IN THE DISTRICT COURT

OF NEW SOUTH WALES

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST 2023

**SWEARING IN OF HIS HONOUR JUDGE PAUL MCGUIRE SC AS A JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Ms G Bashir SC, President, on behalf of the NSW Bar Association

Ms J Wong, Councillor, Law Society of New South Wales, on behalf of solicitors

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MCGUIRE DCJ: Acting Chief Judge, I have the honour of announcing that I have been appointed a judge of this Court. I present my Commission.

 (Commission read)

 (Affirmations of office taken)

HUGGETT ACJ: Judge McGuire the oaths will be placed in the Court archives and the bible will be suitably inscribed and presented to you as a memento of this occasion.

 Judge McGuire, on behalf of the Chief Judge and all of the judges of this Court, may I welcome you to this Court. You bring with you a wealth of experience, particularly in criminal law, and I wish you all the very best for your judicial career.

MCGUIRE DCJ: Thank you, Acting Chief Judge.

BASHIR: May it please the Court. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. I extend my respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

 Judge McGuire, on behalf of the New South Wales Bar, it is a pleasure and a privilege to welcome your Honour’s appointment to the Court today. Your appointment is another loss for our Bar of a silk of exceptional talent, but an unsurprising elevation, given your Honour’s keen intellect, your ability to distil complex cases to the simple and digestible, your humble character, diligent work ethic and innate ability to engage with juries and court participants.

 This appointment will be a blow to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and the solicitors who have relied on you for many years to prosecute extremely complex and consequential frauds, terrorism, insider trading, market manipulation and proceeds of crime trials. It will also be a blow for defenders, who could rely on your fair presentation of such matters. It was in your Honour’s safe hands that the CDPP and AFP placed the prosecution of the Plutus Payroll crimes, self-described by one recently convicted and sentenced perpetrator as bigger than Ben Hur. While that devastating admission may have assisted your case, the description of the mammoth volume of the undertaking and the intricacies of the criminal endeavour was apt. However, not even that case could escape the McGuire distillation method. Your Honour is famous for embracing the challenge in such trials, to use your Honour’s words, “to make it as simple as possible.”

 Court of Appeal and Supreme Court judges have described the outstanding impression you have made on judges and juries with your wonderful ability to simplify complicated cases and engage with juries in a way so that their eyes do not glaze over. And your Honour, as a fantastic advocate, who is a pleasure to watch in court. Your Honour has the elusive skill of transforming the most difficult of facts and document after document into palatable, readily understood matters. You have not shied away from the difficult cases, even with stomach turning subject matters and have argued for statements of principle that were accepted on appeal and now guide this Court, such as in the case of *Porte v R.*

 Your Honour is also by nature calm and courteous both in and outside of court. You have always shunned the limelight, despite the increasingly high profile nature of your cases. You have abided by the adage of Neil Williams SC, that one should be more keen on making the law reports than making the newspapers. Your Honour’s cases have certainly made the law reports.

 It is not widely known that you are of Lebanese heritage. Who knows we are probably cousins. Your grandfather, Khalil, who later became known as Henry emigrated from a village in the north of Lebanon. He bought a wool broking store in Goulburn and adopted its name as your family surname, McGuire. Your grandfather’s wool broking business quickly expanded through New South Wales, then chased the gold rush to Queensland. Your father Labeeb, studied medicine at the University of Sydney, before becoming chief surgeon in Brisbane, where you were born and raised.

 Your elder brother also later became a doctor, but your Honour was to follow in the footsteps of your late uncle, Frederick McGuire AO, who was a barrister for 22 years. He was described as the leader of the Central Queensland Bar and became a District Court judge. He was also the first president of the Children’s Court in Queensland, instrumental in establishing its practices and procedures. The archives of the speech upon his swearing in disclosed descriptions with an uncanny resemblance to your Honour in the chronicling, that he possessed felicity of expression and great command of language, an equable temperament, patience, unfailing good humour and innate kindness.

