



AUSTRALIAN
LAWYERS
FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS

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15 February 2017

The Hon Susan Kiefel AC
Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia
Parkes Place
PARKES ACT 2600

By registered post

Dear Chief Justice Kiefel,

Congratulations on your appointment as Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (**ALHR**) warmly congratulates you on your appointment as Chief Justice of the High Court Australia, our country's most revered legal institution.

Your Honour's appointment is historic by virtue of Your Honour's status as the first female Chief Justice, and, most importantly, because of Your Honour's impeccable legal mind and inspiring rise to the foremost role on the Honourable Court. You are a truly trailblazing inspiration to the legal profession and beyond.

The High Court represents many things to many groups of people throughout Australia and overseas.

To Australian society, the Court represents an independent arm of government, free of influence, full of integrity, and representative of the liberal democracy that Australian citizens so proudly respect and hold dear. The Court is charged to protect the citizenry from excesses of the executive and parliamentary arms of government and thereby hold a solemn guardianship over the basic building blocks of our democratic Australian way of life, whether they be basic common law rights and freedoms or those rights found in legislation

To the international community and Australia's neighbours, the Court symbolises nationhood, sovereignty and a reverence for the rule of law, all of which assist in maintaining a stable, secure, system of government and geopolitical region.

The High Court of Australia holds fundamental democratic importance, particularly in such tumultuous political times as the present. It presides over a national system of courts for all Australians, and it must promote the just and fearless protection of the essential legal rights of all Australians. As the indispensable third pillar of our constitutional democracy, the judiciary requires as much health, vitality, courage and ingenuity as the other arms of government; perhaps even more, in order to keep the other arms properly in check.

In 2013, Your Honour remarked that:

The position of a judge is still afforded a high status in our society. But, as judges well know, the status and the respect which accompany it are afforded to the office, not the person. Nonetheless, given that status and the importance of the role, most lawyers who are offered an appointment feel a sense of honour. Indeed the older view, still maintained by some today, is that a person has a duty to accept appointment.¹

The legal community respects you enormously and shares a deep appreciation of the honour and duty of your appointment.

We wish you an illustrious career as Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia and look forward to a new era of leadership over our great institution.

Yours sincerely,



Benedict Coyne
President
[Australian Lawyers for Human Rights \(ALHR\)](#)

On behalf of the ALHR National Committee

ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national organisation of Australian solicitors, barristers, academics, judicial officers and law students who practise and promote international human rights law in Australia. ALHR has active and engaged National, State and Territory committees and a secretariat at La Trobe University Law School in Melbourne. Through advocacy, media engagement, education, networking, research and training, ALHR promotes, practices and protects universally accepted standards of human rights throughout Australia and overseas.

¹ The Hon Justice Susan Kiefel AC “On being a judge” (2013) Public Lecture, 15 January 2013, The Chinese University of Hong Kong