

Her Honour Judge Helen Wilson SC

Helen Wilson SC was sworn in as a judge of the District Court of New South Wales on 28 April 2014.

Her Honour studied arts and law at the University of Sydney. During her studies, her Honour volunteered at the Redfern Community Legal Centre during which time the Hon Justice Virginia Bell was principal solicitor.

Her Honour first worked as a solicitor in the Criminal Division at Legal Aid between 1990 and 1992. The next seven years of her Honour's career were spent in the Office of the DPP, where her Honour served as a senior solicitor between 1992 and 1995, then managing lawyer at the Campbelltown branch from 1995 to 1997 before rising to the rank of trial advocate.

Her Honour began practising at the bar in April 1999, initially as an acting Crown prosecutor before attaining a permanent appointment in 2001. In 2005 her Honour moved to the Newcastle Crown Prosecutors Chambers. Throughout her career, her Honour appeared in hundreds of jury trials as Counsel for the Crown. Notably, her Honour prosecuted former MP Milton Orkopoulos, who was jailed in 2008 for child sexual assault and drugs charges. In 2010 her Honour prosecuted former Catholic priest and school teacher John Denham for the sexual abuse of multiple boys.

Her Honour took silk in 2013. In the two years alone prior to her Honour's appointment, she appeared in nearly 40 cases before the Court of Criminal Appeal. Her Honour has also appeared in the High Court and was previously seconded to the public prosecutor's office in Vanuatu.

Her Honour has also written about human rights for judges in China and prepared a prosecution policy for legal staff in Vanuatu.

Other appointments of note

On 10 February 2014 former solicitor Michael O'Brien was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW and as an industrial magistrate.

On 10 February 2014 former Crown Prosecutor David Williams was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW and as an industrial magistrate.

Michael McHugh SC, who spoke at her Honour's swearing-in said:

Judge Wilson, your former colleagues, in the ranks of both the Crown prosecutors and the criminal defence lawyers, are effusive in their admiration. You bring to this role a formidable breadth and depth of experience in criminal law – from Illawarra and Campbelltown to Newcastle and from the Local Court to the High Court. You are renowned for being a forceful cross-examiner and a formidable opponent in the courtroom. A common observation was that your Honour rarely needed to read from a statement during cross-examination, such was the extent to which you were across the brief.

McHugh SC concluded:

The New South Wales Bar Association is satisfied that you are eminently well qualified and suited to a place on the bench of the District Court. Furthermore, your appointment is a clear demonstration on the part of the attorney and the chief judge of confidence in the skill and learning of the Newcastle Bar.

Peter Krisenthal and Antony Evers have been appointed as acting public defenders commencing 14 July 2014 and expiring on 13 July 2015.