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DRAFT

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES
BANCO COURT

BELL CJ
AND JUDGES OF THE
SUPREME COURT

MONDAY 4 JULY 2022

**SWEARING IN CEREMONY OF DINA YEHIA AS A JUDGE OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

(Commission read)

(Oaths of office taken)

BELL CJ: Justice Yehia, on my own behalf and on behalf of your new colleagues of the Supreme Court we congratulate you, we wish you well. You bring to the Court a reputation as one of the State's most respected judges already and a reputation also as being a dynamic judicial leader. I know that that reputation has been forged through years of dedication, perseverance, hard work as well as your own great natural ability and positive character, I am sure you will make a wonderful contribution to the Court.

YEHIA J: Thank you Chief Justice.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: May it please the Court. I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the Gadigal of the Eora nation and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge all Aboriginal people who are with us today.

Your Honour Justice Yehia, on behalf of our State and the Bar it is my great pleasure to congratulate you on your appointment as a justice of the Supreme Court. Your Honour's husband, Ernie Benton joins us today. Your brother Talat and your nephews Alex and Omar are watching online from New Zealand and your late parents Bassam and Rita Yehia would be so proud

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to see how hard you have worked and how much you have achieved.

Your Honour was born in Cairo, the first child of Bassam a general in the Egyptian army and Rita a woman of Greek heritage who worked as an interpreter with the United Nations. Your family came to Australia in 1970, originally intending to stay temporarily but your mother decided it was a good place to raise children so you settled in Five Dock. You enrolled at Domremy College. Your family wasn't catholic and at the time you enrolled you did not speak English but neither was an impediment to your education. Your parents impressed upon your brother and you the importance of a good education and told you regularly to study and study hard. You paid heed and were soon a model student with excellent grades. From an early age you were confident and independent.

As you progressed to high school you developed a love of English literature, in particular Jane Austen and Oscar Wilde. When you were about 13 you decided to become a lawyer. This was perhaps influenced by an injustice that your father had endured. He told you the story of being suddenly and inexplicably detained for a few days in Egypt. This helped shape your sense of justice as well as your ability to recognise injustice when you saw it. You also read and loved Harper Lee's, To Kill a Mockingbird a novel that has inspired millions of potential lawyers all over the world. Your last two years of high school were at Burwood Girls where you enjoyed studying for its own rewards. One of those rewards was entry into Arts Law at the University of New South Wales.

While at the college of law you made a call from a payphone to the Western Aboriginal Legal Service, known as WALS, and asked Eric Wilson for a job. Fortune favours the brave. You graduated in December 1989 and in

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1990 you started work at WALs in Dubbo. You were fortunate to be mentored by Eric Wilson, one of the first WALs lawyers who started when the office had no physical building and solicitors rang their practice from their cars. Things had improved greatly by the time you had arrived, there was an actual office and enough funding to ensure regular wages.

The bookkeeper and officer manager, a proud Barkindji woman, Maryanne Housea(?) was the first person you met on your first day. Marianne recalls you looking like you had stepped from the pages of a Vogue magazine. Marianne discreetly took you aside and gently explained the expected attire for a female defence lawyer in the bush. That began a nurturing friendship with Marianne where you would be welcomed into the wider Dubbo community, the Aboriginal community. WALs covered Dubbo, Bourke, Wilcannia, Brewarrina, Broken Hill and Wentworth, an expanse that one of your colleagues observed was an area the size of Spain. You travelled regularly to meet with clients in all kinds of locations and appeared in court for their matters.

Solicitors were thrown into the deep end when they came to WALs. From day one it was straight into court and to manage a busy practice. Your Honour jumped in feet first. You were popular with your colleagues and your clients. One WALs lawyer who worked with you explained, many of us had to be met in the cells with the greeting we weren't needed but that they did want that Aboriginal lawyer, Ms Yoohoo(?). You handled thousands of cases at WALs, you were known for your command of the Court. You were a significant force in the daily battles in court at a time when there was distrust between Aboriginal communities and law enforcement.

Your seven years at WALs were busy, an educational time and personally fulfilling. You made lifelong friendships with Maryanne Housea and

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her daughters Kim and Denise and many of the lawyers you worked with including Eric Wilson SC, Justice Peter Hamill and Judge Sophia Beckett. You found your life partner in the boy next door, Ernie Benton who actually did live next door to you in Dubbo. You then joined Legal Aid as a Solicitor Advocate for two years and in 1999 you were called to the Bar. Soon after you were appointed a public defender. Here you built a substantial District Court practice at Sydney and the regional courts but the bulk of your practice was in the Supreme Court.

