

MEDIA RELEASE

Chief Justice Murrell and Justice Burns to retire

The ACT's two most senior judges have announced their retirement.

After 31 years on the bench, Justice John Burns will retire on 31 August 2021. There will be a ceremonial sitting to mark his Honour's retirement on Monday, 30 August 2021.

After 25 years as a judge, Chief Justice Helen Murrell will retire on 7 March 2022.

In 1995, Chief Justice Murrell was appointed Senior Counsel in NSW. In 1996, her Honour became a Judge of the District Court of NSW. Her Honour was an Acting Judge in the Land and Environment Court of NSW, President of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal of NSW, Deputy President of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal of NSW (Equal Opportunity Division), and Deputy Chairperson of the NSW Medical Tribunal. Her Honour was instrumental in establishing the first Australian drug court, the Drug Court of NSW, and, from 1998 to 2003, her Honour was the first Senior Judge of that Court.

In 2013, Chief Justice Murrell was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the ACT. Her Honour is the first woman to have held that position. Her Honour quickly introduced case management procedures (including court-based mediation of civil and criminal trials), fundamentally changed the Court's listing procedures and, with the support of the Principal Registrar and Supreme Court Registrar, introduced governance measures designed to ensure the efficiency and transparency of the Court's operations. Currently, the Court has no backlog of matters and listing dates are readily available. Chief Justice Murrell played a central role in the development of the new courthouse. Over many years, her Honour has supported the work of the national judicial education body, the National Judicial College of Australia (NJCA). From 2016 to 2020, her Honour was Chair of the NJCA.

At only 33 years of age, Justice Burns was appointed a magistrate. During his 19 years as a magistrate, his Honour spent three years as the Childrens Court Magistrate. From 2007, as List Coordinating Magistrate, his Honour managed the Court's lists efficiently. In 2009, his Honour was appointed Chief Magistrate. In acknowledgement of his outstanding competence in that role, in 2011, his Honour was appointed to the Supreme Court. His Honour chairs the Court's Criminal Procedure Committee, which has proposed many procedural improvements. In 2018, his Honour chaired the committee developing a model for what is now the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List, a therapeutic list that supports the rehabilitation of persons addicted to drugs or alcohol. His Honour is an Additional Judge of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and, in 2020, his Honour presided over the high-profile trial of Bravos in Darwin.



SUPREME COURT

OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

As judges and heads of jurisdiction, Chief Justice Murrell and Justice Burns have promoted court efficiency through strong and direct management of court lists and judicial resources, and through operational and fiscal accountability. Both have supported therapeutic jurisprudence, which prioritises rehabilitation and the giving of voice to victims.



Chief Justice Murrell and Justice Burns express their gratitude to their judicial colleagues, their chambers staff, the Principal Registrar and Supreme Court Registrar, the Registry staff, and the lawyers of the ACT for their willingness to embrace change, their professionalism, and their strong work ethic—qualities which were most apparent in 2020, when the Court continued to operate almost without interruption during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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