

**IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES
BANCO COURT**

**BELL CJ
AND JUDGES OF THE
SUPREME COURT**

MONDAY 12 MAY 2025

**SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF STEPHEN JOHN FREE SC
AS A JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
AND AS A JUDGE OF APPEAL**

- 1 **FREE JA:** Chief Justice, I have the honour to announce that I have been appointed a judge and a judge of appeal of this Court. I present to you my Commissions.

(Commissions read; affirmations of office taken)

- 2 **BELL CJ:** Justice Free, we met, I think about 30 years ago, on your return from Oxford. Since that time, I had the pleasure of leading you, I had the challenge of appearing against you and then I had the pleasure again of you appearing in front of this Court on many occasions in some of the State's most difficult and challenging briefs. I have absolute confidence that you will make an outstanding judge of this Court and on my own behalf and on behalf of your new colleagues and my colleagues I congratulate you on your appointment.

- 3 **FREE JA:** Thank you, Chief Justice.

- 4 **BELL CJ:** Dr Higgins I understand you have recently got a new brief. Do you move?

- 5 **DR RUTH HIGGINS SC, PRESIDENT, NEW SOUTH WALES BAR ASSOCIATION:** May it please the Court. I acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation. I give my respect to the elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations persons present today.

- 6 Chief Justice it is a great privilege and an even greater surprise to speak today on behalf of the barristers of New South Wales. Justice Free warmest congratulations on your appointment to this Court. We are joined today by your wife, Kim, children Charlotte and Alexander and your father, the Honourable Ross Free. Many more colleagues and friends are joining us in person or watching online.
- 7 Today marks a new chapter in your distinguished legal career, one that has been characterised by intellectual rigour, legal excellence, humility, fairness and a commitment to public service. The value of public service was instilled in you by your parents. Your mother, Margaret, was a teacher and community organiser who worked with groups including Meals on Wheels. Your father became Federal Member for Macquarie and then Lindsay and served as a Minister under the Hawke and Keating Governments.
- 8 Growing up in the Blue Mountains backyard cricket and soccer were more than pastimes. They were early tutorials in arguments, competition and the art of persuasion.
- 9 You were a motivated school student who achieved a perfect score in the HSC placing first in New South Wales in Ancient History, first in Modern History and fourth in the State in English. You enrolled in Arts and Law at the Australian National University where you received numerous academic awards and prizes. These included the University Medal in Law, the University Medal in History and the Supreme Court Judges' prize for the best academic record at graduation.
- 10 At this point many would be satisfied with their achievements but not your Honour. After graduating ANU of course with first class honours you secured a Commonwealth Scholarship to Oxford University where you added yet more distinction to your academic record. There you were awarded the Vinerian Scholarship for the best academic record in the Bachelor of Civil Law and also completed a Master of Philosophy and Law at Magdalen College.

Despite your outstanding academic results, you found time to pursue other interests at Oxford.

- 11 You played football captaining the Magdalen College team to a historic treble and leading the side on to some of the most pristine pitches in the country.
- 12 It was also at Oxford that you first met your wife Kim who was visiting from Sydney. You were a generous host and obviously made quite the impression. Kim recalls the two of you punting on the river, playing croquet on the college lawn and spending time surrounded by books and a lot of people wearing corduroy.
- 13 Your legal accomplishments are many, but your greatest achievement is your family. Kim, your partner in all things, has witnessed your career unfold with great pride and admiration. As a journalist and former court reporter she understands better than most the pressures of legal practice and the responsibilities that come with judicial office. Together you have built a life which is based in shared values of friendship, fairness, kindness and community.
- 14 Charlotte and Alexander have inherited your love of sport and curiosity about the world. Outside of work and family you enjoy running, cycling, reading widely and, when you can, returning to the football pitch with North Sydney and Bar FC.
- 15 By your own confession you are a devoted Penrith Panthers fan. The team's recent successes have been a source of great joy though Kim suspects your expectations may now be a little too high.
- 16 Following Oxford, you and Kim eventually returned to Australia and you began your legal career as a graduate of Mallesons Stephen Jaques. It was not long before you joined the Crown Solicitor's Office where you served with distinction from 2002 to 2006. It was at the Crown Solicitor's Office that you built a reputation as an incisive thinker, gifted advocate and genuinely dependable

colleague. You could manage complex briefs with calm efficiency and made those around you feel valued and supported. Colleagues speak of your patience, clarity of thought and humility.

