

The Hon Justice Fabian Gleeson

Fabian Gleeson SC was sworn-in as a judge of the Court of Appeal on 29 April 2013.

His Honour grew up in Denistone then Strathfield and attended St Patrick's College Strathfield and the University of Sydney. He began his career in law in 1980 as a solicitor at Freehill Hollingdale & Page, as it was then known. He quickly developed a reputation for being an excellent and very gifted lawyer, particularly in the area of commercial litigation and was involved in some of the most high profile corporate cases at the time, including Spedley Securities and Equitcorp.

He was called to the bar in 1991 and continued along the path of legal excellence in commercial law and being involved in high profile cases including the James Hardie inquiry and a significant number of matters arising from the collapse of HIH insurance. Speaking on behalf of the bar, Attorney General Greg Smith SC said that solicitors noted in particular his 'encyclopaedic knowledge of corporate and commercial law.'

The attorney continued:

Regarded by your peers as a leading company law practitioner, your preparation for matters has been detailed and meticulous, aided by a mercurial ability to master a brief quickly. Solicitors recognise your key strengths as being that you are extremely numerate, and possess a deep understanding of commercial activities, along with an encyclopaedic knowledge of corporate and commercial law.

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Other strengths for which you are renowned amongst solicitors, include the clarity of your written work which is considered to be unsurpassed at the Bar, and your instances about where a case may or may not lead. Commercial litigators used to trudge up to your Honour's chambers with dubious and hopeful arguments, encouraged by their enthusiastic clients. Your Honour's fearless and incisive advice about those arguments has often led to a long trek back to the office where the unfortunate but always correct advice is delivered to the client. Even more difficult for commercial litigators has been the humbling experience of your Honour surgically dissembling dubious arguments of the client.

Although it is said that your Honour's bedside manner with respect to the giving of bad news has mellowed, there is finality and crispness to your Honour's advice which leave little room for reasoned dissent other than for the foolish and the brave. I am told the only things as unfailingly crisp as your arguments are your shirts.



Solicitors attending conferences with you have learnt to take provisions with them as you are disinclined to offer coffee or water for fear that it encourage people to stay too long. This is probably best understood in the context of your reputation for being notoriously busy.

In 2005 his Honour took silk. He was involved in the Oil for Wheat Inquiry and appeared in court matters relating to the failure of Lift Capital Partners and international derivative trader MF Global. He was also involved in some criminal work, including as junior counsel for the accused in the prosecution of Simon Hannes, a very large insider trading prosecution. His Honour has appeared in relation to a number of disputes involving international arbitrations, he has written for a range of legal publications and worked as a part time lecturer at the University of Sydney, teaching insolvency and business finance law.

His Honour was also a founding member of Banco chambers where he was a great mentor to junior members.

Outside the law his Honour loves early morning swims, travel, Deep Purple and all things Rugby, especially rugby union. When describing his playing days, the attorney general said that there was a rumour that he was '...one of the hardest, most vigorous, most ruthless first grade rugby players of the 1970s'.