



Monday, 6 October 2003

The Commission and the High Court exhibition

An exhibition celebrating links between the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the High Court of Australia was opened by the Hon. Justice Michael Kirby in Melbourne today.

Staged by the Sir Richard Kirby Archives, the exhibition is timed to coincide with the centenary of the High Court. It is intended that it will run until 30 January 2004.

In opening the exhibition Justice Kirby said that from the earliest days of federation the High Court and the national industrial tribunal were 'inextricably bound together to advance the welfare of Australia and its people'.

'By its awards, the industrial tribunal probably contributed as much to nation-building in the early decades of federation as the High Court,' he said.

'Just as the High Court's decisions affected the law in every part of the nation, so the awards of the industrial tribunal set the employment standards for all Australians.'

The exhibition explores 10 significant industrial cases and the nine individuals who have served on both institutions.

Only 43 Justices have been appointed to the High Court since its establishment in 1903. This means that about one in five who have served on Australia's highest court have also served on the national industrial body.

Justice Kirby, who was appointed to the High Court in February 1996, served as a Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (a predecessor body of the current Commission) between 1975 and 1983.

He said the connection between the judges of the High Court and the industrial tribunal were only half the story. Every High Court judge had had to decide crucial cases concerning the scope of the powers of the national industrial body.

The archives' exhibition is being staged at the Commission's Melbourne headquarters in Nauru House, 80 Collins Street.

Further information

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