

LIV president applauds non-Bar appointment to County Court

Newly appointed Judge Pamela Jenkins was welcomed to the County Court at a ceremony on 29 April. Among the speakers was LIV president Michael Gawler. An edited version of his speech is reprinted below.

On behalf of the Law Institute of Victoria, and representing the solicitors of this state, I have much pleasure in welcoming your Honour to this Court.

Your Honour's appointment is particularly pleasing, since it brings to seven the number of women as judges of this Court, which is a 100 per cent increase in seven years.

It is important to note that your Honour does not come from within the ranks of the Bar and, with the greatest respect to the Bar, it is pleasing to see that the Bench is being increasingly opened to those practitioners of distinction who work in other areas. Indeed, it has been observed that a reasonable and gifted person such as your Honour is capable of carrying out a task of higher quality than many of those who have had much experience in the courts.

We are assured that more judges will come from what might be called non-traditional backgrounds and this is something that should be celebrated.

Your Honour served your clerkship at Frenkel Berkovitch Kefford & New, now Wisewoulds. Your Honour's old principal, Ben Frenkel, says with no hesitation that your Honour is easily the best articulated clerk he ever had, and he had many who were outstanding.

Your Honour was, we understand, headhunted by Rivers Dickinson Stirling & Munz to work from Melbourne on complex taxation matters in Hong Kong. Once again you excelled. Your recruitment by this firm was the occasion of Professor Louis Waller's expressing the opinion that your Honour's thesis on unincorporated

associations was the best honours thesis he had ever seen.

Your Honour's background as a lawyer came under scrutiny during your successful progress. Before you joined the corporate affairs office of the then Victorian Law Department, those in charge of recruitment were told of your many outstanding attributes.

"But what about the clients?" was a further question. "She can't possibly be that good."

The reply, as noted, was: "The clients love her."



Judge Pamela Jenkins

Following an interval of some years in corporate work, sole practice and consultancy, your Honour once again joined the state government, and was appointed as Crown Counsel in 1997.

Your Honour's ability to quickly acquire knowledge on an entire industry has earned you a formidable reputation. Within weeks, we are told, you had mastered the intricacies of the building industry, both nationally and internationally.

Your work in rewriting the entire legislation on fair trading and on the control of domestic building in the state, as well as the *Motor Car Traders Act*, added to your

reputation. As a close friend remarked: "Woe betide anyone who tries to pull the wool over your eyes in relation to insurance, motor cars or building."

Your Honour's enormous intellectual skills are matched by your astuteness with people and what might be called your "no frills" approach. This has enabled your Honour to conduct many an otherwise tense meeting in a most pleasant way, while achieving the changes that you sought in a practical manner.

Your Honour is known, too, as a lover of dining. No fad diets enter the picture.

Lunch is important.

Beyond the profession, too, is the love of astronomy enjoyed by you and your husband Rudi. The imported telescope atop your Kew home is testimony to this unusual passion.

As well, there is yachting, although we are told that for the past decade, since the birth of your children, now aged nine and six, the yachts remained moored and unvisited until recently.

Your Honour's passion for music is, we are told, unaccompanied by formal training, but you and your husband share an untutored enthusiasm evidenced by the large number of instruments in your home, among them a piano accordion, cello, many violins, a euphonium and other brass instruments and a piano, from which you may have coaxed a reluctant *Fur Elise* when required.

Also, importantly, your Honour is something of a pioneer in combining a demanding, high-profile career with family responsibilities – giving time to your children in the face of pressures which would defeat most of us. Your intellectual courage and commonsense demonstrated by this will be of great use to you on the Bench.

From this background we may conclude that this Court is indeed enriched by your Honour's appointment. On behalf of the solicitors of Victoria I once again welcome your appointment and wish you a long, happy and successful career on the Bench. ■