



Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW PAROLE AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN APPOINTED

One of Australia's eminent former judges and most respected legal minds, retired Justice James Wood AO QC, has been appointed the new Chair of the NSW State Parole Authority.

NSW Attorney General Greg Smith SC today announced the appointment of Justice Wood to replace outgoing Parole Authority Chair, Mr Ian Pike AM.

"I am delighted to welcome Justice Wood to this critically important role within the NSW criminal justice system," Mr Smith said.

"At the same time I thank the departing Chair, Mr Pike and Alternate Chair, Judge Terence Christie QC for their loyal and skilful service to the Authority in two very challenging and demanding roles."

"As a former Supreme Court Justice, Chief Judge and Royal Commissioner, Justice Wood is extremely well qualified to lead the Parole Authority."

"He brings to the role an exceptional understanding of both the criminal justice and correctional systems and has a deep interest and commitment to building innovation and integrity into administrative systems."

James Wood was a Justice of the NSW Supreme Court from 1984 to 2005 and Chief Judge, Common Law Division from 1997 to 2005.

He was Commissioner for the 1994 to 1997 Royal Commission into Corruption into the NSW Police Service and into Paedophilia – an inquiry that began tearing away at the secrecy surrounding paedophilia and exposing notorious sex offenders including Philip Harold Bell and Robert 'Dolly' Dunn.

Justice Wood was Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission from 2005 to 2007, led the 2008 NSW Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services after allegations around child deaths. He is a current member of the federal Customs Reform Board established after corruption allegations within the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. He also currently chairs the NSW Sentencing Council.

Justice Wood said he would resign his position as Chair of the NSW Law Reform Commission at a date to be agreed, to take up his new three-year appointment with the State Parole Authority in mid-December. He will continue to be involved in the Commission's references on Criminal Appeals and on Guilty Pleas. He will retain his position as Chair of the Sentencing Council.

“I regard the decision to grant or refuse parole and to determine the ongoing supervision requirements for offenders to be an extremely important part of our criminal justice system,” Justice Wood said.

“I look forward to working with my fellow members of the Authority, the very capable secretariat staff and criminal justice leaders including the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW, to provide exemplary service and protection to our community.”

Mr Smith also announced the three-year appointment of Acting NSW District Court Judge David Freeman as a judicial member and Alternate Chair of the State Parole Authority, replacing Judge Christie.

Judge Freeman began his judicial career in 1980 in the Workers Compensation Division and was appointed to the District Court in 1986 presiding over mainly criminal matters. He retired from the bench in 2011 and was later appointed as an Acting District Court Judge and Acting Supreme Court Judge.

Acting Judge Paul Cloran has been reappointed as Deputy Chair of the Authority for a further three years.

Justice Wood is a current member of the Domestic Violence Death Review team and a member of the Human Research Ethics Committee for the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network.

He has been leading the Law Reform Commission’s current references on Criminal Appeals and on Early Guilty Pleas and also the NSW Sentencing Council reference on Standard Non Parole Periods.

In recent years Justice Wood led separate Law Reform Commission References on Sentencing, Jury Directions in Criminal Trials, Cheating at Gambling (Match Fixing) and Criminal Complicity. He was also part of the Division of the Commission dealing with Bail Reform, Penalty Notices regarding criminal offending, and People with Cognitive and Mental Impairments in the Criminal Justice System.

The Government is still awaiting the findings of the Commission’s reference into parole, which will examine ways to ensure the system works effectively to protect community safety and reintegrate offenders into society to reduce the risk of reoffending.