- 17 You are known for your ability to dissect legal arguments with surgical precision and to explain your thinking in a way that was both persuasive and accessible.
- 18 You were called to the bar on 1 May 2006 and joined Eleven Wentworth Chambers. There you built a formidable practice in many areas including constitutional, commercial and administrative law. You appeared in some of the most important appellate and High Court cases of the past two decades. Your list of appearances reads like a textbook of modern Australian Public Law: *Kirk v Industrial Relations Commission*, *Williams v Commonwealth*, *Clark v Commissioner of Taxation*, *Berejiklian v ICAC*, *Lee v New South Wales Crime Commission*, to name just a few.
- 19 You also found time to defend the broad tooth rat and the broad headed snake. Your family were a fan of these cases because they got to meet the animals in question. It was the only time your children have said that you should work more.
- 20 You have been led by, and worked alongside, some great mentors and as your career progressed you became a mentor to many. You made silk in 2018, and colleagues have described you as the most universally liked person at the bar, brilliant but humble, principled but approachable. They credit you with setting a standard not only in advocacy but in leadership and collegiality. You have always found time for others and were never too busy to explain a point of law, offer strategic advice or just lend an ear.
- 21 Your mentees speak of your open-door policy and your genuine investment in their development. While you delivered it you never expected perfection from others. What you encouraged was rigour, curiosity and respect. You taught by example showing that the best lawyers are not the loudest but the most thoughtful. Your reputation is summed up best by a close colleague who said

you were the barrister everyone wanted on their side. Not just because you are good, but because you are good to work with. That is high praise and richly deserved.

- 22 Outside the Courtroom you have served on various committees contributing to legal education and turned out, as I mentioned, for the Bar Football Club when available. Your performances there were legendary.
- 23 While you are looking forward to the intellectual challenges ahead you will miss the camaraderie of chambers, the conversations with colleagues and opponents, the collegial spirit and the shared endeavour. Fortunately, you joined one of the strongest courts in the country with impeccable colleagues everywhere you look.
- 24 You have a curious mind, a dry sense of humour and a gift for making the complex seem simple, traits that will serve you well on the bench.
- 25 Justice Free you recognise that the work of a judge is not just to resolve disputes, it is about serving the community, safeguarding the rule of law and ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. One of the most formative moments in your career was serving as counsel assisting the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It was a role you found incredibly meaningful. You saw firsthand the importance in a legal system of a forum where people can be heard and how the decisions made can affect the community. Kim has said that this experience has shaped the way you look forward to your role as a judge – thoughtful, patient and deeply attuned to the lived reality behind the legal argument.
- 26 Your Honour, you bring to this Court a powerful combination of intellectual empathy, seriousness and grace. You believe that courtesy is not a sign of weakness but a strength and that the law for all its technicality must never lose sight of the human beings at its core.

- 27 The Barristers of New South Wales welcome you to this Court with absolute confidence in your ability as a Judge of Appeal. We know that you will continue to serve with integrity, wisdom and, as presently, a wry smile. We know that your judgments will be thoughtful and your courtroom respectful. On behalf of the Barristers of New South Wales, warmest congratulations again and we wish you well in your time as a Judge of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal. May it please the Court.
- 28 **BELL CJ:** Thank you, Dr Higgins. Ms Ball, President of the Law Society of New South Wales.
- 29 **MS JENNIFER BALL, PRESIDENT, THE LAW SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES:** May it please the Court. I acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which this Court stands, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present. I acknowledge and extend my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are with us here today.
- 30 I also thank all those people who have helped your Honour achieve all that you have. In that sense I acknowledge your family, your friends and colleagues who are with us today. Hopefully as the first solicitor to call your Honour, your Honour, may I say on behalf of 43,000 solicitors in New South Wales congratulations on your appointment.
- 31 Your Honour joins this bench after an academic and professional career that very often without hyperbole could not have been better. As one solicitor said he has a very wide repertoire which I think is reflective of his intellectual capacity, which is enormous, but your Honour also comes with a serious appreciation of the power of communication based on a deep respect and appreciation that ultimately law is a human endeavour.
- 32 If always communicating the essential legal point and communicating with the person in front of you sounds extremely simple, I am minded to say it is not. The law and facts mixed together can present pitfalls of complexity that can

bury many things. That, quickly, can become unpersuasive. For your Honour a technical regard for law has been one part of it but communication with people, no matter the issue, has been your guiding light.