 Speaking of McGuires, there was actually another Judge McGuire on this Court, who was originally from Gundagai, Judge John McGuire, appointed in 1982 straight from the ranks of solicitors. While there may be an inference available from the surname and cultural heritage of family connection between you, he had quite a different style to your uncle, which some here may remember described in the newspapers as distinctive.

 Your Honour, as a young man, commenced studies of science in the mould of your father at Brisbane Grammar School, but your preference for humanities won the day. After graduating with Commerce and Law degrees from the University of Queensland, you became an associate to Judge McGuire in the Queensland District Court where you remained for five years before being admitted as a solicitor in 1989 and joining Feez Ruthning in Brisbane, now Allens Linklaters, before a stint at Freehill Hollingdale & Page.

 You met your future wife, Nicola, in Brisbane. She was an English law graduate, travelling through Australia on a gap year, who was offered a job as a paralegal at Allens in Sydney but was sent up to Brisbane to work on a large defamation case, where she met your Honour. After the trial, however, she returned home to London to work at Linklaters & Paines. No fool, you promptly sold your house and followed her, landing a job as a senior solicitor at Alsop Wilkinson in London where you worked for three years. Your Honour adapted to the British legal system quite easily but was shocked, when arriving at work at 8.30am, to discover all the lights were off and the doors locked until 9.00am. Obviously such a keen and hardworking Australian was embraced heartily and your Honour no doubt adjusted to the working hours.

 Your Honour married Nicola in London in 1993, before you moved to Sydney in 1995 where you commenced as a senior solicitor at Freehills, with the Bar in your sights. You were called to the Bar in 1999 and your early days were assisted by steady briefs from Freehills, as you began to specialise in commercial criminal law. One of your tutors, Neil Williams SC, practised in this area as did your other tutor, now the Honourable Justice James Stevenson.

 The Honourable Geoffrey Bellew SC led you in your first years at the Bar and notes you were, “the junior from central casting, he had everything prepared and ready to go.” He enticed you from 10 Selborne Wentworth to 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers with the lure of further commercial criminal work, which you were to make your own. The more cases you did for the Commonwealth DPP, the more they briefed you. You tackled and excelled in areas of the law that intimidate others.

 Your Honour’s earliest cases invariably featured descriptions of multiple counts of defrauding the Commonwealth or insider trading, or dishonestly obtaining a financial advantage, or importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug. At a time when insider trading laws were considered, even by judges, to be overly complex and legalistic, with consequently few successful prosecutions, your Honour, as junior counsel to David Yates SC, successfully prosecuted Rene Rivkin for insider trading in 2003, in what was then seen as a landmark case.

 You also delved successfully into the complex Operation Wickenby tax investigation and as junior counsel to then, Des Fagan SC, blocked the permanent stay sought by Messrs Seller and McCarthy, both at first instance and on appeal, in a case that is now leading authority on stays and derivative use of evidence gained under compulsion. You later successfully resisted the special leave challenge.

 Your prowess in this area may be attributed, perhaps to the surgical approach you inherited from your father, but more likely it is due to your meticulous preparation. Your clerk, Mark Grace, confirms that you burn the midnight oil and are methodical in your preparation. Others know you to be a barrister who always arrives ready to run the matter, having done the hard yards in groundwork, unwilling to waste court time, calm and unflustered and thoroughly decent to appear against.

 While your prodigious work ethic meant that you worked with your teams through morning teas and lunches, you also kept them entertained during lengthy trials with your dry wit and in supply of McGuire sketches, such as your beautiful work depicting a cockatoo, that Commonwealth prosecutor Yoshitha Alles now has framed on her desk, that was passed to her during the evidence of a lookout.

 Your Honour became senior counsel in 2015 and head of chambers in 2016. Out of court your Honour was a loved and respected leader at 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers maintaining a pleasing equilibrium on the floor. Your clerk notes that no one has ever heard you raise your voice in chambers. Your Honour practices an open door policy, assisting and nurturing junior talent and dedicating valuable time to the Bar Association’s mentoring program. You will be sorely missed in chambers but your clerk would like it known that he will not miss having to wear your Queensland themed ties each time the Blues lose the State of Origin, which has been a little too frequent in recent years.

