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INTRODUCTION OF THE HON BELL J

3 February 2020

In a moment, I will ask the Honourable Justice Bell to propose a toast to the new silks. The milestones of her Honour's career are perhaps, by now, well known but may bear a little repetition on an occasion such as this.

After graduating in law from the University of Sydney she worked for seven years as a solicitor with the Redfern Legal Centre before being joining the New South Wales Bar in 1984.

Between 1986 and 1989, her Honour practised as a public defender (in Liverpool) before returning to the private Bar.

She took silk in 1997 and was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1999. Her Honour was then appointed to the Court of Appeal and not long after that was appointed to the High Court in February 2009 as its 48th Justice.

Your Honour's eminence, skills, and attributes are, of course, deservedly well documented.

However, in today's vernacular of young practitioners, your Honour was never solely a "law-bot". To assist those of us of a certain age, the expression is used admiringly or disparagingly (depending on the bent of the user) to describe a "total law nerd" who appears to have no life other than worshipping at the altar of the law.

No one could accuse your Honour of that.

Your interest and career in the theatre are notorious – now that "notorious" is thought to have positive associations for members of ultimate courts of appeal. Without recourse to exhaustive, or indeed any, research, I nonetheless feel confident to say your Honour is, and probably will remain, the only High Court Justice to have hosted a national radio program for any time.

Your Honour said in your farewell from the New South Wales Court of Appeal that one of the "pleasing" discoveries you had made on joining the Supreme Court was "how nice judges are".

Whether nice or not, your Honour's approach – may I say with great respect – sees the law as clearly striving to meet and balance the community's many aspirations for justice between us; it is not an abstract thing to be served for itself. That is inspiring.

The Australian Bar Association was delighted that your Honour accepted the invitation to propose this evening's toast.

Please welcome Justice Bell to the lectern.

END OF SPEECH.