You took Silk in 2009. That same year your Honour was appointed as the first female Deputy Senior Public Defender. You were appointed to the District Court in 2014. You have thrived as a judge, despite the initial strangeness of sitting on the other side of the bench. In your first weeks, so you would remember not to interject in arguments and submissions you applied post-it notes to your bench with some personal reminders including "Do not object, do not interfere and shut up".

You have presided over numerous and sometimes complex trials and sentencing proceedings including matters involving serious charges of sexual assault, attempted murder, drug supply and implementation of fraud. For the last two years you have been a Sydney District Court list judge responsible for trial management at the Sydney District Court as well as conducting sentencing proceedings, appeals, notices of motion and pre-trial arguments.

Your most recent role has been presiding in the Walama list which started in January. You were involved in the first discussions with the Chief Judge back in 2015 when you first took him your ideas for an Aboriginal sentencing court. He agreed with your suggestions and together you developed the first proposal for a Walama court. Having defended thousands

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of Aboriginal people in your career you believed there were more effective sentencing procedures that would help Aboriginal offenders rather than trapping them in a life of disadvantage and incarceration.

Although no evaluations of the list have been completed as yet, you have already seen remarkable transformations in the offenders who have been in the list so far. Your leadership and legal acumen have provided New South Wales with an innovative and compassionate form of justice to improve the lives of many people.

One of your noble appearances as counsel was in 2011 when you appeared in the High Court in the landmark case of *Bugmy v The Queen*. The accused, Bugmy, an Aboriginal man had been convicted of charges relating to an assault on a police officer. He was sentenced in the District Court. The Crown appealed his sentence to the Court of Criminal Appeal which increased the sentence. In the High Court you argued that Mr Bugmy's life had been one of deprivation and that this was not something that diminished over time regardless of any repeat offending. The High Court agreed and the matter was remitted to the CCA. The decision in *Bugmy* remains important because of the Court's recognition that the effects of a background of an accused's disadvantage and poverty are not reduced over time or diminished by repeat offending. The added significance of *Bugmy* is that it includes the consideration of the impact of disadvantage on any offender's life regardless of race or culture.

Given your stellar career path, it is difficult to imagine you have time for a life outside the Court. In fact the opposite is true. Your tenacity and passion aren't left at the court door. Friends have commented on your love of fine fashion and beautiful clothes, one going so far to suggest that you love the

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hunt for the right garments as much as you love to wear them. Your personal style is a delight to all. At the completion of one long complex case a juror sent a note to your Honour thanking you for the way you have conducted the trial. The note had a PS that said "Love the scrunchie".

You love music, you love dancing and have recently started learning salsa with your dear friend Tash. You enjoy travelling anywhere, be it a flight to Dubbo or to Paris but your happy place is in Greece on the beach in Paros. Ernie and you have travelled there frequently and are likely to make a welcome return for a landmark birthday celebration next year. You are a keen camper. Ernie and you have fitted out many kombi vans to suit your personal requirements making sure there is room for Ernie's art supplies and Issy the dog.

You belong to an exclusive book club with Judges Beckett, Hanley and Buscombe which is closed to new members. Their Honours and you are always reading the same book or sending your associates to each other's chambers with the latest tome. Your choices aren't always revered. You have been chastised regularly for persistently picking the longest book despite continued reminders that this is against the book club's rules.

You are involved with several District Court committees and outside the Court you chair the Ngarā Yura Committee and Diverse Women in Law. Diverse Women in Law was established in 2019. This professional network provides mentoring and support focusing not just on women lawyers cultural diversity but also their socioeconomic diversity.

Your friends and colleagues have said it is difficult to find enough words to describe your devotion to the law, your intelligence, your determination, your courage, your loyalty and your compassion. Your associate came close when

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she said,

“Her Honour has shared her love for the law and advocacy with me, mentored me, taught me to occupy spaces she knew I deserved and taught me to be outspoken in thought and practice. She has quite literally shaped my career and I would not be standing here without her”.

Oscar Wilde famously said that one can never be overdressed or overeducated, your Honour is a testament to the truth of that statement.

Your appointment to this Court acknowledges your faithful and outstanding service to the law and to the people of New South Wales. Your Honour congratulations and best wishes for your career in the Supreme Court. May it please the Court.

