



Presentation of Newly Appointed Barristers' Ceremony
Monday, 25 August 2025
Banco Court

Helen Bowskill
Chief Justice

We welcome everyone here today: the new barristers, their family and friends, and members of the profession. I also acknowledge the first custodians of the land and waters across Queensland; here, in Brisbane, the Turrbal people and the Jagera people, and pay my respects to their ancestors and elders, for their wisdom, courage and leadership.

On behalf of all the members of the Court, I congratulate the new barristers who have joined the Bar since the beginning of May this year.

It is wonderful to see the ranks of the Bar increasing each year; I think this is the first time that we have reached the third row of seating for new barristers, at a ceremony such as this.

This ceremony recognises the traditional relationship between the court, its judges, and the barristers who appear before them. That is not because of some superficial status that barristers enjoy within the legal profession, nor to encourage pretensions. It is because, both as a matter of law and tradition, you are more than merely the representative for your client. You are partners, with the judges and your fellow members of the Bar, in the great endeavour that is the administration of justice, for the benefit of the community.

This special relationship is a delicate one, which carries exceptional privileges and obligations.¹

¹ *Ziems v The Protonotary of the Supreme Court of NSW* (1957) 97 CLR 279 at 298.

One of the privileges is trust: a readiness to accept what you say. That is the trust of your colleagues at the Bar, and the trust of the judges when you appear in court. The corresponding obligation is complete reliability. We judges, in particular, have to be able to rely on you, on your integrity and your effort. The system would grind to a halt if there were not that relationship of trust between the Bar and the bench. Our being able to rely on you never to mislead, always to do your utmost to assist with the best submissions you can provide and with accurate, relevant and up to date authority is essential.

In the contemporary context, of the evolution of generative AI, I emphasise that you must check, and be responsible for, the accuracy of every single word, particularly case citations and legislative provisions, that appears in any document bearing your name that is relied on in a court. There are no short cuts.

Don't do anything to lose that trust, with judges or with other barristers, because it is extraordinarily difficult to regain.

Let your ethical obligations, articulated in the Barristers' Conduct Rules, be your surest guide at all times.

Another essential element of the maintenance and protection of the rule of law is our respective independence and fearlessness.

As the former Chief Justice of the High Court, the Hon Susan Kiefel AC KC, has said, independence is not a benefit bestowed on a barrister. It does not imply freedom from action; but rather the need to be free from pressures and temptations antithetical to the obligation to serve the public, the duty to the courts and to the client.²

Fearlessness includes having the courage to make decisions and give your clients advice they may not want to hear; and being discerning about the arguments you choose to run. That will be amongst the hardest things you have to do.

But there is another type of fearlessness that is called for – which is in choosing how you will conduct your professional lives, so that you can still be happy, healthy and well-rounded

² The Hon Justice Kiefel, High Court of Australia, speech given to the Bar Practice Course, 20 February 2009, [‘The Profession of Barrister – Service, Duty and Independence’](#).

people. In that regard, don't be afraid to be your authentic self in how you conduct your practice as a barrister. The legal profession is a far more rich and colourful tapestry than it once was, in every sense, and there is no stereotypic notion of what a barrister is. There are of course some non-negotiable, essential requirements for all lawyers – industry, honesty and integrity are among them. But in terms of how you perform as an advocate, there is no one style that is best; and its likely to be least stressful, and most effective, if you be yourself.

As I dare say you have already experienced, barristers' work can be very stressful, and can at times necessitate long and arduous hours. Take your time to learn and improve your skills. Have the courage to say "no" – it is better to do less, well; than more, poorly (or even mediocrely). Make time for other things that you enjoy, and other people in your life – which is so essential to mental and physical wellbeing.

Having a content and happy life outside of work will sustain you through the hard work and inevitable stress of life as a barrister.

Independence does not mean isolation. You are now part of a remarkably collegiate branch of the profession, exceeded only, in my experience, by the collegiality of the judiciary. You will already have had first-hand experience of this. Where people might expect competition between barristers, there is support, encouragement and friendship. Make the most of this for the valuable gift that it is, and foster it, by becoming involved in the social and educational activities of the Bar, and by contributing to the work of the Bar Association in any way you can.

Congratulations to you all, for embarking on this most fulfilling and enjoyable of careers in the law. All the judges of the Court wish you the best, and look forward to seeing you appear as advocates in our courts.