



David Bennett AC QC

50 years at the New South Wales Bar

Members of the bench and bar gathered in the Common Room on 20 October 2017 to congratulate David Bennett AC QC for his remarkable achievements during the half-century since he was called to the bar in 1967. Not since the 150 Not Out Dinner in 1999 for Tom Hughes, Chester Porter and Frank McAlary had there been a gathering under Bar Association auspices to celebrate the milestone of 50 years in practice. Speakers for the evening were John Sheahan QC, President Arthur Moses SC and, of course, David Bennett AC QC himself.

Mr Bennett's accolades are many and varied. He took silk in 1979; was appointed officer in the Order of Australia on 12 June 2000 for service to the law and the legal profession in the areas of administration, education and practice. He was appointed as a life member of the Bar Association in October 2001. He has served as bar councillor for many years. He was an office bearer and president of the New South Wales and Australian Bar Associations. He served as president of the Medico Legal Society of NSW; as a council member of the Australian Academy of Forensic Sciences; as member of the International Commission of Jurists, Australian Section. In August 1998 Mr Bennett was appointed as solicitor-general of the Commonwealth, then subsequently appointed for a second five-year term in 2003. Following David's second term as solicitor-general he returned to the bar and in 2010 delivered the Sir Maurice Byers Address – the Bar Association's premier oration on Constitutional law.

In addition to being a celebration of David Bennett's achievements during a half-century in the law, the evening was also an opportunity for a light-hearted roast. President Arthur Moses SC spoke about, among other things, Mr Bennett's interview 'On the Couch' with Richard Ackland. He said:

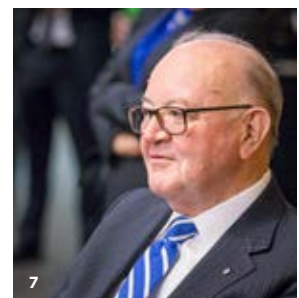
Richard couldn't be here tonight. In fact, he was not invited. However, it

was from him that we did learn many relevant things. David's favourite movie is *Dr Strangelove*. His favourite piece of music is 'Oh Susannah'. His most recognised talent is the ability to simplify complex concepts. David's hobbies include dinner parties and computer games. He has a strong dislike of white wine and champagne before dinner and claims to make the best martinis in the Southern Hemisphere. He once famously said that being a barrister was 'like being paid for eating chocolate'.

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Unfortunately, overshadowing much of David's hard work in the office of bar president is his brush with *The Naked Lady* – that scandalous painting which had hung on the walls of this common room. I won't say anything more about that matter, except that David's opinion on the lady who is the subject of the painting has, according to Ackland, 'troubled many medical and legal experts'.

In May 2003, at the swearing-in of Annabelle as a Federal Court judge, David broke with the convention that the attorney-general should speak on behalf of the bar. This was done on the basis that 'sometimes the first law officer accepts and acts on recommendations from the second law officer'. In the conclusion to his speech David noted that 'this is the first and last time on which I'll be able to address you as your Honour. Notwithstanding that I will never cease to honour you and your incredible achievements'. It was the first and only time that I can recall a swearing-in ceremony bursting into applause.



This page, top to bottom, left to right:

1. Tim Hale, Jeff Phillips, Trish Kavanagh.
2. Tony Bannon, Chief Justice Bathurst, Peter Jacobson, Ishita Sethi.
3. Catering.
4. Jeffrey Phillips.
5. Garth Campbell, Andrew Smorchevsky.
6. John Sheahan.
7. David Jackson.



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- 8. John Sheahan, Hugh Stowe.
- 9. James Gibson, Sam Hallahan, David Larish.
- 10. Michael Izzo, David Harris.
- 11. Simon Kalfas, Charles Gregory, Vance Hughston, Mark Boulton.
- 12. Rashelle Seiden, David Jackson, Sheila Kaur-Bains.

- 13. Carer, Phillipa Gormly, David Williams, Matthew Lewis, Paul Glissan.
- 14. Simon Kalfas, Trish Hoff, Mark Boulton.
- 15. David Jackson, David Bennett, Maher Gaven, Malcolm Oakes, John Sheahan, Noel Hutley.
- 16. Dale Bampton, Sonia Stewart.

- 17. Matthew Lewis, Brian Knox, Michael Heath.
- 18. Tony Bannon, Peter Jacobson.
- 19. David Bennett, John Sheahan, Tim Hale.
- 20. Dyson Heydon, David Jackson.
- 21. Virginia Lydiard.