

Margaret Cunneen: I didn't feel that it was difficult at the time but I am currently doing a series of anonymous cases that don't seem to carry the same degree of stress because, of course, whatever way the cards fall, publicity does give people the chance to criticise you for something and that does add an extra degree of stress to any case. Some of the sexual assault matters which I have prosecuted have been attended by extensive publicity and I have been surprised to hear that I have been thought by some people who don't know me to have somehow encouraged it. The press turns up when the press wants to turn up. The press has not been interested in 90 per cent of the murder trials I have done. The press was however very interested in my prosecution in Queensland of a magistrate for a rather more minor matter. There is nothing that a prosecutor can do either to encourage or dissuade the press. Some advocates may be more daunted by the pressure of publicity at the time for fear of losing in public as it were. But fortunately at the crown we never win or lose. Justice is simply done so that we never have to have that fear. Disinterest is a comfortable state.

Chris O'Donnell: Do you find that to be a satisfactory place to be in the framework of the legal system?

Margaret Cunneen: Being a crown prosecutor is a very satisfying position because it does bring with it a real sense of service, which is extremely rewarding.

Chris O'Donnell: And what lies ahead for you Margaret?

Margaret Cunneen: I am very happy with the position that I now hold: 'Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor'. I'm very content

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with the work that I have and the wonderful friends in the chambers in which I work. Messrs Cowdery and Tedeschi are enormously talented in their respective roles and they have been extremely supportive of me. So I feel that I can serve the public in this role better than in any other role and am perfectly happy for it to continue. I am in the old, old superannuation scheme so that will hold me in good stead for retirement.

Chris O'Donnell: Is that as good as the one that the present federal parliamentarians used to enjoy?

Margaret Cunneen: I am sure it's not but it's as good as a public servant can get.

Chris O'Donnell: And ever hope to get.

Margaret Cunneen: That's right, so they will have me on the books until the statutory retirement age of 60 in 14 and a bit years time.

Chris O'Donnell: Alright thank you very much Margaret.

Margaret Cunneen: Thank you very much Chris.

The breadwinner

By Michelle Painter

I came to the Bar in February 1998, having practised as a solicitor for seven years. Coming to the Bar meant a move from Canberra to Sydney and a change in job for my partner. We arrived in Sydney a week before the Bar Practice Course started and moved into our rented house. My work with the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra had been in trade practices - my only client was the ACCC - and as a consequence the only jurisdiction with which I was familiar was the Federal Court. You can imagine my dismay when I first encountered a Friday morning motions list at the District Court!

I read with Paddy Bergin and with Tim Castle, and initially occupied 9 Selborne's reader's room in the National Dispute Centre. I then licensed on 7 Wentworth, where I was privileged

to occupy Bob Stitt's magnificent chambers for a time. In about my third year I purchased chambers on 8 Wentworth and was there for a couple of very happy and productive years before moving over the road to 6th & 7th Floor, St James' Hall Chambers.

One of the things which I have tried very hard to achieve is a semblance of balance of work, family and leisure. Too often this balance is viewed as important only to families with children, but I am firmly of the view that having a happy and rewarding life outside of work is important to all of us, whether parents or not. It also calls into question the nature of family. I don't accept that a family must consist of the traditional unit of mother, father and children.

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My partner and I have been together for 15 years and have a strong relationship founded on equality and trust. We took for granted that we would have equal responsibilities and commitments. However, a year or so ago, my partner negotiated a redundancy package from his employer. This has meant that he has been able to move out of the work treadmill. We joke that we have now evolved to a 'traditional' relationship, but reversed. I am the primary breadwinner, while

his responsibilities are home based. This has meant some adjustments for us, and also for our friends and extended families. Many people have difficulty understanding how our new arrangement isn't threatening or somehow offensive to the 'natural order' of things. Eyebrows are raised at the thought of a male partner staying home while the female partner goes out to work.

The important thing is that it works for us. The bonus for me is that I am free to concentrate on work during the week, and don't have to worry about juggling any of the other demands on my time and attention which other working women are often burdened with. It also means that I don't spend weekends frantically attending to the backlog of domestic duties in order to prepare for the coming week. I can relax and enjoy the weekend.



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