



**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT MS REBECCA TRESTON QC, ON THE OCCASION OF A  
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY FOR HIS HONOUR JUDGE MICHAEL BYRNE QC, ON HIS  
APPOINTMENT AS A JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF QUEENSLAND  
TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2020**

1. May it please the Court.
2. On behalf of the Bar Association of Queensland, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you on the occasion of this swearing-in ceremony for your Honour Judge Michael Byrne QC. The Bar extends a particular welcome to your wife Anne-Maree, and your sons Rhys and Joe, who have been able to join us here today.
3. Your Honour, congratulations on your appointment as a Judge of the District Court of Queensland. Your Honour joins the Court following a distinguished career in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions including the last 4½ years as the Director. Even a cursory search through the reported criminal cases reveals the high profile, complex and challenging cases that your Honour has been involved in throughout the over 31 years of your career at the DPP, and therefore, the wealth of experience and talent that your Honour will bring to your new role on this Court.
4. You were raised on the Gold Coast, an only child. As such, you are accustomed to getting your own way, which was a trait you wore proudly and promoted regularly at the slightest suggestion of disagreement – perhaps a word of warning for your new colleagues and the practitioners who will appear in your Court.
5. After working in the Magistrates Court as an Administrative Officer in Coolangatta and Southport for 5 years, your Honour commenced your career at the DPP as the Listings Officer in the Rockhampton office in July 1988. In an early display of your enduring capacity for multi-tasking, your Honour studied externally whilst also working full time managing the criminal lists from Maryborough to Bowen, and out west to Longreach, as well as instructing in Court.
6. Things didn't always go as planned however. On one circuit to Bundaberg your Honour managed to pack only two left shoes. Always unflappable but not necessarily pragmatic, your Honour persevered and wore the two left shoes to Court each day. It was not until days later that the pain in your right toes forced you to consider an alternative solution.

7. Also whilst in Rockhampton, your Honour tried your hand as an entrepreneur when, with other articled clerks from the jurisdiction, you organised the annual Law Ball. In an early sign that you would succeed at whatever you turned your hand to, the event was a success and returned a modest profit which you and your fellow organising committee decided should be used for a weekend at the Kahuna Motel in Mackay. It is at that point that the story becomes unsuitable for further public discussion.
8. It was during this time in your Honour's life that you came to meet Constable Heater, who would later become your wife. Or, as your Honour regularly refers to her, your "*first wife*".
9. Your Honour was called to the Bar in December 1992, and appointed Queen's Counsel in November 2009.
10. Your Honour began your career as a trial advocate when you were appointed as a Crown Prosecutor in January 1995 to Southport. After a disheartening run of failed prosecutions, you managed to persuade a jury to convict Mr Renton and Ms Festa of charges of armed robbery and unlawful use of vehicles. It was a complex and difficult trial and a hard fought, but well-deserved win and a boost to your confidence. It was seemingly short lived however, as, following an appeal against the conviction, your colleagues got to the published judgment before you and manipulated the cover page so as to reflect that the appeal had been successful and the convictions overturned. It was that copy of the judgment which you first saw. Your heart sank. With a heavy heart you read the judgment to discover where you had allowed the trial to derail only to discover the true state of affairs was that the appeal was dismissed and you had been the victim of a cruel (and successful) prank by your workmates.
11. In addition to your public persona; the experienced, even handed, unflappable and talented court advocate with enviable legal acumen; those who know you personally know another side to your personality having been regularly the victims of your Honour's own proclivity for pranks. The story of the Renton and Festa judgment is perhaps therefore, a rare occasion when your colleagues managed to get one back on you.
12. As a practitioner, you enjoyed a reputation amongst the judiciary and the profession on 'both sides of the fence' of being an outstanding, highly-skilled and ethical prosecutor. In addition to your Honour's commendable public service throughout your career, you have made a significant contribution to the legal profession having undertaken the important role as an Ethics Counsellor for the Bar Association since 2010 for which the Association is extremely grateful. Your Honour was also a founding vice president of the Gold Coast Bar Association from 2001 to 2002, and a member of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychiatry, Psychology and the Law.

13. Whilst it is perhaps more by coincidence than design, your Honour's career has loosely followed that of your uncle, the late Judge Vincent Finn, who was a Crown Prosecutor in North Queensland and a District Court Judge in Townsville from 1971 to 1981.
14. Apart from your wife and family, your Honour's other great love is sport as the Attorney-General has mentioned, in particular indoor cricket. The broken exit sign remains a matter about which you steadfastly deny responsibility. But then your Honour is not always one to readily accept fault. In a recent High Court Special Leave application, you referred to Justice Gordon by addressing her as Justice Bell. When corrected by Justice Keane, you blamed the video link equipment for your error.
15. You have shown yourself to be a natural leader with a genuine affection for others and a desire to see them succeed. In spite of your busy schedule at the DPP, you always made time for advice and to mentor other staff, personal qualities that are well suited to your role as a Judge of this Court.
16. Your Honour however made no secret of your distain for festive celebrations at Christmas time and cemented yourself as a bit of a Grinch. But, turning a negative into a positive, if the Chief Judge is looking for a vacation Judge at Christmas time, the Bar respectfully suggests you might make a good candidate.
17. Not only does your Honour bring a wealth of talent, legal acumen and experience to this Court, you also bring a commendable humanity which will ensure your success in this new role.
18. The Bar Association of Queensland and its members extend to you, your wife Anne-Maree, and your sons Rhys and Joe, its best wishes on this well-deserved appointment. We thank you for your continued service to the justice system and the people of Queensland.
19. May it please the Court.