

# ADLS Employment Law Dinner – a fond farewell to NZ’s longest serving Employment Court Judge

By Liz Coats, Senior Associate, Bell Gully, on behalf of the ADLS Employment Law Committee

Around 140 employment law practitioners, judges, academics and friends attended the annual ADLS Employment Law Dinner held at the Northern Club in Auckland on Wednesday 28 June 2017, as well as Chief Judge Colgan’s wife and his four children, two of whom are lawyers.

This year’s dinner was a particularly notable occasion, being held in honour of his Honour Chief Judge Colgan, just over a week in advance of his retirement from the Employment Court Bench on Friday 7 July 2017.

The evening’s formalities were opened by Catherine Stewart, Convenor of ADLS’ Employment Law Committee. Ms Stewart spoke in place of retired Judge Travis, who served in the Employment Court with Chief Judge Colgan for many years, but was unfortunately unable to attend on the day.

Ms Stewart recounted several humorous personal anecdotes on Judge Travis’ behalf, and warmly thanked his Honour for his humanity, contribution to the profession, and generous service as an Employment Court judge.

Chief Judge Colgan then addressed the attendees, speaking about how he came to be a lawyer (despite no family history in the profession), his early industrial law career with Haigh Lyon (previously known as Haigh & Charters), and his move to the independent bar at Southern Cross Chambers in 1978.

His Honour recounted some of the employment law cases that he took which made a particular



The Hon Margaret Wilson, Catherine Stewart, his Honour Chief Judge Colgan and Joanna Pidgeon

impression on him, as well as noting the changes to New Zealand employment law over his time as a practitioner and then judge – first on the Labour Court in 1989 (at just 35 years of age), and then as the longest serving Employment Court judge in its history (from 1991 to 2017).

ADLS’ Employment Law Dinner is an annual feature of the ADLS Employment Law Committee schedule, and this year was especially well-attended, with people coming from all over New Zealand to be part of this special evening in honour of the Chief Judge’s contribution to employment law in New Zealand.

Special thanks go to Jodi Libbey of ADLS and to the members of the ADLS Employment Law Committee who were involved in organising the dinner. ADLS and LawNews wish his Honour all the best for the future. ❄



Rodney Harrison QC and Emily Strom



Simon Schofield, Alexandra Wallace, Lucy Carruthers and Kate Ashcroft



Vicki Campbell and Christopher Eggleston