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Chief Justice appointment a landmark in Australian history

The appointment of the Honourable Justice Susan Mary Kiefel AC as the next Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia is a landmark moment for Australia's legal system and the nation, according to the Law Council of Australia.

Law Council President, Stuart Clark AM, said Justice Kiefel had served with distinction as a Justice of the High Court since 2007.

"Justice Kiefel will be the 13th Chief Justice of the High Court, and the first woman appointed to that role," Mr Clark said.

"Prior to her appointment, Justice Kiefel was already a trailblazer for women in the legal profession. She was the first female QC appointed in Queensland in 1987. She was appointed to the Queensland Supreme Court in 1993 and the Federal Court of Australia in 1994.

"Among her many achievements, she has also served as President of the Queensland Bar Association, and as a part-time Commissioner of the Australian Law Reform Commission," Mr Clark said.

Leaving school at the age of 15, Justice Kiefel studied law at night while working full-time. She then went on to build a successful practice at the bar leading to her appointment to the Queensland Supreme Court.

"Justice Kiefel's talent and commitment to her profession has taken her to Australia's highest judicial office," Mr Clark said.

"Justice Kiefel's success should serve as an inspiration to all young people considering a career in law."

Mr Clark paid tribute to outgoing the Honourable Chief Justice Robert French AC.

"Chief Justice French has been an exemplary leader of the Court over the past eight years. His entire career has been devoted to public service. He leaves a legacy of important contributions to the law, notably in his commitment to Indigenous justice," Mr Clark said.

Mr Clark also welcomed the appointment of the Honourable Justice James Joshua Edelman to fill Justice Kiefel's seat on the High Court.

"Justice Edelman's career has been remarkable having made significant contributions as both an academic and legal practitioner.

"The breadth Justice Edelman's achievements to date are all the more remarkable by his relative youth.

"Underlying these achievements, however, has been a very clear commitment to public service, driven by a desire that the community should understand and respect the importance of the law for an ordered society.

"The Law Council of Australia congratulates Chief Justice French on his achievements in leading the High Court, Justice Kiefel on her historic appointment and Justice Edelman on his elevation to the High Court," Mr Clark said.

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