



**Sharon Grierson MP  
Federal Member for Newcastle**

**22 September 2008**

**ADJOURNMENT SPEECH TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**JUSTICE GRAHAM MULLANE**

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (9.35 p.m.)—I rise to inform the House of the pending retirement of Justice Graham Mullane, a judge devoted to the administration of family law in the Newcastle registry of the Family Court of Australia throughout his 22 years of judicial service. The Family Court is losing one of its finest. Justice Mullane's appointment in 1986 to the Newcastle registry was exceptional in many ways. He was the first judge appointed from the Hunter region. Prior to that, the Sydney legal fraternity had dominated such appointments in NSW. But the then Attorney-General, Lionel Bowen, adopted a different approach. His vision was for federal judges to have the opportunity to work in all areas of federal law rather than confining them to one jurisdiction, thus providing career opportunities for the best practitioners of the law. His vision was to expand the delivery of areas of federal law in courts such as the Newcastle Family Court registry.

Graham Mullane's appointment was recommended by the Family Court through the endorsement of Justice David Tonge, the first resident judge of the Newcastle registry. Unfortunately, David passed away very recently and will not be at Friday's retirement ceremony. He was, though, forever proud of Justice Mullane's conduct and service. In his appointment speech, Justice Tonge described Graham as a man who could 'walk with both paupers and kings'. That quality, coupled with Justice Mullane's utmost professionalism earned him the respect of his peers and colleagues. Graham is a true egalitarian, a true Novocastrian, who has always acted without fear or favour to prosper the rights of those before him and of all those whose interests have come within his powers and influence.

Although Graham Mullane was not a family law specialist at the time of his appointment, he was clearly a lawyer with a great future. At just 40 years of age, his achievements were exemplary. The son of a Newcastle plumber, he gained a Commonwealth scholarship, graduating in 1975 with a Master of Laws from the University of Sydney. He went on to establish his own successful legal practice in Newcastle, later assisted by his partner and very good friend Robert Lindsay. As a committee member and Secretary of the Newcastle Law Society, he advanced the interests of the local legal fraternity and was keenly sought after as an occasional lecturer in legal and social justice matters. Graham Mullane has also distinguished himself in community leadership, through the Scouting movement and as the chair of

the Hunter Region QUIT for Life Campaign, the Hospitals Association of Greater Newcastle and of the Royal Newcastle Hospital Board. I also make particular mention of his advocacy as Chair of the Hunter Institute of Mental Health's Advisory Board and as chair of the board of Tinonee Gardens Multicultural Aged Care Village, as they typify Justice Mullane's lifelong commitment to serving the most vulnerable in our society.

Justice Mullane has established an extensive legacy at the Family Court. Devoted to leading quality performance through inclusion and empowerment, his achievements in Newcastle include building a collaborative culture in the Newcastle registry; establishing regular meetings with managers from the Department of Community Services to promote knowledge exchange; capacity building of the profession through quarterly liaison meetings; initiating weekend conferences for the family law profession; organising mock trials in the Newcastle registry for University of Newcastle law faculty undergraduates; and leading the advocacy for the rights of children for over 15 years, by meeting with them at the end of proceedings to explain first hand the outcomes and reasoning in the cases affecting them.

Justice Mullane's judicial colleagues tell me his most noteworthy achievements include the major changes made to the court rules, including the simplification of procedures amendments under his chairmanship of the rules committee for four years; as chair of the judicial bench book committee, the establishment of the electronic judicial bench book, which allows judges to easily access case information and summaries; and his authorship of the precedent orders for the judicial bench book. It seems that the Family Court of Australia has gained great benefit from Justice Mullane's Masters Degree of Judicial Studies from the US National Judicial College and University of Nevada in 1997.

But now Justice Mullane retires from the bench on 30 September 2008. I thank him on behalf of the people of Newcastle for his tireless advocacy for the Newcastle registry and the people who presented before him. Justice Mullane has always understood the value of permanent appointments to our registry to make sure local needs are understood, responded to and appropriately resourced. On his retirement, Newcastle will have lost a great champion.

But Justice Mullane is also my friend of 30 years, and I thank him personally for his inspiration and ongoing support. I know that he would want me to acknowledge the support he has always had from his family—his loving wife, Dawn; his three special children, Scott, Richard and Yvonne; his mother, May; and his sister, Annette.

On behalf of his many friends, I thank him for making time for us over his immense career and tell him that we look forward to seeing more of him after September 30. Thank you Justice Graham Mullane. Newcastle and Australia are indebted to you. We are proud of you, and we wish you well.