VAN DER PLAAT: May it please the Court. I too acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which this Court stands and I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I acknowledge and extend my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are with us today.

I come before the Court on behalf of the solicitors of our State to offer congratulations and wish your Honour well in your appointment to this Court. Mindful of the important role that family and relationships have played in your Honour’s life, I would like to acknowledge your partner Ernie who is with us today, your brother and nephews in New Zealand and your family in Egypt.

Today’s appointment reflects not only your excellence as a judge of the District Court but also your leadership in law reform. Your Honour has been called the creative force and driver behind the Walama list, first as chair of the working group and later as its first list judge. Today I will reflect on some of the distinctive qualities that your Honour has shown from the bench which has helped bring this project to fruition.

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I will begin with your ability to build relationships because that is what your Honour does, you put people first. Your Honour invested enormous time and energy over many years to build relationships with elders and their communities. This process began well before your appointment to the District Court. In 1989 the year you were admitted to the role, your Honour applied to join the Western Aboriginal Legal Service. The interview panel included the Board of Directors, 17 elders from right across western New South Wales including such luminaries as the late Steve Gordon and Tombo(?) Winters and Maureen O'Donnell. After your Honour gave an impassioned answer on the subject of politics Tombo Winters replied, "Well listen Dina what we really need is good lawyers, so you do that and you can leave the politics to us". The advice stuck.

As a solicitor, barrister and later a District Court judge, your Honour always combined legal excellence with a deep respect for the autonomy and capacity of First Nation's decision makers. Your ability to build relationships was on display when you were appointed to the Judicial Commission's Ngarra Yura Committee in 2016 and more recently as its Chair. The committee's project officer noted how core relationship building has been for your Honour. Reflecting upon your advocacy in the Bugmy case she noted its deeply personal legacy saying "When lawyers talk about Bugmy they're talking about a decision but when she talks about Bugmy she's talking about her client". This ability to build relationships wouldn't have been possible without the ability to listen both long and deeply. Colleagues have observed that when judicial officers of the Ngarra Yura Program meet with elders they are not tempted to speak into the silences, instead they understand the importance of silence in communication. This ability to listen has allowed for the voices and narratives

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of First Nations people to be heard in the District Court.

A solicitor at the Aboriginal Legal Service recently spoke with a client on the Walama list who said, and it is worth noting the quote in full.

“I'm going to really try and open up to the Court next time. I've never done that before but I feel like everyone is listening this time. I just owe it to the judge and to the elders to open up. They have shown me respect and I want to show it to them”.

Listening in the year of covid isn't without its challenges nor is running a court.

During the first covid lockdown your Honour was overheard saying that conducting a trial callover via audio visual link was akin to conducting a séance, it required a judge to call upon unseen parties and then ask them for a sign that they were in fact present.

In putting people first your Honour's ability to nurture, advocate on behalf of and recognise the need to support culturally diverse female lawyers is both valued and appreciated by those whom you support and the community at large. As Chair of Diverse Women in Law your Honour has an acute awareness of the benefits of a judiciary which reflects the wider population and the importance of intersectionality. As your Honour once said,

“So not just women but diverse women and not just diverse women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds are championed and promoted in the law”.

To quote a recent participant in a Diverse Women in Law event,

“Despite her Honour's position and workload she always turns up to events. She gives selflessly of her time and seeks to understand and find solutions to complex issues. She's approachable, refreshing and her diversity of thought is rare air”.

The final quality I wanted to touch upon today is your Honour's ability to journey, to navigate between worlds. As a young immigrant coming to Australia, as a newly admitted lawyer crossing the great dividing range or as a woman of colour ascending to the bench, your Honour's life has been full of

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journeys, both literal and metaphorical. Your Honour is still happy to travel. You have that unique brand of stamina that comes from having once worked out west, accustomed to sleeping overnight on buses for court appearances featuring up to 50 people in the list. You also never stand on ceremony, still happy to enter a community with nothing more than a Texta and a sticky name tag. Your Honour has an admirable ability to empathise, to see what the law looks like for a people who, as it says in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, are the most incarcerated people on the planet.

But more than this, you have the relationships, the networks and the understanding of the law to help create a program that seeks to make a meaningful difference to Indigenous incarceration rates. As the Walama list progresses to become, what we hope, the Walama Court, it might just be one of the ways our nation takes the journey to where we need to be. To quote one of your fellow committee members in the Ngara Yura Program, “When I look at Walama list I see what a post-reconciliation Australia might look like”.