33 I believe that your Honour's appointment, this moment, is a hopeful moment then. It is hopeful because your Honour joins this bench not just with pages of prizes, publications and professional achievements, which I could read, and won't, and that is the advantage of speaking second.

34 It is hopeful, not just because of a list of High Court and appellant cases which would make most lawyers' eyes water, but it is hopeful because of all of this and the simple fact that your Honour is actually really, really nice.

35 Is that the best they could come up with you might be thinking! But allow me to make a case of the importance of being nice. Although unlike Oscar Wilde's play of a similar name this is not a trivial comedy for serious people.

36 Your Honour worked for some years as counsel assisting the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. You worked on Royal Commissions into defence and veteran suicides and aged care quality and safety and for the State in serious matters alongside huge economic giants in complex legal disputes, across many areas of law. Indeed, for clients like The Crown and Apple.

37 As a slight digression, the international dimension of the vast legal battle your Honour was part of for Apple, included the possibility of the game, Fortnite, being on Apple iPhones. For anyone with children in the audience you will know the game's potential to help, say a seven year old child, strip you of your money for so called skins or outfits within the game. This will no doubt strike fear into your heart. For those who do not understand anything I just said you are very lucky.

38 Your Honour has also helped establish many points unambiguously on the law, taking but one example, appearing for the Crown in *Namoa v R* in 2021 in the

High Court of Australia and showing that the statutory offence of conspiracy applies to spouses when they agree between themselves to commit an offence against the law of the Commonwealth.

- 39 Nevertheless, I am indebted to the bar for recently pointing out that Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior commented in “The Path of the Law” in the Harvard Law Review way back in 1897 that we do not realise how large a part of our law is open to reconsideration upon and slight change in the habit of public mind and he went on. The fallacy to which I refer is the notion that the only force at work in the development of law is logic. It is individual people whether in Parliament or Courts who effect legal changes, individual people, who despite all their ability and achievement, particularly remain grounded. Otherwise, our institutions risk slipping from reality in the eyes of the public and this brings us back to being nice.
- 40 Now obviously your Honour is much more, this is a synecdoche not an exhaustive description. We heard from a range of solicitors from different genders, ages and experience and from family and friends that your Honour is, and here I quote one solicitor. “Just a good guy, down to earth. You don’t have to put up with anything.” Another said, “He went out of his way each day to be nice to the juniors. A true gentleman.” Another said, “Unfailingly polite, always calm and measured even when under enormous pressure”. In all our conversation this has cropped up repeatedly. This is worth taking note.
- 41 Of course, I do not wish to make out that your Honour is unreasonably perfect and while your Honour has been noted by solicitors as unfailingly polite, courteous and respectful, never even with a hint of aggression, your Honour has also been known to make opponents cry. Let me just take one example. Clive Palmer’s tears came down during his contention that Premier Mark McGowan and others were gunning for him because he was a Queenslander. This was an argument he put to the High Court. Despite his self-represented appearance invoking people like Martin Luther King and Robert Jackson, the former US Supreme Court Justice and Chief Prosecutor to

the USA at Nuremberg Trials, and despite his tears your Honour's legal skills carried the day.

42 If I may flip to the other side of the coin, we lawyers train and work very hard and we hope who we are combined with what we find is enough, enough for the reality of the lives effected by the law and ourselves.

43 Was your Honour enough? Let's get accurate, sometime during the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and it does not matter when for this story, but during this, one senior member of the legal profession sought a general media around this enquiry, and one evening the senior lawyer came in to discuss their own experiences and consider giving evidence. A solicitor who worked with your Honour was present and recalled your Honour's care and kindness asking the right questions considering and reflecting on the responses, how your Honour recognised a person first and foremost before a witness sitting across from you. It was a very intense, very confronting thing and the solicitor who witnessed all of this thought your Honour was amazing in those initial moments, away from the Court, from the logic of legal argumentation. At the end of that block of hearings that witness sent a text message expressing their very deep appreciation for the care that your Honour and the solicitor had taken. For what your Honour had shown personally and expressing what a credit you were to the legal profession. Over the years your Honour would be involved in moments like this. Everyone a defining point unravelling traumatic events and hoping to change our institutions in the name of basic humanity and justice. Your Honour was, in this instance, I believe, enough, as your Honour has been for all the solicitors that we spoke with in more than 15 High Court appearances, in Federal Court cases, Court of Appeal and Court of Criminal Appeal of New South Wales cases, your Honour has been enough. For your clients in a myriad of ways, too numerous, personal or complex to explain today, your Honour has been, in short, outstanding.

