

Thursday, 21 August 2008

FRESH FACES TO LEAD THE LAW

The Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has announced three new appointments to some of the State's most senior legal posts.

"These appointments introduce fresh faces to some of the highest ranks of South Australia's justice system," Mr Atkinson said.

"The appointment of an additional District Court judge also marks the start of the Rann Government's \$48 million strategy to slash the backlog of criminal cases," Mr Atkinson said.

"Each of these people bring immense talent, a deep understanding of the law and years of valuable experience to their new positions. South Australia is fortunate to have them," Mr Atkinson said.

The appointments took effect this morning.

The former Solicitor General **Chris Kourakis S.C.** is now a judge of the South Australian Supreme Court.

Justice Kourakis replaces Justice Bruce DeBelle who retired from the position in July after 18 years on the bench.

"In his role as Solicitor General, Justice Kourakis lead the State's fight on several high profile and complex cases, including the Nemer appeal and S.A.'s challenge to the Howard Government's planned nuclear waste dump," Mr Atkinson said.

"Justice Kourakis also chaired the Criminal Justice Ministerial Taskforce which is helping to break barriers and develop innovation and co-operation in law and procedural reform," Mr Atkinson said.

Justice Kourakis has provided sound and reliable advice to the State since taking up the position of Solicitor General in early 2003. Before that, he was a barrister at Edmund Barton Chambers.

"Justice Kourakis is also the first silk in this State to relinquish his Queens Counsel (Q.C.) title and take the new Senior Council (S.C.) post-nominals. A step I encourage other republicans to follow."

The first of three new District Court judges will be long-serving and accomplished prosecutor **Peter Brebner Q.C.**

"Judge Brebner has over 30 years experience as a criminal prosecutor. He has lead more than 50 murder trials and some of the State's biggest and most complex fraud trials," Mr Atkinson said.

“As a prosecutor, Judge Brebner’s work helped to shape case law. His prosecution of serial rapist Gary Frederick Sutton is a leading case on similar fact evidence and his work on the lengthy trial of Paul Andrew Walton for murder helped establish the bounds of hearsay evidence.”

He also prosecuted Jean Eric Gassy, the man accused of murdering Mental Health Chief Margaret Tobin.

“Judge Brebner has long been a leader in the D.P.P. and in the past has filled the post of Acting Director.

“Judge Brebner has already made a lasting contribution to the law in South Australia. I’m sure he will build on this in his new role as a Judge of the District Court.”

The Rann Government has funded three new District Court judges as part of its \$48 million plan to slash delays in the criminal justice system. Two more will start work next financial year.

The Sturt Street Justice Precinct project will see two courtrooms renovated by the end of next year at a cost of \$3.2 million. The courtrooms are expected to hear about 300 trials over five years. The package also boosts funding for the D.P.P, Legal Services Commission and Forensic Science S.A.

The new Solicitor General is **Martin Hinton Q.C.** Mr Hinton has served as a Senior Crown Prosecutor in the Office of the D.P.P. for the past eight years, including as Deputy D.P.P.

“Mr Hinton has practiced privately and as a public servant, in both Australia and the U.K. He has extensive experience ranging from fisheries charges to murder cases on appeal to the High Court.

Mr Hinton also has expertise in ‘white collar’ crime, administrative and constitutional law.

“Among Mr Hinton’s most high profile cases are the prosecution of Mobil for an oil spill at Port Stanvac and the case against Josiah Finch for a shooting murder at McDonald’s at Camden Park.

“Mr Hinton also prosecuted Vicki Brooks and Dennis Childs for killing a man by setting him alight in the car park of the Marion Hotel. He has also appeared for the D.P.P. on appeals by Henry Keogh, Chad Parenzee and the McGee brothers.” Mr Atkinson said.

Mr Hinton is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Law at Adelaide University and is widely published in legal journals.

“Mr Hinton brings a breadth of knowledge and a wealth of experience. He will be a valuable and versatile asset to the State and the people of South Australia,”

“I congratulate each of these people on their new roles and thank them for the huge contribution they’ve each made to the law and the delivery of justice in South Australia so far,” Mr Atkinson said.

“Each of these jobs demand deep commitment, immense intelligence and, above all, hard work. I wish each of them the very best in their new positions.”