 Those who work with you know little about your personal life beyond your devotion to your family, because that is the only thing you talk about beyond the law. A few weeks ago you and Nicola celebrated your 30th wedding anniversary. She intends to match your stamina for cases with running marathons and is training for her first one. A measure of your empathy and kindness as a couple has been your role as foster parents over the years. Your family with Nicola is obviously a great joy to you and all of your five children, bar one, are here today. While Beau was unable to attend, we welcome Gabriel, Frank, Beatrice and Jack here today. We hope that they all know their father is a widely respected lawyer of consummate skill. He was the epitome of a good barrister, thorough, talented, courteous and sensible and he is sure to be a wonderful judge because he is not only genuinely committed to the rule of law, he is a genuinely good person.

 On behalf of the barristers of New South Wales, we wish your Honour all the very best in the years to come. May it please the Court.

HUGGETT ACJ: Thank you President Bashir. Ms Wong?

WONG: May it please the Court. I too acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of this unceded land on which this Court stands, and I pay my respects to elders past and present. I also want to acknowledge the younger generation who can teach us who we could be as a nation. I also acknowledge and extend my respects to all Aboriginal people who are with us today.

 It is a privilege to come before the Court on behalf of the solicitors of New South Wales and congratulate your Honour on your appointment. We are joined today by your family and friends and I would like to acknowledge those present and their support in helping you arrive to this position. Your wife, Nicola, your children Gabe, twins, Frank and Bea, and your youngest, Jack. Plus your son, Beau, who could not be with us here today. Also joining us for this special occasion, are your brothers John and Mark, your sister in-law Jo and your parents in-law, Terry and Sylvia Sadler, who are watching the livestream from the United Kingdom.

 Your Honour is born and bred Queenslander. You attended Brisbane Grammar School and even from your schooldays, law would have seemed a natural choice of career given a precious family connection, which I will talk a little on later, which has also already been referred to. You achieved a Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Laws from the University Queensland and during this time at university, your Honour picked up two trophies, the Professor K Sutton trophy for best individual mooter and the University of Queensland Law Society’s prize for best moot team member. It is no wonder your legal career began with a love of being inside the courtroom and you arrive to the bench today with the distinguished résumé as an experienced trial and appellate advocate.

 Your first formative experience in the law came when working as an associate for your uncle, the late Judge Fred McGuire AO of the Queensland District Court. You described this time as one that took the theory you poured over at law school and turned it into practice. In your Honour’s words, it was an introduction to the pointy end of the law. You witnessed how sound judicial decision making can have a meaningful and lasting impact on society. You also saw many different approaches to advocacy in the courtroom and it has shaped you into the eminent lawyer you are today.

 One of the most memorable cases during your time with Judge McGuire, was the prosecution of Dr Peter Bayliss, who operated the Greenslopes Clinic in Brisbane and was being prosecuted for carrying out abortions. A preliminary issue in the case was whether an offence had been committed. Judge McGuire found him not guilty, with a ruling that the procedure is effectively legal if it is carried out to prevent the serious danger to a woman’s health. Judge McGuire’s interpretation of the law regarding abortion at the time, in the mid to late 1980s, allowed for consideration of the mental health of a patient, not only whether there was a physical risk to their life.

 This decision became a landmark one in establishing jurisprudence in the area of law and was recently quoted as far away as the United States Supreme Court. The elder Judge McGuire’s decision has also been recognised for its significance and impact on other States and Territories within Australia.

 Being thrown into the deep end of the law, with exposure to serious matters of litigation, this set the tone for your early career. Upon admission as a solicitor in Queensland in 1989, your Honour practised almost entirely in the area of litigation. In 1989 you began your legal career as a solicitor at one of Queensland’s major law firms, Feez Ruthning, in Brisbane where you stayed until 1991. The firm has since merged with Allens, the oldest law firm in Australia. Your Honour subsequently moved to Freehills in Brisbane, where you worked as a solicitor from 1991 to 1992.

