



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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JUDGE FINNANE APPOINTED TO DUST DISEASES TRIBUNAL

The Attorney General, Greg Smith SC, today congratulated District Court judge Michael Finnane QC on his appointment as a judge of the Dust Diseases Tribunal of NSW.

Judge Finnane started duty this morning at the Tribunal's new complex at John Madison Tower in Sydney's CBD.

"Judge Finnane has served on the bench of the District Court for more than a decade, sentencing some of the state's most notorious criminals including the Skaf gang rapists and paedophile Robert 'Dolly' Dunn," Mr Smith said.

"At the Dust Diseases Tribunal, Judge Finnane will be presented with a different set of challenges, as he determines the compensation claims of people who have contracted mesothelioma and other deadly dust-related conditions."

Judge Finnane's legal career spans more than 40 years. He was admitted as a barrister in 1969 and appointed a Queens Counsel in 1982. As a barrister, he appeared in many significant inquiries including the:

- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (appearing for the NSW Government);
- Wood Royal Commission into the Police Service (as senior counsel for the Police Service);
- Inquiry into the conviction of Andrew Kalajzich for the murder of his wife (as senior counsel assisting the inquiry); and the
- Inquiry into the Glenbrook train disaster (appearing for the NSW Government).

In October 2000, Judge Finnane was appointed to the bench of the District Court where he has remained until he was appointed to the Dust Diseases Tribunal.

Mr Smith said the Dust Diseases Tribunal was entering a new era with the arrival of Judge Finnane and the development of new headquarters at John Madison Tower.

"The Dust Diseases Tribunal's new facilities include technology that will enable hearings to proceed more efficiently, which is crucial in cases involving people who may only have weeks or days to live," Mr Smith said.

The technology enables witness testimony (including evidence given via audio-visual link) to be digitally recorded, while X-rays and MRI scans can be displayed in high definition on large LCD screens. Each of the four courtrooms also features infra-red hearing aid technology and three have oversized witness boxes to enable experts to take the stand simultaneously.