

The Hon Brian John Keith Cohen QC

The title of Honorary Fellow was conferred upon The Hon Brian John Keith Cohen at the ceremony held on 27 October 2000.

Citation

Chancellor

I have the privilege of presenting the Honourable Brian John Keith Cohen QC, for the conferring of the title of Honorary Fellow of the University.

A Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 1983 until his retirement last year, Brian Cohen is a graduate of the University in Arts and Law. Soon after his appointment to the Bench, Justice Cohen became a member of what is now the Legal Practitioners Admission Board. The University has a long history of providing legal education to the Board's students through its Law Extension Committee and in due course Justice Cohen became the Chair of the Committee.

Brian Cohen was called to the Bar in 1952, took silk in 1976, and that year was made a Master of the Equity Division of the Supreme Court. He hastened the evolution of the role of Master, which has administrative and judicial elements, and made the Equity Division much more accessible. Further evidence of his managerial ability and outstanding commitment to the profession and legal education was his chairmanship from 1991 to 1996 of both the Legal Practitioners Admission Board and its Legal Qualifications Committee. At the same time he continued to chair the Law Extension Committee.

More recently, Justice Cohen has been the Supreme Court's representative on the Steering Committee for the Conference of State and Federal Court Judges, a Member of the Board of the College of Law, and a teacher of legal ethics. He has been a constant and inspiring supporter of law students, often attending universities to share his experience and insights. A common thread of appreciation of Brian Cohen among his peers is the recognition of his attentive and respectful manner in all circumstances. In the view of a former instructing solicitor, his mild demeanour and polite and persistent finesse in court has served clients and the public exceptionally well.

From the mid-1980s and through the 1990s, his diplomacy served the University well as he shepherded the Law Extension Committee through some troubled times. He always maintained the primacy of the Committee's goal to extend to as many as possible an education and a career in law. When impending retirement from the Supreme Court meant resignation from the Law Extension Committee, Justice Cohen ensured that the Committee was left with a renewed stability and purpose.

A desire to promote an understanding of law and access to legal education has characterised Justice Cohen's involvement with the University, and the University has been the grateful beneficiary of his expert and generous commitment.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting the Honourable Brian Cohen for the conferring of the title of Honorary Fellow of the University.