 Your early days of legal practice mostly involved being shown to an office and a filing cabinet, with instructions to read through the files and alert one of the more senior lawyers if you found any problems. There was, however, one big discovery during this time, a chance encounter while at work in Brisbane, set the course for the next chapter of your life. You met a fellow young lawyer, an English woman named Nicola, in the office one day and the rest, as your Honour says, was history.

 In 1993 the two of you moved to the UK for a new adventure, as Nicola completed her requirements for her British Law degree. There your Honour was admitted to practice in England and Wales and you worked as a senior solicitor at Alsop Wilkinson, now DLA Piper, in London. During your time in the United Kingdom, your Honour and Nicola married before deciding to return to Australia in 1995. You were admitted as a solicitor in New South Wales and joined Freehills, now Herbert Smith Freehills, as a senior solicitor. Your colleague at the time, Nick Beaumont SC, described you at that time as “a dapper mystery man.” Your Honour stood out, Mr Beaumont said, due to your immaculate style. You were rarely spotted without a pair of cufflinks. Your suits, many purchased from the esteemed Savile Row in London, saw your Honour likened to Cary Grant in the Alfred Hitchcock classic, North by North West. Your Honour for this occasion, I put my best coat jacket on.

 You were also said to have perfected the Clive James hybrid Australian British accent after only a few years abroad, and even as a young lawyer, your Honour was known for your humour and appreciated for always being up for stress relieving office games to break up the long hours. I understand one popular activity was room squash, where a projectile would be bounced around by colleagues and off the walls of the office, the only rule being it couldn’t touch the ground. Mr Beaumont described you as a confidant to almost all the solicitors on the floor and your office door was often closed so a colleague could, in his words, pour his heart out to you and receive some calm and considerate advice. “People just really liked Paul a lot”, was how he best summarised the positive effect on colleagues.

 Professionally during this time, your Honour’s advocacy continued to flourish under the mentorship of lawyers, including Rebecca Davies, Keith Steele and Graeme Johnson. You worked on some impressive cases, including *The Commissioner of Taxation v Lamesa*, and that was a matter before the full Federal Court in 1997 as well as the dispute involving the tender and redevelopment of the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf.

 Your Honour says you have always preferred being in court to being in an office, and how fortunate that those locations are now one and the same. Your Honour was admitted to the Bar in 1999 and appointed as senior counsel in 2015. Your Honour’s experience at the Bar has included appearing and advising in commercial, equity and criminal jurisdictions. Your Honour received some early briefs from the Director of Public Prosecutions and you have since worked extensively in the Supreme and District Courts of New South Wales, particularly the criminal jurisdiction.

 Over more than two decades at the Bar, you have developed a strong expertise in Commonwealth criminal law, you have specialised in running complex cases across a number of areas, including white collar crime, insider trading, money laundering, taxation fraud, terrorism and corporations law offences. Your Honour recently appeared for the Crown in the Plutus Payroll $105 million tax fraud conspiracy involving multiple accused in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, and we know how that sentencing went yesterday. As well as, the criminal case against Queensland businessman, Clive Palmer and the troubles in his Sunshine Coast Dinosaur themed resort.

 Your Honour’s appointment today follows another big milestone. You and Nicola celebrated your 30th wedding anniversary just a few weeks ago. Your former colleague, Nick Beaumont, believes that one of the reasons your co‑workers came to you for life advice back in the 1990s was, your devotion and love for your wife and your personal life was deeply apparent. With a busy career at the Bar and a busy household of five children, there is not too much time spared for once enjoyed hobbies like swimming and tennis. Managing the schedules of teenagers and young adults is definitely enough of a workout, yet as your Honour embarks on this new appointment, you are also retiring from another job. Your youngest, Jack, will soon shortly be going for his drivers licence. Once those red P plates are in his hands, you will officially end your career as a driving instructor, having taught all of your children how to get behind the wheel.