The people of New South Wales are privileged to be served by you in this role and solicitors have every confidence that you will make an exceptional judicial officer in this Court. On behalf of the solicitors of New South Wales congratulations your Honour. As the Court pleases.

YEHIA J: Thank you Chief Justice for your very warm welcome. I look forward to serving as a judge of this Court under your leadership. Your Excellency, the Honourable Tom Bathurst AC, Mr Attorney, Ms Van Der Plaat, distinguished guests, members of the profession, friends and family.

I commence by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land upon which we gather today, the Gadigal of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I acknowledge First Nations peoples' continuing

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connection to lands, waters and culture. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. That phrase was coined by Uncle Jim Bates, a Barkindji man from Wilcannia. I am humbled by the presence of a number of his descendants here today including Maryanne Hausia, two of his granddaughters, Kim and Karen O'Donnell and one of his great granddaughters, Jasmine Crutchen. Thank you for being here.

I express my support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It is a powerful and generous statement in which our First Nations peoples invite us to walk with them for a better future. I also acknowledge all First Nations peoples present. The Walama Elders and members of the Aboriginal Service Union do me a great honour by attending this ceremony. I thank everybody for attending. I have been overwhelmed by the messages of support.

This occasion is made even more special, if that were at all possible given that it is taking place during Naidoc week, a week in which we celebrate the history, culture and achievements of our First Nations peoples. The theme of Naidoc week this year is get up, stand up, show up. As members of a privileged profession I hope that you will participate by standing up with First Nations peoples to address the wrongs of the past and continuing injustices.

Your Excellency, you do me a great honour by your presence. I am also very happy to see the Chief Justice of the ACT, thank you for making the effort to be here today. I look around and see many people for whom I have the deepest respect. I am deeply moved that you have taken the time to be here, it means a great deal.

I am told that Anthony Whealy, formerly Justice Whealy would be here, he's here. You were the trial judge in the Pandenis terrorism trial in which I appeared. The pretrial applications took place over a period of nearly one

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year. The jury trial took nine months and the jury were out for five weeks. It is only after I was appointed a judge of the District Court that I fully appreciated what his Honour had to contend with. We took every legal point, regrettably not with a high degree of success. It was no doubt very challenging given that his Honour had to produce over 100 judgments and keep the trial on track. Upon the announcement of my appointment I received a very warm message of congratulations from him adding "I hope they allocate you a very, very long trial".

I was given some advice about the length of this speech, ten to 12 minutes would be about right. I tried my best to keep it to 12 minutes, I failed. It is perhaps not the best start on this Court to ignore the first piece of advice given to me by the Chief Judge at Common Law but don't be anxious, while there is much to say, many people to acknowledge and thank, I will be relatively brief. If I don't mention you by name in this speech, please do not be offended and direct your complaint to the Chief Judge.

I thank the Attorney and Ms Van Der Plaats for your generous remarks. The Law Society and the Bar Association play critical roles in supporting the solicitors and barristers of this State who in turn have a critical role to play in the administration of justice. I acknowledge the President of the Bar Association, Ms Bashir SC. I had the privilege of appearing with you in the High Court on behalf of Mr William Bugmy. Your presidency is also a cause for celebration and I wish you all the best in your term as President of the New South Wales Bar Association.

Chief Justice, I am very honoured and humbled sitting here today as a judge of this Court. I have received a very warm welcome from the members of the Court and look forward to serving with them. Justice Adams has already

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been kind enough to celebrate my appointment by organising my welcome drinks and I hope that she will continue to take charge of the social calendar.

There is an obvious absence on the bench, Justice Hamill is overseas, as I understand it following the baseball circuit. We all know his love of catchwords so I thought I would try some of my own. "Justice Hamill missing in action, sighted at Fenway Park, lots of grovelling to do on his return."

Peter Hamill, (as he then was), and I started our careers in Western New South Wales. I was a junior solicitor with the Western Aboriginal Legal Service and he a junior barrister. We were both in our 20s appearing for many Indigenous clients in places like Bourke Local Court. Those were the days when our clients were regularly sentenced to terms of imprisonment for offensive language.

