



**ADDRESS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, DAMIEN O'BRIEN QC
ON THE OCCASION OF A SWEARING-IN CEREMONY FOR
THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE KERRI MELLIFONT
ON TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2021**

1. May it please the court.
2. On behalf of the Bar Association of Queensland, it gives me great pleasure to speak at the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony of your Honour Justice Kerri Mellifont.
3. **JUSTICE MELLIFONT**, I extend a particular welcome to your husband Peter, your sons, Grant and Joe, and your step-daughter Katy and your step-son James, and other members of your family who have been able to join us here today - either in person or virtually.
4. Your Honour joins this Court following a very successful career at the Bar.
5. You were called to the Bar in 1994 having being awarded a Bachelor of Laws with Honours from the Queensland University of Technology. You were subsequently awarded a Masters of Law in 1996 and the award of a Doctor of Juridical Science in 2007.
6. In 2001, you commenced your practice at the private Bar, following 11 years in public prosecutions, where you spent 5 and a half years with each of the Public Defender's Office/Legal Aid and the office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.
7. At the private Bar, your Honour managed a busy practice where you excelled in the areas of criminal and regulatory law, medical law, inquests, commissions of enquiry and administrative law.
8. Your work in inquires is of particular note. You had substantial roles in the Forde Inquiry into Child Abuse, the Queensland Floods Commission of Enquiry, the Barrett Adolescent Centre Commission of Inquiry - where I

appeared alongside you – and, most recently, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, where you were Senior Counsel assisting the Commission.

9. In recognition of your prominence in these areas, you were made silk in 2010.
10. You are known for your meticulous preparation and endless capacity for hard work. It is said you have never been to court anything less than completely prepared.
11. Your deep sense of fairness and justice is clearly displayed in your work and is the quiddity of your approach to any matter.
12. Despite such a heavy workload, your Honour has always had time to help others in the profession. You have found joy in helping others at the Bar and have been an enthusiastic mentor to many junior barristers, particularly women. You shared your successes with your juniors, and gave much of yourself to them, often becoming a confidante and life coach. You have always showed your generous spirit to those around you, who are safe with the knowledge that you are always available to give professional or personal advice, or share in good food and coffee, or just a chat and a laugh.
13. Your Honour has always been a keen contributor to the Bar Association. For the past three years you have been the co-chair of the Association's Annual Bar Conference Committee. You have also presented countless CPD seminars for the Association.
14. Your Honour has also been a strong advocate for any effort to make life as a barrister better – be it through professional development or encouraging colleagues to look after themselves, both physically and mentally.
15. On behalf of the Bar, we thank you for the significant contribution you have made to our profession.
16. As much as you have aided those in the profession, it is perhaps the work your Honour has done for those studying law which will have the greatest impact. For many years, your Honour has been a member of the QUT Law Founder's Scholarship Committee, which is available for first year law students who would be unable to commit to study without financial

assistance. In any spare moment, you have always selflessly committed yourself to raising funds in support of this scholarship and supporting anyone who has a desire to make a career in law. Whilst I am aware that this is done without any desire for fuss or fanfare, I am reliably informed that your involvement with this scholarship is, quite rightly, your Honour's proudest achievement.

17. JUSTICE MELLIFONT, to become a judge of this Honourable Court is to answer a call to public service. Your Honour's extensive contribution to the profession and the community is such that it was no surprise that your Honour answered that call when the opportunity arose.
18. We know that your Honour has accepted this appointment because your Honour values public service and understands that the reputation of this great Court can only be maintained if leading members of the Bar, such as yourself and Justice Kelly, are prepared to take on the considerable burden of life as a superior court judge. For that sacrifice and commitment, the legal profession and the broader Queensland community are extremely grateful.
19. The Bar has every confidence that your Honour's intellectual ability and integrity, sense of compassion and justice, patience and calm demeanour will put your Honour in good stead for a long and very successful life on the bench.
20. The Bar extends to you, and your family, their best wishes on this well-deserved appointment.
21. May it please the court.