 Your Honour said you were approaching this appointment with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. Joining the bench is a goal that you have worked towards for a long time. I hope today you celebrate and feel proud of the realisation of this dream. On behalf of the solicitors of New South Wales, I offer sincere congratulations for your appointment. As the Court pleases.

HUGGETT ACJ: Thank you Ms Wong. Judge McGuire.

MCGUIRE DCJ: Thank you Acting Chief Judge. I too acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, as the traditional custodians of this land and I pay my respects to the elders both past and present. I acknowledge and extend my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here this morning.

 Acting Chief Judge, fellow judges, Ms Bashir, Ms Wong, distinguished guests, colleagues, family and friends. It is a long list. I am grateful to you all for being here today. I particularly want to acknowledge Bell CJ, Beech‑Jones CJ at CL, pausing there to offer my congratulations for the recent announcement of his appointment to the High Court, Payne JA, Adamson JA, and Hulme AJ, the Honourable Peter Johnson, the Honourable Geoffrey Bellew and others who I have missed, I apologise, but thank you all for coming.

 Ms Bashir and Ms Wong, thank you for your overly kind words. For a portion of those speeches, I wasn’t entirely sure who you were talking about, but thank you for being more generous than I could have ever hoped. I want to thank the other judges of the District Court for making me feel so welcome and thank you to everyone who sent me kind words by note, by email, by text message and by telephone.

 I am humbled, and I have to say, quite embarrassed by all this attention and I want to deal with that by diverting the attention away from myself today in order to pay tribute to those who have been significant in my life, without whom none of this would have been even conceivable. I could not have wished for more loving and supportive parents. I owe almost everything that I have achieved to my late mum and dad, Ruth and Labeeb McGuire. I am sure they would have been very proud to see me become a judge today.

 My father, Labeeb, was and always will be one of my heroes. He was a great man. In my eyes his achievements are even more extraordinary because of his humble and distant background. As you have heard, dad was born in Lebanon. He was, in fact, born in a dusty, almost biblical village in the north of Lebanon called Bishmizzine. His father, Khalil, emigrated to Australia at the age of 16. He later returned to Lebanon, met my grandmother, there they had my father and that new family returned to Australia when dad was only six months old. At that time the family was Mufarrij. For the court reporters that is spelt M-U-F-A-R-R-I-J. My grandfather worked hard to provide opportunities in this new country for his family. He initially worked for, and then bought, a wool grading business in Goulburn and as I have said, his name at the time was Mufarrij and that store was named McGuire Brothers. My brothers and I will always be grateful that he changed his name to match that of the business rather than the other way around.

 In the years that followed he worked hard and was successful. He ended up opening grocery, drapery and ironmongery stores throughout rural New South Wales and in central Queensland, all in the McGuire Brothers’ name. My father, learning from that lesson, in turn worked hard and in turn he excelled. He graduated in medicine from the University of Sydney. He practised as a surgeon in Brisbane, ultimately becoming the head of the surgical department at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, at the time the largest public hospital in the southern hemisphere. He also became a lecturer in surgery and anatomy.

 Dad’s whole approach to life could be described as surgical. He was almost always calm. He never raised his voice. He was always composed, efficient and effective in almost everything he did. I recall that dad had a number of patients who presented with complex symptomatology, an abundance of surgical conditions and a scarcity of cash. He operated on each of them, whether or not they could afford his services, often coming home with things that patients had given him in lieu of payment. I recall one such payment was a partly consumed jar of chocolate coated almonds. Dad treasured these items for what they were, generous gestures of gratitude from people who gave all they could afford. Now I hope I have inherited dad’s calm temperament, although unfortunately for my instructing solicitors, I clearly didn’t inherit his willingness to work for free.

 Mum also came from a background of advancement through hard work. Her father left home at the age of 12 and his first job was chopping wood for an insurance company in Hobart to keep their offices warm. He studied accounting and bookkeeping at night and was eventually promoted to the lofty position of insuring haystacks, which required him to ride his bicycle from farm to farm in rural Tasmania. He excelled. He steadily climbed the corporate ladder, eventually becoming a company executive in Brisbane and a Director of the Bank of Queensland.

