

Commodore Slattery

On 15 March 2010 the Hon Justice Michael John Slattery was appointed deputy judge advocate general – navy and promoted to the rank of commodore. A ceremony was held at Fleet Headquarters, which was attended by his Honour's family and friends, as well as distinguished legal officers of the Navy Reserve Legal Panel. The following is an edited extract from a speech delivered at the ceremony.

The Hon Justice Michael Slattery joined the Royal Australian Navy and the RANR Legal Panel as a lieutenant in February 1990, just over 20 years ago. Later in the year his naval career commenced when he joined HMAS *Creswell* for the RANR Orientation Course. His commanding officer at the time commented that, 'Slattery is a well-motivated officer who, with more exposure to the RANR, will prove to be an asset to the service.'

Michael's early career as a legal officer in the naval reserve included experience in discipline law, acting as defence counsel and prosecutor in courts-martial and defence force magistrate trials. He also advised on a range of matters across the commercial, administrative and operations law fields, and appeared at boards of inquiry. In August 1994, the then Lieutenant Slattery received a navy commendation in recognition of his tireless dedication and highly reliable counsel as a member of the Naval Task Group supporting the Senate inquiry into incidents of sexual harassment in the ADF – the HMAS *Swan* Board of Inquiry. In 1995 the head of the NSW Reserve Legal Panel made the comment: 'Already held in the highest regards in the Navy. His qualities warrant rapid advancement and he is most highly recommended for promotion forthwith.'

Michael continued his steady climb up the ladder of achievement and was promoted to lieutenant commander in 1996, commander in 2000 and to captain in 2005. A former director-general of the Defence Legal Service observed: 'He is widely respected by members of the ADF and reserve forces, and in particular by senior officers, for the quality of legal advice that he gives. He is also revered by his subordinates for the wise professional guidance and



L to R: Commodore The Honourable Terrence Cole, the Honourable Sir Laurence Street, former chief justice of NSW and founder of the Reserve Legal Panel, Commodore Michael Slattery and Captain The Honourable Murray Tobias.

support that he gives to them in the performance of their duties.'

In 1998 he undertook a major investigation into allegations of misconduct at the Defence Force Academy and continued his outstanding advisory work for senior commanders, in the fields of management resolutions, mediations and investigations under the Defence (Inquiry) Regulations. In April 2003 Captain Slattery joined HMAS *Kanimbla* and deployed to the North Arabian Gulf to conduct an inquiry into concerns raised about anthrax vaccinations given to deploying personnel. In August 2005 Captain Slattery was appointed counsel assisting at the Sea King Board of Inquiry. He and his team, several of whom are present here today, received a Maritime Commander's Commendation for their outstanding dedication and professionalism in their role in support of the Sea King Board of Inquiry.

Captain Slattery was appointed queen's counsel at the New South Wales Bar on 1 December 1992. From March 2002 until December 2005 he served as head of the NSW Navy Reserve Legal Panel, which reflected his dedication, professional standing as a pre-eminent

queens counsel and a person with strong leadership ability. He was president of the New South Wales Bar Association from November 2005 to November 2007 and in this role he had the responsibility to lead and protect the interests of the approximately 2,000 barristers practising in NSW. He was also a director of the Law Council of Australia from 2005 to 2007. On 25 May 2009, Captain Slattery was appointed as a justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

On promotion to commodore today, Michael Slattery has been selected to fill the position of deputy judge advocate general – navy. His career to date is a source of inspiration to many in the navy legal fraternity and in the navy generally. It has been marked with a dedication to members, especially their concerns. Michael demonstrates what the navy stands for through our values of: honour, honesty, courage, integrity and loyalty. This was evident during the Sea King BOI where he devoted special effort to ensuring that the nine members who died had a voice, and their sacrifice was remembered, as well as his 2003 inquiry into members' concerns about vaccinations.