



**ADDRESS OF DAMIEN ATKINSON OAM QC ON THE OCCASION OF A  
WELCOME CEREMONY FOR MAGISTRATE BALIC, MAGISTRATE  
GOVERDHAN AND MAGISTRATE ROWAN ON  
THURSDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2022**

1. May it please the court.
2. On behalf of the Bar Association, I rise to congratulate your Honours Magistrate Balic, Magistrate Goverdhan and Magistrate Rowan on your elevation, and to celebrate this event with you. The President of the Association, Tom Sullivan QC, extends his best wishes and expresses his regret that he could not attend. I also acknowledge the elders past, present and emerging for the Jagera and Turrbal people.
3. MAGISTRATE BALIC, I extend a particular welcome to your family here today, including your father Faruk, your mother Latifa, your husband Junuz and your son Zinedine.
4. Your Honour's is a story that is truly vivid, courageous and inspiring. From a young Bosnian refugee fleeing the most terrible times in your homeland, you went on to become a gifted advocate, appearing in the High Court of Australia. But that startling contrast only book-ends an equally remarkable career.
5. Your Honour joins the Bench following nearly 17 years with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. You graduated from Griffith University with a Bachelor of Laws. You commenced working as a Legal Support Officer in 2005, going on to be appointed Principal Crown Prosecutor in 2014. During your time at the DPP, you prosecuted more than 150 criminal trials to verdict, and more than 120 appeals to judgment in the Court of Appeal.

6. You are universally regarded as a dedicated, hard-working, accomplished and fair-minded prosecutor, and that reputation, no doubt, has seen you entrusted regularly with complex prosecutions including drug trafficking and murder. You have forged lasting friendships and excellent working relationships even with defence counsel – which rather underlines your commitment to tolerance and diversity - and they tell me that, despite the many skills you brought for the prosecution, you will be widely missed at the bar table.
7. Your Honour has been closely involved in your mosque and in Brisbane’s Muslim community. I read a reflection you authored on persecution where you wrote that “...*hate is a powerful weapon which ought not be the determinant of our emotions but rather the fuel of our compassion*”. Your Honour is fluent in Bosnian, German and English, and you read or speak many other languages. We are certain you are eloquent, considered and wise in each of them.
8. Throughout your career, you have made time to be a thoughtful mentor to women in the DPP and to be an active and effective member of the Women Lawyers Association. The Bar is also conscious that you have been a great contributor to the Association, through the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Committee and Equitable Briefing Sub-Committee, as well as the committee considering amendments to the *Barristers’ Conduct Rules*. You have also provided a generous guidance to young counsel, both as a member of the New Bar Support List and through the Bar Practice Course. The Association thanks you for that service.
9. Your Honour’s vast experience, like that of your colleagues today, will make you an invaluable resource for this State in your new role.
10. **MAGISTRATE GOVERDHAN**, I extend particular welcome to your family with us here today, including your mother Shanti and your sister-in-law Mohini.
11. You joined the Court after a career in private practice and academia which began following your graduation from the University of Adelaide in 1998. Your experience in commercial litigation began on the Gold Coast in 2002 with Adamson Bernays Kyle & Jones Lawyers, where you became Senior Associate.

12. In 2014, you commenced further study, graduating from the Queensland University of Technology with a Master of Laws in 2018. For the last five years, you have been a sessional academic at QUT and, in the meantime, you returned to practice at Mullins Lawyers. You were a very unusual lawyer in that you were equally interested in the academic and practical aspects of the law, and the Bar is sure that your insight and your perspective will be an asset to the bench.
13. I have had the great pleasure of being instructed by you on at least two occasions and I can attest to your thoroughness, your agile legal mind, your calmness and your preparedness to continue until the job is done well. You are rightly known for having a keen understanding of legal principle with a mastery of the facts and relevant law, as well as a commitment to professionalism and ethical conduct.
14. Your Honour's dedication to detail can be off-putting. As a solicitor, not a document would leave your desk without you first ensuring that its margins were uniform, the paragraphs were properly indented, the font was appropriate and all lines were spaced 1.5. One can only hope that advocates in your Honour's court show the same attention to detail. I also note, in a similar vein, that your Honour's very first experience with a traffic infringement seems to have been on the bench, which is perhaps unusual. No doubt, the Bench is a steep learning curve in many areas.
15. My only personal regret with your Honour's elevation is that you once told me that you come from a musical family so that, from memory, your mothers sings and you dance. I fear that, with your commitment to judicial gravitas, we may now never see you perform.
16. Your Honour, I know you feel very deeply the recent loss of your father and I take the liberty of saying, as your friend, that he would have been exquisitely proud today.
17. On behalf of the Association, I am pleased to welcome you to this court.
18. **MAGISTRATE ROWAN**, I welcome you and your family with us today, including your mother Kate, your Husband Nick and your son Noah.

19. Your career began after you graduated from the Queensland University of Technology in 2007, with an Honours Degree in Law, but also a Bachelor in Journalism which, no doubt, will stand you in good stead for letter writing. Aside from a ten-month intermission, you built your career at Charltons Lawyers, where you commenced as an Articled Clerk and were appointed Partner. Your Honour's practice was focussed primarily in the areas of criminal and family law; particularly domestic violence, parenting and property settlement matters. In 2015, your Honour was accredited as an Independent Childrens Lawyer and in 2017 you obtained a Graduate Diploma in Criminology. In the course of your career, you have been the recipient of a number of prestigious prizes including the Agnes McWhinney Award which recognises trailblazers in the law.
20. When I approached your former colleagues in Bundaberg, they responded with one voice. They said there were many tears shed when your Honour left, that every lawyer in that region applauds your elevation and, quite simply, as one member of your firm put it: "*we loved her here*".
21. That is hardly surprising given the energy, focus and compassion you stamped on that region. You were the President of the EDON Place Domestic and Family Violence Centre and you co-authored a book on that area. You were the President of the Bundaberg Law Association. In addition, you have been an active member of organisations as diverse as Zonta, the Prisoner's Legal Service, the Rotary Club and St Mary's Catholic Primary School. On top of all of that you have been a significant contributor at various sporting events.
22. Your Honour has a reputation for being quick witted and unpretentious, but I'm informed that much of the evidence of the same is best not shared. Despite those traits, I have been asked to warn young practitioners that your Honour is a stickler for punctuality. I have also been asked to warn your fellow magistrates that your elevation may pose some danger to their waists. I understand that your Honour has mastered a talent where you craft beautiful art works from the wrappers of lollies and chocolates. Unfortunately, that medium requires that your work colleagues engage in some rather voracious consumption ...

23. We are very confident that your experience in practice and in community, and your obvious compassion, will make you also very well suited to the new role.
  
24. On behalf of the Bar and its members, I warmly welcome you, Magistrates Balic Goverdhan and Rowan and your families, and assure you all of the ongoing support of the Bar.
  
25. May it please the court.