 Mum often boasted of her genetic connection to early white or almost white immigrants from Scotland, England and Ireland, some of whom came to this country voluntarily, others not so voluntarily. It would seem that a long association with the criminal law may well be coursing through my veins. She loved the fact that I became silk, at least in part because it allowed her to refer to me as her Sydney Silky, one of her favourite breeds of dog.

 Mum would have loved today’s pomp and ceremony. She came to see me in court a few times and she seemed to relish the experience. One such time was when I was appearing in a case that has been mentioned, in the High Court, a special leave application in Seller and McCarthy. Mum sat proudly in the front row of the public gallery. Unfortunately she did not stay there. Whilst waiting for my matter to be called on, and whilst I was in the middle of a detailed conversation with my opponents about some of the details of the case, we were interrupted by mum’s large head of curly hair which appeared between us. “I just wanted to say how beautiful you look Paul”, she said. Now after her curls disappeared and she went back to where she had come from in the public gallery, my opponent was looking, understandably, a little shocked which prompted me to say, “I've absolutely no idea who that was but whoever it was she clearly didn’t much like the look of you.”

 My mother died in September last year, whilst I was in the midst of the Plutus Payroll trial, and I want to pause there to thank and acknowledge the kindness and sympathy shown to me at the time by Payne JA, by the defence teams of barristers and solicitors, some of whom are here today, thank you and by my prosecution team. You each demonstrated that the best traditions of the Bar and the best traditions of the bench are alive and well and living in New South Wales.

 As you have heard, my first job in the law was as an associate to my uncle, Fred, also known as Judge Fred McGuire. He was a judge of the District Court for 24 years and I had the fortune to be his associate for four and a half of those years. The time I spent in court with my uncle observing and learning from him, and to be fair observing good, bad and indifferent advocacy were influential. I knew then that I wanted to become a barrister. My uncle was popular and respected by the profession and he was absolutely loved by the press. There was always a gaggle of journalists in the back of his court. He had such an ability to produce good copy, that the press dubbed him “Front page Freddy.” He was also somewhat of a pioneer. As you have heard, he was the first barrister to be appointed to the bench from the Central Queensland Bar. He was the first president of the Queensland Children’s Court. He was also the first judge in Australia to employ an Aboriginal associate and the first to invite an Aboriginal elder, the late Senator Neville Bonner, to sit with him on the bench when sentencing young Indigenous offenders. When he died, the Courier Mail described him as a man of great compassion, integrity and humanity and noted that, rarely among judges he had the capacity to incite love and reverence. I can only hope to emulate him.

 As a solicitor, I worked for many great partners in many big law firms in Brisbane, London and Sydney and from them I learnt many lessons. It must be said though, one of the main lessons I learnt in the ten or so years I spent in large law firms, is that I wanted to spend less time in large law firms and more time in court. And so, with Nicola’s encouragement and support, I came to the Bar.

 As you have heard, Neil Williams SC and Justice James Stevenson were my tutors. Both were great. They both took time to discuss the law and to get me involved in their cases. I recall, when Neil Williams first introduced me to solicitors from the Commonwealth DPP, he warned me. He warned me that once the Commonwealth sinks its teeth into you, it doesn’t let go. Happily that turned out to be very true in my case because over the years they briefed me in some fascinating, challenging and important matters. For much of that, I owe thanks to Neil and of course the Commonwealth DPP.

