is the Director of Public Prosecutions for Western Australia, an office to which he was appointed in May 2022. Prior to his appointment Mr Owen practised as Consultant State Prosecutor and as counsel for the Aboriginal Legal Service.

As Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Owen has responsibility for all criminal prosecutions by the State in superior courts. He has personal carriage over a number of the most serious and complex matters, and appears as counsel at trial and on appeal.

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