44 If I may contrast this for a moment but in addition to your Honour's compassion one of your brothers, and I will not say which, told the Law Society that your Honour was both the youngest and also the fieriest as a child and as a six year

old you were kicking goals and dribbling past everyone nearly twice your age in endless rounds of backyard soccer and other sports. He said you were extremely competitive, like *extremely* competitive at sport, and yet you also kept up with the much older children and were one of the best. As an older brother he said it had been a wonderful thing to see, and for the record by the time you found your incredible academic powers and focus as a teenager, he said your Honour had mellowed considerably.

45 I am sure many of us in this room will know someone whose skills, formidable as they may be, did not get balanced by things like compassion. People who were not enough, not because they were not great at something but because greatness does not have to come at the expense of being a reasonable person.

46 I appreciate that this has been a long address and one that is perhaps unusual in its focus in these ceremonies. Nevertheless, in law we focus on institutions, we ignore the people that make them possible. So today I hope I have made a case for the importance of who your Honour is. I have really tried to cut to the heart of what I believe is deeper matter and do so for the record. I sincerely thank your Honour for taking this opportunity and for choosing to serve as a Justice of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of New South Wales. As the Court pleases.

47 **BELL CJ:** Thank you, Ms Ball. Justice Free.

48 **FREE JA:** Thank you, Chief Justice. May I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to their elders past and present. My thanks to Dr Higgins and Ms Ball for your kind words and to those who assisted you for making such generous use of their artistic licence. Dr Higgins special kudos to you, but it comes as no surprise to me to see your stunning ability to recite words which may or may not have been written by others at a level which betrays no unfamiliarity.

- 49 Chief Justice thank you for your kind words of welcome and thanks to all of my new colleagues for the warm reception I have received within the Court. That includes my new associate, Jane Gray, who I have been lucky enough to inherit from the retiring Justice Gleeson.
- 50 It is a very great honour for me to be joining this Court and I am delighted to be able to share this honour with family and friends from different parts of my life. It is fitting, even if a little confronting from this seat, that these ceremonies should focus on the personal histories of the judges being appointed. I am very much a product of the environment and the opportunities that were provided to me by my family and by my education, and by the wonderful people with whom I have been able share my life. Many of them are here today or gathered around screens in other part of the world. You do me and this Court a great honour by attending and tuning in.
- 51 I had the benefit of reading with the Chief Justice when I was called to the bar back in 2006 and I had many adventures as his junior. Your Honour's capacity for work was, and remains, astonishing. You devour it with the same devastating enthusiasm as you have been known to devour a tray of party pies.
- 52 My first appearance with your Honour was one of the last in which your Honour was a junior counsel with a leader. I sensed at the time that you had reached that point in your career where there was a degree of restlessness with this arrangement. On that occasion we were led by Ian Jackman SC, now Justice Jackman in the Federal Court. As argument progressed your Honour's restlessness threatened to boil over. Your efforts to attract your leader's attention bordered on assault. I began to wonder if it was possible that you might take an objection to your own leader's submissions and, if so, whether it was part of my responsibility to restrain you. Jackman SC, it goes without saying, was unfazed.
- 53 I was blessed to read also with Stephen Lloyd SC, the sobering yin to your Honour's fiery yang. As with the Chief Justice I will forever be indebted to Stephen for the guidance and the friendship he has given me over the years.

Both of my tutors taught me that one can do serious work to an exceptional standard without ever having to take oneself too seriously in the process. I came to appreciate that a sense of humour, much like a sense of humanity, can be a disarming quality in an effective advocate. These are critical survival skills as well in a job that, while deeply rewarding, can certainly take its toll.

