

SPEECH AT CEREMONIAL SITTING FOR RECENTLY APPOINTED SENIOR COUNSEL

Delivered by the Chief Justice, the Hon Justice Alan Blow AO, on 23 August 2024

This is a ceremonial sitting to celebrate the recent appointments of five members of the Tasmanian legal profession as senior counsel. Their names are Chris Dockray, Leigh Mackey, Matthew Verney, Tom Cox, and Mark Rapley. On behalf of the Court, I would like to welcome all the visitors who are here today. I particularly welcome the family and friends of the five appointees.

There has been a tradition in many Commonwealth jurisdictions that newly appointed King's Counsel, Queen's Counsel or Senior Counsel appear before the courts in which they practise on a day appointed for the hearing of motions, and each announce his or her appointment, whereupon the presiding judge asks, "Do you move?" In response, the new appointee bows to the Court. In 2014 the judges of this Court decided that it was appropriate to have a ceremonial welcome for every newly appointed Silk that included the appropriate parts of the traditional practice. We have continued this new tradition ever since then. We will now proceed.

Mr Dockray, do you move?

Ms Mackey, do you move?

Mr Verney, do you move?

Mr Cox, do you move?

Mr Rapley, do you move?

Mr Dockray, Ms Mackey, Mr Verney, Mr Cox, and Mr Rapley, on behalf of the Court I congratulate all of you on your appointments.

Ever since the 1590s, counsel learned in the law have been appointed at Queen's Counsel, King's Counsel or, more recently, Senior Counsel. The appointment of Queen's Counsel by the Governor-in-Council was replaced in this State by the appointment of Senior Counsel with effect from 2001.

The designation of Senior Counsel is reserved for those whose standing and achievements justify an expectation that they can provide outstanding service as counsel and advisors, to the good of the administration of justice. The appointments are made by the Chief Justice in consultation with the other judges of the Court, judicial officers of other courts when appropriate, the Presidents of the relevant professional bodies, and certain other senior members of the profession. The required qualities include skill and learning, integrity and honesty, independence, diligence and experience, particularly experience as advocates in the higher courts or tribunals. Other factors that are taken into account include the mentoring of junior practitioners and contributions to the profession and to the community generally, particularly contributions that are above and beyond the call of duty.

Mr Dockray was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1984. He has practised in Launceston ever since. He was employed by Zeeman, Kable & Page, and was a partner in that firm from July 1986 to September 1995. He practised as a barrister and solicitor as a sole practitioner from 1995 until 2021. Since May 2021 he has been practising as a barrister. He has practised in a broad range of litigious areas and holds long-term retainers from some major corporations. He has a long history of professional directorships. For many years he was the Chairman of Directors of St Luke's Health and St Luke's Private Hospital Ltd. He has been involved in a number of community organisations. He has been a member of the Council of the Law Society of Tasmania, a part-time Commissioner of the Workers' Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal, and a member of the Disciplinary Tribunal under the *Legal Profession Act* 1993. He has been a Law Society of Tasmania members' advisor since 2016.

Ms Mackey was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1992. Her first job in the law was as an apprentice with the Hobart firm Jennings Elliott, and she has never left that practice. She continued to work for that firm after her admission. She became a partner when the firm merged with Ogilvie McKenna to become Ogilvie Jennings, and she is still there practising as a barrister and solicitor. She routinely appears before this Court, before coroners and before the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal ("TASCAT"). Amongst other professional roles she is the Chair of the Tasmanian Parole Board, a member of the Disciplinary Tribunal under the *Legal Profession Act* 2008, a member of the Law Foundation, and a member of the Police Review Board. She has been a member of the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, a Superannuation Commissioner, and a member of the Tasmanian Board of the Medical Board of Australia.

Mr Verney was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1995. He worked in a number of legal practices on the north-west coast before establishing his own firm there in 2003. Since October 2021 he has practised as a barrister, based in Devonport. Since about 2012 his principal area of practice has been family law. He served on the Council of the Law Society of Tasmania for 10 years, commencing in 2009, including a year as Treasurer and two years as the President. He has been a Director of the Law Council of Australia and is now a member of the Bar Council. He has been a Commissioner of the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania, the Deputy President of the Guardianship and Administration Board, and a senior member of TASCAT. He is a member of the Disciplinary Tribunal under the *Legal Profession Act*.

Mr Cox was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1999. Since 2008 he has practised as a barrister, based in Hobart. He is the President of the Tasmanian Bar Association. He has been the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board and the Deputy Director of the Tasmanian Legal Practice Course. He practises in all sorts of civil litigation, particularly in personal injuries litigation and historical sexual abuse litigation. Through the Tasmanian Bar Association and the Australian Bar Association he has been involved in various projects, including one for making interest-free loans to young barristers establishing their practices, and the Bar's continuing professional development program.

Mr Rapley was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1999, 10 days after Mr Cox. He practised as barrister and solicitor at Page Seager undertaking a variety of litigious work and becoming a partner in that firm. He left that firm in 2014 and went to Butler McIntyre & Butler where he continued to practise as a barrister and solicitor undertaking civil litigation, including some complex pieces of commercial litigation. In October 2023 he was appointed as Tasmania's first State Litigator. In that role he is responsible for the conduct of all the State's civil litigation, apart from constitutional matters which are the responsibility of the Solicitor-General. He has

been a member of the Litigation Committee of the Law Society of Tasmania, the Rules Committee of the Magistrates Court, the Disciplinary Tribunal under the *Legal Profession Act*, and TASCAT. He is a Director of Centre for Legal Studies Limited, the company that provides the Tasmanian Legal Practice Course.

All five of the appointees here today have all the attributes required of senior counsel. It gives me very great pleasure to acknowledge their appointments at this ceremonial sitting. I congratulate all five of you again. Mr Dockray, Ms Mackey, Mr Verney, Mr Cox and Mr Rapley, I hope you enjoy many years of challenging and rewarding practice as senior counsel in your various roles.

That concludes this ceremonial sitting. The Court will now adjourn.