 I read on level 10, Tenth Floor Selborne Wentworth Chambers and then became a member of those chambers. From those chambers I have many long and lasting friends, many of whom are here today. Also there, and also here today, is Judge Mark Williams SC who took me under his wing. And taking me under his wing, Mark introduced me, importantly, to the deep end. On one occasion, after junioring Mark in a trial, he told me that he would leave the indemnity costs application in my hands. At that time I was fresh out of the Bar Practice Course. Our opponent in the trial, and therefore my opponent in the costs application, was one of the most senior silks in the State, a man with a famously sharp mind and an even sharper wit. I was terrified. Just as the judge came on to the bench to hear that application, and no doubt sensing my fear, my opponent leant over and whispered in my ear. Polite company prevents me from telling you the precise words that he said, but suffice it to say it contained a recommendation about where I should go and a suggestion about what I should do to myself when I got there. Thankfully, I not only survived the experience, I somehow prevailed in the application, but I was all the better for being introduced so importantly to the deep end of litigation.

 In 2008, after nine very happy years at the Tenth Floor Chambers, I decided to leave. It was a difficult decision. My practice at the time was becoming less civil and more criminal, and I was primarily motivated by the desire to flock with birds of a similar feather. I believed 7 Garfield Barwick would be a good fit and I knew of the towering reputations of the senior members of that floor, Sutherland SC, Russell SC, Judge David Russell who is sitting with us today, Chapple SC and the Honourable Geoffrey Bellew SC, who is also with us today. So I moved from the mighty 10 to the magnificent 7 and it was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

 Since that time, Geoffrey Bellew has been a number of things. He has been a leader, a confidant, a trusted mentor and a close friend. I have appeared with, and more recently, in front of him on numerous occasions. Geoffrey Bellew is here today and I thank you for all you have done for me and thank you for coming today. Each time appearing with or in front of his Honour has been a valuable learning experience. Geoff, I am indebted to you for all you have done.

 A particularly memorable occasion when I appeared in front of him was in 2019 in a terrorist trial. One morning, mid-trial and mid-year, as his Honour came on to the bench, I heard his Honour say “It’s mighty cold up here this morning Mr Crown”, causing me to look up and notice that the judicial robes that day had been supplemented with the New South Wales State of Origin scarf. Apparently the New South Wales team had a rare victory the night before. Needless to say, that scarf has rarely seen the light of day since.

 The members of the Seventh Floor, over the years that I have been there, have become more than colleagues, they have become confidants and friends. I have also had the pleasure of being the head of chambers on that floor for about seven years. In that time, the board and I have addressed gender balance on the floor and on the board. We have navigated our way successfully through the covid pandemic, proudly I must say, without even losing a single member of staff and we have attracted highly credentialed readers and juniors to the floor. I have absolutely no doubt that 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers will continue to go from strength to strength.

 As junior counsel, I was led by and learnt from many outstanding silks. They include, Peter Hastings QC, Judge Richard Maidment QC, Justice Des Fagan, Justice David Yates and Tim Game SC, among many others. Learning from such preeminent barristers has been a privilege. In the years I spent as senior counsel, I led numerous talented members of the junior Bar, some of whom themselves are now silk and others of whom are destined to follow that path. I thank each and every one of them.

 I also want to thank the numerous solicitors who instructed me over the years. It has always been a constant source of amazement that my phone rings and the briefs come in the door, but I am very pleased that they do. In particular, I want to thank the solicitors of the Commonwealth DPP who have been an important source of briefs and I especially want to thank the hard working solicitors and the junior counsel working with me on the Plutus Payroll prosecution last year, and on the various terrorist trials that I have conducted over the years. To each of you, and I won’t name you, you know who you are, it has been a pleasure working with each of you. Thank you for making my job so much easier and for making me look far better than I ever could on my own.

 On the topic of terrorist trials, I want to acknowledge that Mrs Selena Cheng is here today. Selena, despite you and your family being the victims of a senseless terrorist act, you have as Justice Johnson once is reported to have said, “shown nothing but courage, decency and dignity in response.” Selena it’s been a pleasure getting to know you, thank you for coming.

 Also here today are two exceptional police officers who investigated that crime, Detective Sergeant Mardi Forsyth and Detective Senior Constable Darine El Jarrar, as well as my talented instructing solicitor in those cases, Yoshitha Alles. I regard the experience of working with each of you as amongst the most significant, important and rewarding of my career, thank you all.