The seven years I spent as a solicitor with the Western Aboriginal Legal Service were amongst the best of my professional and personal life. Those years were rich with experience and learning, not just learning the law and legal craft but perhaps more importantly developing qualities that make for a good human being as well as a good lawyer. During my early career I was taught, influenced and mentored by some of the legends of the profession, Anthony Parker, John Terry, Eric Wilson and Bob Bolear. As young solicitors we were taught there was no place for what Anthony Parker referred to as "big noting". It was not about you, it was always about your client and the law. These advocates were not remarkable simply because of their skill and talent as lawyers but because of their sense of fairness, compassion, fearlessness and integrity. These are the qualities that underpin all that is noble about the profession.

I also had the privilege of working with incredibly talented young lawyers

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including Sophia Beckett, now Judge Beckett of the District Court. I had the privilege of working with her again during the terrorism trial. As you have heard, following my time in Western New South Wales I returned to Sydney where I worked at the Legal Aid Commission and then as a Public Defender. Back in Sydney I continued to have the good fortune to work with and learn from excellent lawyers including Peter Zahra, Paul Byrne, Phil Boulten, Janet Manuel and Tim Game. I am told that Tim Game still has a readers room available for me at Forbes Chambers. Tim, wherever you are, I think it's time that you released the room.

While preparing for this speech I asked Joanne Selfe, the Ngarra Yura Project Officer for an Indigenous word meaning "honoured". She kindly shared her knowledge with me and told me that the closest word to describe that concept is a Dharug word, Dadiabolong which means something like feeling good or a good feeling. Well that certainly describes how I am feeling today but I would be less than honest if I did not admit to sadness about leaving the District Court. I am proud to have served as a judge of that court. The judges of the District Court approach their work and fulfil their duties with energy and in the main good humour. It is a collegiate court. The judges support each other, understanding the immense responsibilities they bear and tackling the high volume of work they have to manage.

As many of you are aware recently we lost a much loved and highly regarded colleague, Judge Peter Zahra. It is only fitting that I acknowledge him in this speech. He worked tirelessly, taking on complex trials without complaint, sharing his knowledge and, it must be said, daggy humour. The tragedy of losing him was made bearable only with the support and warmth displayed by the judges of the Court for each other. Their work ethic and

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capacity to embrace change has been clearly demonstrated during the covid years.

It has been a challenging time for all courts but given the volume and complexity of the work of the District Court it has been particularly challenging. The Court, under the leadership of the Chief Judge, forged on. The judges had to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic, suspension of jury trials, lockdowns, AVL appearances, delays and disruptions and sometimes empanelling juries in the most bizarre of locations. I once empanelled a jury at the Lismore Workers Club and wondered whether those who had been challenged should have been compensated by a drink from the bar which was within reach. To the judges of the District Court, it has been an absolute privilege to serve with you.

The work and commitment of the registry staff must also be acknowledged, in particular I thank Mr Fornito the Criminal Listing Director, Ms Garvey and Ms Kosmas for their support and friendship. Mr Fornito I will miss our daily chats, your supply of almonds and my weekly amazement at how you manage to ensure that we reach all trials listed on a Monday even when it appeared to be an impossible task.

I also take the opportunity to thank my associates who have worked with me over the years. I want to particularly thank my current associate, Shahad Almajed who has demonstrated again and again her capacity to fulfil any task assigned to her. From almost singlehandedly developing the administrative structure required to support the Walama list, to packing up my chambers in the District Court and making sure that my transition has been seamless.

Of course the courts could not have kept the wheels of justice churning

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without the cooperation and collaboration of the profession. The profession stepped up. Led by your presidents and regulatory bodies you also adapted. Barristers and solicitors rallied in an effort to make sure that the courts continue to operate. I am not suggesting that it has been easy or that we haven't had problems along the way. I am not saying that appearing in the 3.1 list court where a certain judge grilled you about non-compliance has always been an easy experience. Some of you have been on the receiving end of the raised eyebrow but I hope that it has not been an altogether unpleasant experience. We managed in the main to reach trials and finalise sentencing and appeal proceedings.

During my time on the District Court I have been deeply grateful for the opportunity to preside in the Walama list. This has been a significant privilege. The Walama list commenced operation in January this year. I again acknowledge the support and determination of the Chief Judge of the District Court in ensuring that the Walama list commence operating as the first step to a fully funded and legislated Walama Court. The Walama sentencing and case plan conversations have been powerful. The Elders and members of the Aboriginal Service Unit are instrumental in implementing a holistic approach to sentencing that incorporates the cultural authority of our First Nations peoples. While there is much more work to be done, I am proud of our achievements and am confident that Walama will continue to prove its value given the commitment of our Elders, the Aboriginal Service Unit team, the Walama working group and the judges who will be involved, Judge Hunt, Judge Weinstein and Judge Sweeney, to name some.

