



**Law Council**  
OF AUSTRALIA

# Ceremonial Sitting of the Full Court of the Federal Court of Australia to welcome the Honourable Justice Yaseen Shariff

**Speech delivered by Luke Murphy, President of the Law Council of Australia, Federal Court of Australia, Sydney.**

**13 September 2023**

May it please the Court.

I respectfully acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and I pay my respects to their Elders both past and present, and Elders from other communities who may be here today.

I also acknowledge the Honourable Debra Mortimer, Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia; The Honourable Justice Gleeson, Former Chief Justice; The Honourable James Allsop AG; Mr Peter Melican, Senior Executive Lawyer, Australian Government Solicitor; President of the Australian Bar Association, Peter Dunning KC; President of the NSW Bar Association, Gabrielle Bashir SC; Ms Jennifer Ball, Junior Vice President of the Law Society of New South Wales; all judicial officers, dignitaries, family, friends, and, most of all: Your Honour. I am honoured to appear on behalf of the Australian legal profession and in particular the Law Society of New South Wales to welcome your elevation to the bench.

Today is, it goes without saying, a very special day for Your Honour. Even more so though given as we have heard, today is also the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day Your Honour first stepped foot in Australia.

The Law Council which celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year has throughout that time advocated for a justice system that best serves our community.

The Law Council has for decades advocated that such a system must include process of appointment that is meritocracy. Free of political influence and influenced by political persuasion. Only those of the very best legal acumen should be considered and just a few among those considered chosen. There must also be transparency and consultation in such a process.

The Law Council was therefore delighted that when announcing Your Honour's appointment, the Attorney-General said, "I have consulted extensively with key members of the legal community seeking nominations of suitably qualified people."

Can I say that judging by the overwhelming endorsement of your appointment which has been shared with the Law Council by those who know Your Honour, it is no surprise your name was top of the Attorney-General's list.

Often when preparing speeches for occasions such as this, as your Honour would be well aware, we reach out to friends, and colleagues of the guest of honour. When preparing for today I had the rare experience

that friends, and colleagues-initiated contact with us and their desire and readiness to assist says much about the esteem in which you are held. All who were spoken to expounded the impressive qualities you will bring to the Bench.

Before settling on your legal career, I understand your Honour dreamed of playing cricket for Australia and considered becoming an English teacher. However, the love of words you inherited from your mother and the logical mind from your father have provided the perfect foundation for entering the law.

Your Honour's passion for crafting a strong argument, your integrity, your compassion, your humility, work ethic and loyalty shine through your work as an advocate.

Your Honour believes in the law and you have been guided by the principle that the law, and your role in it, should always aim to enhance our society. You believe every person deserves equal access to justice. Everyone has a right to be heard.

It is these attributes that will no doubt ensure that those who come before you will leave knowing they have been heard and listened to and a considered judicial determination has been delivered. As Your Honour well knows this is essential to the fair administration of justice. It is

because of these attributes that the Australian legal profession has such confidence in your appointment.

One of the volunteers I mentioned earlier is former President of the Law Council, and now Vice President of the Fair Work Commission, Mr Joe Catanzariti.

Your Honour worked with Mr Catanzariti from very early in your career. What I think says so much about Your Honour is how that came to pass. Your Honour attended a function, had a conversation with Joe, and impressed him so much he offered you a job on the spot.

Joe said he hopes he is still around to witness the very positive contribution that he has no doubt you will make to Australia's Judiciary for many years to come.

Throughout your career you have given back to our profession as a keen, willing, generous and practical mentor. You have personally made the effort and taken steps to support the advancement of those around you.

As we have heard you have also contributed in many other ways, including through your service on committees such as the NSW Bar Association's Industrial, Employment, Health and Safety Committee.

Your Honour today is a solemn occasion, it marks the beginning of a new call to serve for you as a Judge of this Court. It is a call that will require all the power of your acknowledged intellect, wisdom, compassionate understanding of the human condition and all of your humility in the service of the administration of Justice.

On behalf of the Australian legal profession, I congratulate Your Honour on your appointment and the profession looks forward to the valuable contribution you will continue to make to the administration of justice in this country for the benefit of our community– and I of course wish Your Honour a Happy Anniversary on your arrival 38 years ago and state the obvious that our community is better for your and your family’s arrival.

May it please the Court.

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