



15 October 2021

Media Release: Five new judges appointed to the Parramatta and Sydney registries of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia

The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA) welcomes the appointment of five new judges to the Court's Parramatta and Sydney registries. These judicial appointments substantially increase the Court's judicial resources and will greatly assist the Court to effectively manage its demanding caseload and provide access to justice in New South Wales and across Australia.

The Commonwealth Attorney-General, Senator the Hon Michaela Cash today announced the following appointments to the Court's Parramatta and Sydney registries:

Judge Grant Riethmuller, elevated from Division 2 to Division 1 of the FCFCOA, Parramatta
Barrister Peter Campton SC, appointed to Division 1 of the FCFCOA, Sydney
Barrister Suzanne Christie SC, appointed to Division 1 of the FCFCOA, Sydney
Senior Registrar Samantha Murdoch, appointed to Division 1 of the FCFCOA, Parramatta
Solicitor Ms Sophie Given, appointed to Division 2 (general federal law) of the FCFCOA, Sydney

Nationally, five new judges have been appointed to Division 1 of the Court and six new judges to Division 2. This provides five additional judges overall, with two additional judges in Division 1 and three additional judges in Division 2. This brings the total number of judges nationally to 104. The Court is anticipating further appointments in the coming months.

These appointments are in addition to the many new judicial registrars, child court experts, indigenous liaison officers and support staff that have been engaged to support the judges and undertake a significant role in the case management of matters in the Court.

The Chief Justice of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, the Hon Will Alstergren, said that he was delighted to be able to welcome the appointment of such esteemed and eminently qualified individuals to the Bench.

"The Court is undergoing a period of significant reform and modernisation. I am pleased to welcome a number of enthusiastic and highly skilled practitioners to the Court who have an incredible depth of knowledge and experience in family law and general federal law, as well as the elevation of several very experienced judges to Division 1 of the Court, and a very experienced Senior Judicial Registrar to Division 2.

"The calibre of these appointments reflects confidence in the Court's reform agenda to deliver widespread improvements to the experience of litigants engaging with the Court.

"The Court looks forward to welcoming the new judges to assist in delivering a world-leading court system that places the safety of children and vulnerable parties at the heart of the legal process.

“On behalf of the Court, I warmly welcome the new judges who will play a critical part in the Court’s future and serving the people of New South Wales.”

Biographical details:

Judge Grant Riethmuller (PARRAMATTA) was appointed to the (then) Federal Magistrates Court of Australia in Melbourne on 19 July 2004, and has now been elevated to Division 1 of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and will transfer to Parramatta. He holds a Bachelor of Laws degree from the Queensland Institute of Technology. Prior to his appointment from 1987, he practised as a Barrister in. In addition, he lectured part time in Civil Procedure at James Cook University until his appointment to the bench in 2004. His Honour is also well known as the consultant editor of the CCH looseleaf services on the “Child Support Handbook” and his work on the development of the Court’s e-filing system. Judge Riethmuller has held the role of case management judge for Melbourne and has been on numerous committees such as the legal committee, the policy advisory committee, and has been Chair of the business systems and IT committee.

Mr Peter Campton SC (SYDNEY) was admitted to the Bar in February 2000 and appointed Senior Counsel in October 2014. He practised as a Solicitor from 1983 and achieved accreditation as a Family Law Specialist from the New South Wales Law Society. He is a founding member of Waratah Chambers. Mr Campton has developed a practice focusing on complex family law financial disputes. He has extensive experience in, and has developed a specialty for avenues of forensic financial enquiry and the evaluation of expert evidence. He was a member of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia and an instructor engaged by the Australian Advocacy Institute. Mr Campton regularly acted as a Mediator and is an Accredited Arbitrator and a member of the Australian Institute of Family Law Arbitrators and Mediators. Since 2015, Mr Campton has been recognised by the Doyle’s Guide of Family Law Senior Counsel Barrister’s in New South Wales and Australia.

Ms Suzanne Christie SC (SYDNEY) was admitted to practice as a Barrister in 2004 and appointed Senior Counsel in 2018. Ms Christie holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws and has extensive experience in family law, and related matters in both State and Federal Courts, including in adoption and Appellate advocacy. Ms Christie has been an author of Lexis Nexis Annotated Family Law Legislation and was the contributing author to the Financial Agreements chapter in Halsbury’s Laws of Australia. Ms Christie has regularly lectured for the profession and has contributed to numerous conferences and law journals.

Ms Samantha Murdoch (PARRAMATTA) graduated with a Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Arts from Macquarie University, New South Wales in 1995 and was admitted to both the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the High Court of Australia in 1996. She worked at several private law firms including Watts McCray Lawyers prior to becoming the principal solicitor at Murdoch’s Family Law. Ms Murdoch was an accredited Family Law Specialist appearing as a solicitor advocate in this jurisdiction on a regular basis and is an accredited arbitrator. Ms Murdoch originally joined the Court as a Registrar in 2004 and was appointed as a Senior Registrar in August 2020. This role has included hearing and determining complex, high risk parenting matters in the Evatt List of the Lighthouse Pilot.

Ms Sophie Given (SYDNEY General Federal Law) joins the Court from HWL Ebsworth Lawyers, where she was a Partner and litigator specialising in government and administrative law, primarily in

Commonwealth Jurisdictions and Commissions of Inquiry. After four years as a commercial litigator Ms Given was called to the Bar in 2004, returning to private practice in 2013. At the end of 2013, Ms Given was seconded into the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse where she acted as Principal Solicitor in the YMCA and Salvation Army Case studies. Prior to joining the Court, Ms Given was recognised by Doyle’s Guide 2021 as a leading Australian Administrative, Public Law & Judicial Review Lawyer.

Judicial appointments announced by the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash on 15 October 2021

Brisbane	Division of the Court
Justice Michael Jarrett	Division 1 (elevated from Division 2)
Parramatta	
Justice Grant Riethmuller	Division 1 (elevated from Division 2)
Judge Samantha Murdoch	Division 2 (elevated from Senior Judicial Registrar to Division 2 judge)
Sydney	
Justice Peter Campton	Division 1
Justice Suzanne Christie	Division 1
Judge Sophie Given (Sydney – general federal law)	Division 2
Adelaide	
Justice Penelope Kari	Division 1 (elevated from Division 2)
Judge John McGinn	Division 2
Judge Caroline Jenkins	Division 2
Newcastle	
Judge Vivien Carty	Division 2
Judge Julie Kearney	Division 2

* On 1 September 2021 the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia commenced following the amalgamation of the Family Court of Australia (Division 1) and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (Division 2).

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