

Bench & Bar



Held on 17 May 2019 at the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Sydney with a spectacular line up of speakers, the 2019 Bench and Bar dinner promised to be an unforgettable evening and it truly was.

With the Honourable Justice Julie Ward, Chief Judge in Equity of the Supreme Court of New South Wales as the guest of honour, Ruth Higgins SC as Ms Senior and Julia Roy as Ms Junior, the audience was mesmerised by the effortless, intelligent humour of the speeches, as well as the musical genius that was Ms Junior's ukulele playing.

An all-woman cast of speakers made for a tremendous event.



1. The Hon Justice James Allsop AO, Chief Justice of the Federal Court, The Hon Andrew Bell, President of the Court of Appeal
2. Her Excellency The Hon Margaret Beazley AO QC, The Hon Justice Julie Ward
3. Prof Greg Tolhurst, Ruth Higgins SC, The Hon Justice Julie Ward, Julia Roy and Tim Game SC
4. The Hon Chief Justice Bathurst AC, The Hon Justice Julie Ward





5. Sophie Callan, Surya Palaniappan, Michelle Rabasch and Helen Roberts

6. Miss Junior, Julia Roy

7 Back row: Helen Roberts, Belinda Baker, Justice Natalie Adams, Jillian Caldwell

Bottom row: Huw Baker SC, the Hon Judge Kara Sheed SC, Lloyd Babb SC, the Hon Judge Gina O'Rourke SC, Brett Hatfield.



- 8. President, Tim Game SC
- 9. Nipa Dewan, Stuart Bell, Justin Young, Christine Melis and Candice Pedersen
- 10. Miss Senior, Ruth Higgins SC



Alinea Chambers – a new line of thinking



Anthony McGrath SC, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC and Melanie Cairns

The New Year brought with it a new floor just off Phillip Street when Alinea Chambers opened for business in 52 Martin Place. Led by silks Michael Henry SC and Anthony McGrath SC, Alinea has a focus on commercial law and has 15 barristers including two licensees and a reader.

Although he may be one of two silks on the floor, McGrath SC explained that the new name and new structure includes having no designated head of chambers.

‘The most senior member has no more say than the most junior member and there is no head of floor,’ he said.

‘We have a flat management structure with all major decisions being put to the 12 members and most often those decisions are made by a simple majority.’

The name of the chambers comes from the Latin ‘a linea’, the mark at the end of text when a new paragraph is created. The name demonstrates the ‘new line of thinking’ that permeates the floor from how it operates to the type of service being provided to clients.

‘We had as a central aim the desire to create diversity in all of its forms amongst our membership. Being more reflective of the wider Australian community is an aspiration we hold. In particular, during the formation of our chambers it became clear that a gender balance could be readily achieved despite the often suggested difficulty that there do not seem to be very many women barristers doing commercial work at the Bar,’

McGrath SC said.

‘There are many women barristers doing such work and they have been increasing in recent years. As it happens, there are seven women and five men comprising our members. We also have a woman licensee, a man licensee and a woman reader, so we were almost able to achieve the balance we were after and unexpectedly ended with a gender split that defies the traditional one in commercial and other chambers.’

They have also adopted a different approach to membership, which McGrath SC hopes will make the Bar more accessible to junior lawyers hoping to practice in the commercial sphere. It’s an approach not dissimilar to Level 22 Chambers which opened in 2013 and 153 Phillip which opened in late 2017, each with a ‘no key money’ structure.

‘It was very important to all of us that we address the significant barrier to entry for many coming into our profession, which is the eye-wateringly large amount of money that is often required to buy into chambers, particularly for those doing commercial work in the many longstanding locations,’ McGrath SC continued.

‘This financial hurdle is often a deterrent to those looking to come to the Bar, particularly if that timing also coincides with plans to start a family or to buy a house.’

‘We have adopted a structure where a departing barrister relinquishes his or her share to the chambers company for a nominal

value and is repaid any loan he or she has made to the company.’

‘The establishment costs to become a member of the floor are relatively modest, comprising contribution to the lease requirements and the particular fitout of the chambers that are occupied.’

That fitout on Level 33 of 52 Martin Place includes minimal storage, no library and a strong use of technology to minimise waste.

‘We hope it is [an environment] that those who brief us will find fresh, but also familiar to the ways in which they work in modern office space,’ McGrath SC said.

‘We were especially keen to avoid the common experience that if you create storage space you will simply fill it up and not take the hard decisions to return or dispose of materials in a timely fashion.’

‘It has also driven the overwhelming use of online research tools by each of us and electronic briefs becoming the common way in which we receive materials from solicitors and clients. There is always a place for hard copy and it cannot be completely eliminated, but our desire is to make it the exception rather than the rule.’

Alinea recently held its official launch by her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales. Her Excellency spoke about the importance of addressing diversity in the profession and encouraged others to follow along that path.



Portrait of the late Katrina Dawson

Painted by Dr Peter Smeeth



Artist Dr Peter Smeeth

On Friday 28 June 2019, Katrina's family, friends and colleagues gathered in the Bar Common Room to witness the unveiling of the portrait of the late Katrina Dawson painted by Dr Peter Smeeth and commissioned by the Bar Association in 2018.

After welcoming attendees, President Tim Game SC spoke about the lasting impression that Katrina had left on him and all members of the New South Wales Bar in her brief but successful career. Her brother, Sandy Dawson SC, shared some of his memories of Katrina's life at the Bar – including an entertaining story about a miscommunication with a visiting overseas judge which led to the judge donning Katrina's wig and robes for a photograph. The comments of both speakers and guests at the ceremony, stand as a testament to Katrina's truly remarkable qualities and her considerable success both at the Bar and in her many other pursuits.

The portrait depicts Katrina in her robes, without her wig. Her face is surrounded by a stunning teal colour - known by those closest to Katrina to be her favourite. Guests who knew Katrina personally commented that the portrait captures her likeness, joyous manner and spirit. The artist, Dr Peter Smeeth, shared with guests the humbling experience of painting the portrait of such an incredible woman and reminded us all that Katrina was truly exceptional.

The portrait is a special addition to the Bar Association Common Room art collection and is now on display for all to enjoy.



Sandy Dawson SC



Michelle Rabasch, Claire Palmer, Ashley Cameron, Sarah Danne