

Ceremonial Sitting for the Retirement of the DPP, Jon White SC

Supreme Court Building, Canberra ACT

Court SC3, 10:00 am, Monday 15 October 2018

Chief Justice Murrell

The Court acknowledges the first people who are the traditional and continuing custodians of this land and we pay our respect to their elders, past and present. We also acknowledge other first peoples who are present today.

We thank those who cleansed the new building this morning in the smoking ceremony.

Mr Attorney, judicial officers, members of the legal profession, other friends of the Court, family and friends of Mr White,

Resplendent in our new robes, bedazzled by our first experience of a naturally illuminated workplace, the judges welcome you to the first sitting in our new Supreme Court building, our new home.

What an appropriate occasion to celebrate the distinguished career of our learned Director of Public Prosecutions!

Mr Director, for the first and – I trust – the last occasion, the Court has you where it wants you – in the witness box. Some of those present may have preferred to see you in the dock, perhaps the secure dock. It was a hard call.

It is 37 years since you graduated in law from the ANU. For 33 of those years, you have served the community as a prosecutor. Over the past decade, you have lead the prosecutors of this jurisdiction as the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Four years ago, when I had the privilege of congratulating you on your appointment as Senior Counsel, I observed that the appointment reflected your achievements in three areas. Since then, you have expanded and cemented those achievements.

First, you are a compelling advocate, without doubt the Territory's leading criminal appellate advocate (perhaps challenged by your Deputy Director). You combine fearless advocacy with a deep and comprehensive knowledge of the criminal law. Your style is clear,

focused and concise. You welcome engagement with the bench. You have greatly assisted the judges of this Court; fine advocacy supports good judging.

Second, you have promoted the rule of law in the Territory, working tirelessly to defend the independence of your office. By definition, a good DPP is not a crowd pleaser – unpopular decisions must be made. You have been unafraid to make tough decisions, even when they meant that the Court itself was unable to sit in our number 1 court room for much of 2018.

But the true measure of any great leader is not what they have given to the past but what they have given to the future. You have given much. You have mentored many talented young lawyers within your office, including many fine women prosecutors. We have gender equality on this bench. We have gender equality within the DPP. Perhaps in our lifetimes we will see gender equality at the bar, even the senior bar.

As the Court settles into its new home, we too look to the future, not just our personal futures but the future of the judicial arm of government, both in this territory and nationally. That future depends not least on the commitment of the advocates who prosecute with integrity and independence.

Today we celebrate the distinguished career of one such advocate. That is to say, the career to date. We sincerely hope that we will continue to benefit from the Director's outstanding advocacy, perhaps from the other end of the bar table.

Mr Director, congratulations on your remarkable career.

We will now hear from the Attorney-General.