- 54 In 2006 I also had the good fortune to find my professional home at Eleven Wentworth Chambers. From the day I arrived I was the beneficiary of unfailing support and much inspiration from my colleagues and friends in chambers. This includes the floor's devoted staff, particularly Anne Deighton, Mandy Allen and until recently, Melinda Morris. I have also drawn great support from other friends and colleagues on and off the floor and in and out of the law.
- 55 My guests today include representatives from my various football projects over the years including from the mighty North Sydney United, from the sometimes-mighty Bar FC and from Farcelona FC who are the reigning Pan Pacific Masters Champions in an age division that I decline to identify. Albert Camus, who is not one of my guests today but who was a goalkeeper in between his writing gigs, once said, "All that I know most surely about morality and obligations I owe to football". Wise words indeed. Given my new responsibilities as a judge, it will help to know a thing or two about morality and obligations and I expect to be citing Camus as I justify my increasingly questionable presence on the football field.
- 56 Speaking of sporting endurance, when I started on the Eleventh Floor my clerk was the incomparable Paul Daley. He was a remains a great friend and professional guide. I have been blessed to receive the same friendship and support from Zach Rymer, Paul's successor as the clerk on Eleven. It is not easy to follow in the footsteps of a living legend. If I can stick with the football theme for moment, consider Manchester United and any of the nine crushed souls who have sat in the manager's seat since the retirement of Sir Alex Ferguson. Happily, the transition has been much more successful on the Eleventh Floor.

- 57 The opportunities for professional development that I encountered on the Eleventh Floor were remarkable. I had the privilege to work with not one but two future Chief Justices as well as a number of other leaders of the bar both on and off Eleven. The standards that those leaders set for me, not just in their work but in their character, left an indelible mark. I will not run the risk of embarrassment by naming names, but I offer my thanks to each of you.
- 58 It has been a particular source of inspiration to watch as many of my extraordinary leaders have gone on to become extraordinary judges. The same qualities that made them compelling examples to follow at the bar – intellectual rigour, civility and fairness – now find expression in their work as judges. That is part of the tradition that is critical to the welfare of the profession and, more importantly, the interests of the community. It is a tradition that I will devote myself to upholding.
- 59 As I became more senior as a barrister it was a daunting challenge for me to assume the responsibility of setting for the next generation the same standards which were set for me. I largely cheated in this regard by surrounding myself with exceptional juniors with sound judgment and brilliant minds of their own. To these juniors, it has been a great pleasure to work with you and something of a relief to have gotten out of your way before you devoured my practice.
- 60 I have also been propped up along the way by many fine instructing solicitors. Etiquette again constrains me from acknowledging any of you by name, but to all those who have instructed me over the years thank you for putting your trust in me to do justice to our client's causes and to do justice to your own hard work. It is a responsibility I have always taken very seriously and an honour that I have always deeply appreciated.
- 61 By good fortune rather than any grand design on my part I enjoyed a broad range of experiences as a barrister. On both sides of the record in public law matters I have seen the practical reality of the rule of law as a check on power and the critical role of tribunals and courts in mediating the relationship between governments and their citizens. The maintenance of this arrangement

ultimately depends on the integrity of individuals as well as institutions. Recent events around the world should help us appreciate how fundamental this is and should also remind us how very well blessed we have been in this regard in Australia and how we must never take it for granted.

62 As I have seen across my practice as a barrister, justice comes in many forms. As you have heard appropriately recognised in the speech of Dr Higgins it was a particular professional privilege and a formative personal experience for me to work as counsel assisting the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Legal institutions are never perfect, but that Royal Commission demonstrated the profound capacity of the law, when applied with humanity, compassion and skill, to bring light to the darker corners of our community's past and present.

63 Humanity and compassion are critical in every judicial setting. We have seen in recent years a welcome focus on the welfare of the profession, but it is equally vital to recognise that the members of our community who get drawn into the justice system whether as litigants, witnesses or other interested parties are exposed to severe, often debilitating and sadly sometimes life-threatening levels of stress. It is something to which we should never become numb.

64 Now you have heard a little of my own past today. In 1967 two fine institutions rose from the plains and the bush in the west of Sydney, Penrith Rugby League Football Club and Springwood High School. What a perfect setting that proved to be for my parents, Margeret and Ross, to land in Faulconbridge a few years later where they made the home in which I was raised.

65 There was a point of intersection for these two fine institutions many years later, when Springwood High's league team took to the hallowed turf of Penrith Park for a match against Blacktown Boys High. I should acknowledge that the scoreline was suboptimal and we suffered a 73-nil loss. For those curious, I was not born in the three-point try era. There was an early field goal when Blacktown had somewhat overestimated us. I should also acknowledge that as I plodded along the wing that day I gave the coach a reminder that I was very

much a soccer player at heart. The key point, as I like to remind Xander at most home games, is that I have been able to play on that field of champions.