 I want to thank my clerks. My clerks on level 10 Selborne Wentworth Chambers were Margaret McClennan and Di Strathdee. But for the past 15 years my clerk on 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers has been the incomparable Mark Grace. Through the years, Mark has taken an active interest in my practice, he has engaged with my instructing solicitors and juniors. He has been a proactive generator of work. He has acted above and beyond that which is normally expected of a clerk and most importantly, he has become a friend. He also happens to look pretty dapper in a maroon tie. Mark you are the quintessential barrister’s clerk, thank you so much for looking after me.

 Also here today are two of the receptionists from chambers, Linda Cussen and Ann Land, I thank you for coming today, it has been a pleasure working with you both.

 Now to my brothers, John and Mark. Firstly, thank you both and thank you to John’s wife, Jo, for coming from Brisbane to be here today. Mark, I'm sorry your wife Suzie couldn’t attend. Secondly, thank you both for not following through on your threat of wearing safari suits. Finally, I need to give both of you some credit for the direction my career has taken. You see our frequent and hotly contested games of monopoly at the Kirra beach house over the years, are partly responsible for my early interest in bringing to justice those who abuse positions of trust. John was always the banker and he always won.

 Some of our very good friends are also here today, they have seen Nicola and I at our grieving worst and at out karaoking best. Thank you for coming today and for your friendship and support over the years.

 Nicola’s parents, Terry and Sylvia Sadler, are watching from England today via the livestream. From the very first time that we met, when Sylvia greeted me with a slightly misguided but enthusiastic “G’day cobbler”, they’ve been nothing but loving and supportive parents in-law and I thank them both.

 To our children, Gabe, Frank, Bea and Jack who are present today and Beau, who couldn’t be present, I want to thank you for your love and for putting up with me. I know I haven’t always been easy to live with, and I apologise for being the cause of IBS, which in our house stands for Irritable Barrister Syndrome. My children must have thought it quizzical when the speeches that we have heard today referred to me never raising my voice. I will do my best to shield you from whatever might be the judicial equivalent. It has been an absolute pleasure to watch you each develop into such fine adults and I am pleased that some of your partners could be here today.

 Lastly and most significantly, I want to thank my beautiful and amazing wife, Nicola. As you have heard, we met when I was a solicitor in Brisbane and Nicola was a paralegal, having a break from the northern hemisphere. I still recall the day she first came into my office to have an affidavit sworn. She took my breath away that day and she has been taking my breath away every day since. I think it is fair to say, though, that I didn’t have the same immediate effect on Nicola. In fact, I don’t think she noticed me much at all, until one Friday night office drinks when she took a shine to a floral Liberty print tie that I was wearing at the time. As many of you know, I continue to this day to wear floral Liberty print ties. My secret’s out. You now understand the reason I do so is in the hope of continuing to keep Nicola hypnotised.

 Nicola is going to hate this part, I apologise in advance. Nicola is one of the most intelligent people I know. She finished her law degree with first class honours. She has a Master of Laws in Human Rights. She has worked for some of the best law firms in the world and has been actively involved in pro bono work. She has a keen interest in social justice and she was the driving force behind us becoming foster parents. It has always been humbling and puzzling for me to think that you have allowed your career to take a backseat while allowing mine to progress. If it is any consolation, you are an amazing wife, an incredible mother and I am more grateful than words can ever say.

 Nicola, however, is as modest as she is accomplished and she will be hating this attention. She told me that all I was to say about her today is that she is a housewife who spends her days moving vases from room to room. The truth is that my wife is a supernova; powerful and luminous. She is the gravity that binds our family together and she is the love of my life.

 As a son, as a son in-law, as a husband and as a father, I have been loved and believed in. I am a very lucky man. So on that sad note, I thank the Attorney General and the Chief Judge and the Acting Chief Judge for the trust they have placed in me today. I will do my best to ensure that that trust was not misplaced. Thank you. Thank you Acting Chief Judge.

HUGGETT ACJ: Thank you Judge McGuire. Everyone is welcome to join us in the dining room opposite for morning tea.