



**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, MS REBECCA TRESTON QC,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE VALEDICTORY CEREMONY FOR  
THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE ROSLYN G ATKINSON AO  
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF QUEENSLAND  
ON THURSDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2018**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great privilege to speak on behalf of the Bar Association of Queensland on the occasion of the valedictory ceremony for your Honour, Justice Atkinson, the most senior member of the trial division of this court.

Everyone here knows your Honour for your formidable legal mind. Bachelor of Laws with First Class Honours in 1985. Numerous awards at University including the Feez Ruthning Award for Company Law in 1983, and the Ruthning Memorial Scholarship in 1984. 1984 was the same year that your Honour won the Women's Lawyers Prize, the Virgil Power Prize and the Wilkinson Memorial Prize.

Your Honour commenced Articles of Clerkship in 1985 at Feez Ruthning and became Associate to the Honourable Justice Gerard Brennan in the High Court in 1986. Your Honour was admitted to the Bar in 1987 and immediately commenced private practice, specialising in commercial law, including as counsel assisting the Inquiry into Christopher Skase's Quintex group of companies.

During your time in practice, your Honour was a Member and the Inaugural President of the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, and a Member and Deputy Chair of the Queensland Law Reform Commission.

Your Honour was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court on 3 September 1998 – yes, over 20 years ago. Many of your Honour's friend here today remember the events of that day, and the celebrations that followed that evening. During those 20 years, your Honour also served as the Chair of the Queensland Law Reform Commission for a remarkable 12 years from 2002 to 2014, and as President of the International Commission of Jurists (Qld) for 13 years from 2000 to 2013.

There are many more aspects of your Honour's CV. But they tell only part of the story.

The bald facts do not tell us that your Honour grew up in Kingaroy, the oldest child of Jock and Heather Atkinson. Jock was a war veteran, a bomber pilot having flown over 30 aircraft missions; he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the French Legion d'Honneur. Heather (who joins us here today) worked in the Commonwealth Bank and, in the custom of the time, was made to leave her job on marrying. Your Honour went to primary school in Kingaroy – shoes were optional in those days.

Discouraged from doing law after high school on the basis that it was unseemly, your Honour first became a teacher. A keen eye and ear, and an urge to assess and correct any short-coming in your pupils' work, has endured.

Teaching was followed by acting, and it was in these years that your Honour met and married, Richard Fotheringham. Together you had two children, both of whom are here today, Claire, now a specialist medical practitioner and Tom a solicitor. Your Honour is a proud and completely doting grandmother.

After Claire was born, your Honour decided to go back to do law. Your Honour took your introduction to law exam from your hospital bed after just having given birth to Tom. Unbelievably to some, and unsurprisingly to others, your Honour was awarded a high distinction.

As the first President of the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, your Honour delivered important decisions on claims made under the then very new legislation. Perhaps one of the most enduring was when your Honour ordered a State Government Department to install front lift access to the then nearly complete Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. This was innovative at the time, but has become the standard for access to public buildings throughout Queensland for people with disabilities. Your Honour had less impact on changing compulsory retirement age for tenured academics; and no opportunity to test compulsory retirement for judicial officers.

The transition from “novel” to “normal” would be very familiar. Your Honour was among a cohort of women, senior members of the profession, who gave up established and promising careers at the Bar to serve as members of the judiciary. The decisions of your Honour and your peers changed the face of our courts, making them better reflect the community. It also changed the way we think about the Courts and of the range of options open to women of intelligence, diligence and integrity. Perhaps most importantly, it changed the way our courts operated.

On the Supreme Court, your Honour has presided over some of the most high profile criminal cases, including Brett Cowan, convicted of the murder of Daniel Morcombe, and Alex McEwan, convicted of the murder of Korean exchange student Eunji Ban in 2013. In the civil jurisdiction, your Honour's judgements in *Tyler v Custom Credit* and *Deputy Commissioner of Taxation v Salcedo* are among the most cited on Austlii.

Your Honour strove to make visible the underlying principles of the *Uniform Civil Procedure Rules*. In your Honour's Case Flow Management courtroom your Honour impressed upon practitioners the duties of parties to progress civil litigation efficiently and economically, as well as the virtues of a well-prepared draft Order.

Your Honour's career has been characterised by a commitment to justice and equality for all in the eyes of the law. Can I give but one small example – Your Honour's associates have included many women and many men, one associate in a wheel chair and one associate with a guide dog – and your Honour doesn't even like dogs. The Court was not disability friendly in those days but I am told by then President Margaret McMurdo that your Honour made certain that any necessary alterations were attended to, to ensure all your associates were able to effectively and efficiently perform their roles.

Your Honour doesn't just speak of your convictions, your Honour lives them, every day. A testament to this, your Honour's many associates assembled here today, each of whom learned quickly to pay attention in Court, to listen to the arguments, and to be ready to express an opinion, backed up by sound reasoning, in the lift on the way back to chambers. Those associates recount that they witnessed your Honour's ability to balance your dedicated and tireless work ethic with your generous giving of time and wisdom to community organisations, while still maintaining wonderful relationships within your family.

In 2015, your Honour was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the judiciary and to law reform in Queensland, through contributions to the legal profession and to promoting awareness of issues of injustice and inequality in Australia and internationally.

The barristers and solicitors of Queensland owe a debt of gratitude to your Honour for your leadership and your inspiration as a role model, for your outstanding intellect and your incisive judgements, for your commitment to social justice, and your lived example of equality for women and men of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Bar Association thanks your Honour for your service to the court and the community, and wishes you well in the next phase of your journey.

May it please the Court.