66 If I can take you back up the hill to Faulconbridge, Sir Henry Parkes, the proverbial founding father of the Australian Constitution, is buried at the end of our street and the town, Faulconbridge, takes its name from his mother. Perhaps, then, I was destined to live a life in which the Constitution would feature prominently.

67 Dad, as you have heard, had his own adventures in Chapters I and II of the Constitution. This was a source of endless fascination for me as I grew up. I was intrigued by the workings of government and suitably inspired by Dad's commitment to serving the community. Still, I worked out soon enough that as forms of public service go, I was not attracted to the kind where the public gets to decide every three years if they would like you to continue your service. I am grateful that those instincts as a child led me to find a much more stable home over in Chapter III.

68 I cannot find a neat constitutional analogy for the omnipotent role that Mum performed. Suffice to say that she wrote and administered all the rules and adjudicated with ruthless efficiency on all the noisy disputes in a house full of boys. Life was not always fair to Mum, and she endured a cruel and relentless disease that robbed her for so much that was due to her. She did so with the same strength and spirit that showed in everything she did. In that she set her three boys a powerful example. It is a great sadness that she is not here today to take in this spectacle, to enjoy the embroidered biography and to mock my outfit.

69 Fortunately, my brothers are here, along with the rest of the family. You can count on Mark and Dave to perform their lifelong roles of keeping me firmly in my place. There could be no better preparation for life as an advocate than seeking to win the attention and favour of two older brothers while facing the constant threat of extreme and unprovoked aggression. I thank my brothers for that preparation and more importantly for the irreplaceable friendship and

support they have provided and continue to provide. That includes in their now favourite roles as loving and much-loved uncles. While on that topic can I make special mention of Mark's wife, Louise. She is not just an adored sister-in-law and aunty, she also became a Mary Poppins figure in our household last year when I had a somewhat unscheduled period of exile in Melbourne for 16 weeks. Aunty Weez, thanks for keeping us just about intact through that particular challenge.

- 70 Providing critical extra backup to keep our household intact is a responsibility that has more regularly fallen to Kim's mum, Lexie. Through the frequent chaos of our busy lives, Lexie has been a constant source of support for our family. Lexie, this is a tough reward for having such superhuman energy and resilience, but rest assured we deeply appreciate everything that you do for us.
- 71 You have been hearing me count my blessings but let me come finally to the most important of those and forgive me in advance if this brings me undone. First our children, Xander and BC.
- 72 You two see the world with such clear eyes and kind hearts. Just to be around you as you experience the world, and as the world experiences you, is pure delight. Xander, as genetic inheritances go, I am going to take credit for a decent right foot and the Penrith Panthers. They have both served you pretty well so far. Otherwise, you have Mum to thank for any genetic favours. The rest is all up to you. We look forward to the show as you keep tackling the world with such spirit and joy.
- 73 BC, since the improbably early moment you opened your mouth and started talking, you have been dropping nuggets of wisdom that are as astute as they are amusing. If I can channel just a fraction of your wisdom and perception in my new job, I will be off to a very good start. Just go easy with some of those truth bombs that you like to drop from time to time.
- 74 Finally, but most importantly, to my wife, Kim. The opportunity that I was given through the Commonwealth Scholarship to live and study in Oxford was truly

transformative. So much of what has become dear to me over my life I can trace back to that experience. But nothing can quite compare with being given the opportunity to discover Kim Arlington. Next week it will be 25 years since Kim walked into the Middle Common Room at Magdalen College and into my life. In an instant, all of the steps that I had taken to that point made sense and my vision of the future became very clear. I'm reluctant to quibble with anything Dr Higgins says, but it is not quite accurate to say I made an instant impression. Kim took some time before coming to share the same vision I did, but happily she came around.

75 Now I cannot say that back in 2000 I could foresee this day or foresee the wonderful creatures both human and canine that would enter our lives, but I did foresee a future where every adventure would be richer and every challenge easier to endure if we were together. So it has proved to be and so I am sure it will continue to be. Thank you all once again for your attendance today.

76 **BELL CJ:** The Court will now adjourn.