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P G WILLIS SC

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Little William Bourke

Little William Bourke (ABN 65 610 951 089).
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Inquiries should be addressed to Little William Bourke.

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Memoranda

2020

- 9 April The Honourable Simon Paul Whelan, a Judge of the Court since 2004 and a Judge of Appeal since 2012, resigned.
- 8 May The Honourable Barry Watson Beach AM QC, a Judge of the Court from 1978 to 2003, died aged 89 years.
- 2 June The Honourable Michael Leon Sifris was appointed a Judge of the Court of Appeal.
Christopher James Delany QC was appointed a Judge of the Trial Division.
Kathryn Lucy Stynes was appointed a Judge of the Trial Division.
- 30 June The Honourable Joanne Margaret Cameron, a Judge of the Court since 2014, resigned.

Obituary

The Honourable Barry Watson Beach AM QC

The Hon. Barry Beach AM QC was an eminent, highly respected figure in the legal profession, whose work as a barrister and judge of the Supreme Court left an indelible mark on the justice system and public life in the State of Victoria, recognised in his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia. He died on 8 May 2020.

His Honour was educated at Geelong College. He completed his articles with the late Hon. Allan Elliott McDonald of Wighton & McDonald in Geelong by studying law at night. On 2 March 1953, his Honour was admitted to practise as a barrister and solicitor. He signed the bar roll eighteen days later, reading with the late Lionel Revelman QC.

After coming to the bar, his Honour quickly established an exceptional reputation. He was a formidable advocate, whose style was characterised by a sharp focus on forensic and factual enquiry, tenacity and the ability to make his submissions succinctly and clearly. His Honour was also renowned for his generosity in providing other counsel with assistance and advice. He took six readers: the late Jeremy Darvall, the late Hon. Barry Dove QC, the Hon. John Dee QC, the Hon. David Ashley QC, the late David Ross QC and George McGrath QC. His Honour served on the Bar Council from 1960–3. He took silk in 1968.

His Honour's practice at the bar was broad ranging. It included prosecuting in narcotics trials and taxation proceedings and appearing for the defence in murder trials. It also included numerous high profile inquiries, including the West Gate Bridge Inquiry, the Atlas Dredge Inquiry, and the Winton Air Disaster Inquiry.

Most notably, in 1975–6 his Honour chaired a Board of Inquiry in relation to allegations against members of the Victoria Police Force. While the inquiry was highly controversial and highly public, his Honour's integrity, courage and independence throughout it won him the respect and admiration of many within the profession. The recommendations his Honour made following the inquiry included the mandatory recording of interviews of suspects, which at the time was a leading criminal justice reform.

In 1978, his Honour was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court. The practice at the time required his Honour to sit in every jurisdiction — Crime, Common Law, Commercial and Equity. His Honour mastered them all. He was a consummate trial judge, and efficient case management became a hallmark of his courtroom. Many barristers who later became judges learned much of their judicial craft from observing his Honour in Court.

In the 1980s, his Honour worked in the Commercial List, eventually taking over as the judge in charge. During this time, he oversaw a number of major contested takeover cases. His Honour later moved from the Commercial

List to the Practice Court, where he sat almost exclusively for the last 12 years of his time as a sitting judge. Here, his Honour's practical and decisive approach in managing urgent applications was highly regarded throughout the profession.

In his time as a sitting judge, his Honour contributed substantially to legal scholarship and the improvement of court processes. From 1984–97 he was Chairman of the Council of Law Reporting. Under his Honour's leadership, the Victorian Reports expanded to a second annual volume. He also took part in many procedural reforms designed to improve the Court's operation. He was the architect of the 'Spring Offensive' of the early 1990s, which was an initiative aimed at clearing a substantial backlog of cases. By the time he retired in 2003, his Honour had served almost 25 years on the bench. He then devoted himself to his wife Dell and his family, especially his grandchildren.

Outside the law, his Honour was a devoted supporter of the Geelong AFL team. He served on the Council of Geelong College for a number of years, as well as the Board of the St John's Home for Boys. In later years, he was particularly proud to see his sons David and Jonathan appointed as judges of the Supreme Court (and later of the Court of Appeal) and the Federal Court of Australia respectively.

His Honour made an extraordinary contribution to public life and the administration of justice in the State of Victoria, and will be remembered for his approachability, dignity, generosity, legal ability and integrity. He is survived by his children David, Jonathan and Sally, and his six grandchildren.

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