



Law Council  
OF AUSTRALIA

# Ceremonial Sitting of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia – Judge Patricia Cope

**Speech delivered by Dr Jacoba Brasch QC, Law Council of Australia President, at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, Cairns.**

**15 October 2021**

May it please the Court.

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country on which we all meet, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

It is an honour to be with you all today.

In particular, I acknowledge Senator the Hon. Amanda Stoker, representing the Attorney-General; Chief Justice, The Hon. Justice William Alstergren; all judicial officers; dignitaries and colleagues; and most of all Your Honour and your Honour's family who I know are proudly watching on today in person and online.

Fortuitously, I was here in Cairns on 23 July 2021, the day Your Honour's elevation was announced. We sat in your office waiting until the announcement was made public. When it was, your phone ran hot, your emails pinged like a submarine closing on a target, and your staff were in tears of joy and pride; such was the welcomed response by all to your elevation.

And now, you join your dear friend Judge Willis AM, albeit now sitting in Brisbane. No more will the two of you be 'no-speakies' because you had a matter before Her Honour. Unfortunately, you and I will now have the obligation of no speakies, when inevitably I have a matter before you here. Such are the important boundaries in our profession.

Your Honour is a real quiet achiever.

You opened the first boutique family law firm in Cairns and were the driving force behind the establishment of the local Family Law Practitioners Association (FLPA).

I believe that the make-up of the inaugural Cairns FLPA executive was:

- President – you;
- Secretary – you;
- Treasurer – you.

You took on every key position to get it off the ground and worked tirelessly to get the local FLPA up and running. As a direct consequence of your dedication, FLPA provides an opportunity for practitioners to network, learn more about and connect with local family support services, and share knowledge and expertise. Thanks to you, it is improving outcomes for the local community.

You also improved the outcomes for many of your clients, as you will do *now* from the bench – and first and foremost will be the betterment of all children whose families come before you.

As for clients, I wish to mention two examples, without names of course, whose lives were touched and vastly improved by your involvement.

First, there is now a young woman and her children who are able to live in another state, emotionally safe and secure after being subjected to horrendous stalking for years. Your support of that young mother was such that – like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis she evolved from a torn, wreck of a shell, to a forthright, independent and assured person.

The other is a client who had no choice but to initiate proceedings – at 99 years of age – to protect his assets from a family member. His gratitude for your assistance was so deep

that a year after the case concluded, when he turned 100, he sent you his birthday card from the Queen with the most heartfelt gratitude for you securing his financial stability.

But your care is not just for those with two legs. Your love of animals has often extended to pet sitting for colleagues so they could go on vacation. Take note new co-workers.

I also assume your beautiful portrait of your own much loved family dog has accompanied you to your new Chambers.

But lest it be thought you are a softy; you have a quiet but steely determination ... even when on one of your many bushwalks, you fell and injured yourself. Not only would you not let anyone help you back to your car, which was a pretty long way, you drove yourself home and shrugged off the pain for over a week because you were too busy with clients to see a doctor any sooner. You always put others first.

Judge Cope, on behalf of the lawyers of Australia, I congratulate you again on your elevation. I have no doubt you will make a significant and exceptionally positive contribution to the administration of justice.

May it please the Court.