The disproportionate rate of First Nations peoples in our prisons continues to be a scandal. The high rates of incarceration, intergenerational

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trauma, lower life expectancy, continuing unemployment and poverty are sources of great shame in this country. We, that is non-First Nations peoples, make up 97% of the population. We bear the responsibility of doing the heavy lifting. At the very least we bear the responsibility of engaging in truth telling about our history and educating ourselves about the rich cultural heritage of our First Nations peoples. They have a lot to teach us including how to better relate to each other and to our environment.

Today is a long way from December 1970 when my parents, my brother and I migrated to Australia having left Egypt and a very large and closeknit extended family. As a child of 7, going on 8, unable to speak or understand a word of English, I was bewildered by my parents' decision to leave our country of birth and our extended family. It was not always easy but the opportunities afforded me in Australia allowed me to take up positions of privilege in a profession that I was committed to joining from a very young age. I believe that I am the first person of Greek/Egyptian decent to sit on this Court. As a woman and an immigrant I encourage diversity in the profession. Diversity on the Bench is an essential component of a fair and impartial judiciary. If our institutions are to remain strong and independent, they must reflect the community they represent.

Upon the announcement of my appointment I received hundreds of messages congratulating me. Many of them came from people from diverse backgrounds, some lawyers, some not. I received a message from a non-lawyer, a woman living in South Western Sydney which simply read "Your appointment means so much to our communities out here". Another message from a barrister who I will not name read in part,

"I am sure I speak for many barristers and solicitors from non-

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English speaking backgrounds when I say we celebrate your Honour's elevation because it makes us just a little more proud of the work that we do and our place in this society".

Before I conclude, I want to say something to the young men and women in the law who come from diverse backgrounds, some of whom I have had the privilege of mentoring, some of you have shared with me your uncertainty about whether you belong in this profession, I hope today gives you some confidence that you do belong. You have much to offer the profession. You bring to it your lived experience, your capacity for hard work and your resilience.

I turn now to acknowledge and thank my family and friends. Sadly my brother and beautiful nephews could not be here today but I hope they are watching in New Zealand. I am very proud of the three of you and look forward to celebrating with you in person once you get your act together Talat and renew your passports. I have only one regret and that is that my parents did not live to see me appointed to the District and Supreme Courts, they would have been very proud. My mother in particular would have loved the pomp and ceremony of today's occasion and would have felt vindicated that her strict study regime, and I mean strict study regime, inflicted upon me as a child paid off.

Having left one extended family behind in Egypt I was very fortunate to form a second extended family made up of longstanding friends who have been a great source of support, comfort and love over the years. I am not going to name you all, you know who you are. I thank my friend, Tash, for her 40 plus years of friendship. That friendship was forged in Mrs Clarke's three unit English class over D H Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. We have continued to debate important topics over the years, including the benefits of the jury

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system. For the record I advocate on behalf of the jury system, Tash, a psychologist, against.

I also want to acknowledge a formidable Barkindji woman, Maryanne Hausia. It came as a great surprise to me that she honoured me with her presence here today. Together with her husband and wonderful family, they welcomed me into their home and essentially adopted me as their fifth daughter when I moved to Western New South Wales in late 1989. Your strength, resilience, wisdom and support has been life changing. To the Alvarez Cameron Clan, thank you for being part of this rich tapestry that is now my family.

In keeping with tradition, I have kept the most important person until last. I want to thank my partner of 32 years, Ernie Benton for always having my back. You have always understood the importance of my work and have supported me without complaint. From the days when you used to put me on the midnight bus to Broken Hill so that I could make it in time to start the Broken Hill list and help Brian Hancock, to listening to my incessant talking about my trials, tolerating the long hours of work both at night and on weekends. You continue to support me unconditionally. None of this could have happened without you.

When I was sworn into the District Court I pledged that I would not develop judge-itis, a condition described by Rumpole as,

“A ridiculous inflation of self-importance, with increased intolerance, a fatal tendency to suck up to juries, to interfere with cross-examination by defending counsel and doing your best to find all the customers in the dock guilty”.

I believe that I have fulfilled that pledge. Today I pledge that I will continue to be true to my oath of office, to do my best to uphold the law with the

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independence, fairness and intellectual integrity that are essential to the role.

Thank you Chief Justice.

BELL CJ: Thank you. The Court will now adjourn.