Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5443

McMurdo, Margaret

(1954 -)

Born	19540101, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Occupation	Barrister, Feminist, Judge, Lawyer, Solicitor

Summary

Justice Margaret McMurdo AC is the President of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Queensland. She was the first woman appointed as the presiding judge of an appellate court in Australia.

McMurdo was born in 1954 in Brisbane, the youngest of six children born to Gina, a homemaker, and Joe, a commercial law solicitor and ultimately senior partner at Thynne & Macartney. She attended New Farm State School and Brisbane Girls Grammar School (1967 – 1971) before studying law at the University of Queensland. During her university years, she volunteered at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws in 1975.

On 16 December 1976, McMurdo was admitted as a barrister of the Supreme Court of Queensland. She worked in the Public Defender's Office (1976-89), holding the office of assistant public defender (1978-89). McMurdo then practised at the private bar in Brisbane (1989-91), holding a commission to prosecute. She was a part-time member of the Criminal Justice Commission Misconduct Tribunal (1990-91). McMurdo was a founding committee member (1978-82) and then president (1980-81) of the Women Lawyers Association and a founding member of the Department of Children's Services Serious Offenders Review Panel (1978-83). McMurdo was appointed a judge of the District Court of Queensland on 29 January 1991, being the first woman to be appointed to the court. She also served as a judge of the Children's Court of Queensland from 1993.

On 30 July 1998, McMurdo was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland and the second president of the Court of Appeal. She was the first woman appointed as the presiding judge of an appellate court in Australia. McMurdo was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2007 and awarded the Centenary Medal in 2003. She was awarded the Queensland Law Society's Agnes McWhinney Award in 2006. She was awarded the degree of Doctor of the University by Griffith University (2000) and by the Queensland University of Technology (2009). McMurdo was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws of the University of Queensland (2012). She has also served as a trustee of Brisbane Girls Grammar School (1994-98) and a member of the council of Griffith University (from 2003).

On 23 January 1976, McMurdo married Philip Donald McMurdo who later became a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. They have four adult children.

Details

The following additional information was provided by Anne Crittall, Associate to the Honourable Justice Margaret McMurdo AC, 2014 – 2015, and is reproduced with permission in its entirety.

Justice Margaret McMurdo AC is the President of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

Margaret Anne Hoare was born in 1954 in Brisbane. Her father (Joseph Harold Hoare) was a commercial law solicitor and ultimately senior partner at Thynne & Macartney. She was the youngest of six children. She attended New Farm State School and Brisbane Girls Grammar School (1967 – 1971) before studying law at the University of Queensland. During her university years, she volunteered at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws in 1975. On 23 January 1976, she married Philip Donald McMurdo who later became a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. They have four adult children.

From 1975 to 1976 she worked as associate to his Honour Judge Alan Demack, later the Honourable Justice Demack, first in the District Court of Queensland and then in the Family Court of Australia. On 16 December 1976 she was admitted as a barrister. She joined the Public Defender's Office as its first female paralegal. She was an assistant public defender from 1978 to 1989 appearing regularly in high profile cases in all Queensland courts and on two occasions in the High Court of Australia. She was also a founding member of the Department of Children's Services Serious Offenders Review Panel (1978 – 1983). In 1989 she commenced practice at the private bar in Brisbane where she practiced primarily in criminal defence work. She also held a commission to prosecute and developed a growing civil practice.

In January 1991 she became the first woman appointed a judge of the District Court of Queensland. At 36, she was also the youngest judge ever commissioned to the Queensland District Court. She convened the District Court Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee. From 1993 she also served as a judge of the Children's Court of Queensland, the first woman to be appointed to that role.

Justice McMurdo was appointed President of the Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Queensland in July 1998. She was its second president and the first woman appointed as the presiding judge of an appellate court in Australia.
Her Honour has a deep commitment to education, serving as a trustee of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School (1994 – 1998), a member of the Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Law Advisory Council (1991 – 2011) and a member of the Griffith University Council (2003 – 2013).

Justice McMurdo has been awarded the Centenary Medal (2003) and the Queensland Law Society's Agnes McWhinney Award (2006). In 2007 she was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia for "service to the law and judicial administration in Queensland, particularly in the areas of legal education and women's issues, to the support of a range of legal organisations, and to the community."

Her contribution to the law has also been recognised by a number of tertiary institutions. She was awarded the degrees of Doctor of the University by Griffith University (2000) and by the Queensland University of Technology (2009), and an honorary Doctorate of Laws by the University of Queensland (2012).

She is a founding fellow of the Australian Academy of Law, a member of the American Law Institute, and a Queensland committee member of the Australian Association of Women Judges (2014 – 2015).

Justice McMurdo's passion for social justice has permeated her career. In 1978 she co-founded the Women Lawyers Association of Queensland (WLAQ) and was its president from 1980 to 1981. Her Honour was patron of Southside Education Centre, a school for disadvantaged young women who have not flourished in mainstream education (2001 -2009). She mentors Indigenous law students from Queensland universities through regular work experience placements. Her Honour is currently patron of both the Women's Legal Service and QPILCH's Civil Justice Fund. She has been a member of the Zonta Club of Brisbane for over 35 years.

Her Honour's leadership in promoting excellence in judicial administration, legal professional ethics, protection of the rule of law, judicial independence, and the advancement of women and disadvantaged groups are evidenced by her published articles and speeches.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book Section
Margaret McMurdo, Goss, Caitlin and Currie, Susan, 2005

Resource Section
Judicial Papers and Judicial Profile of The Honourable Justice Margaret A McMurdo AC, Supreme Court Library Queensland, 2015,
http://www.sclqld.org.au/judicial-papers/judicial-profiles/profiles/mamcmurdo

Site Exhibition
Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers

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Digital resources



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