

HONOURABLE LINDA DESSAU



On 1 July 2015, the Honourable Linda Dessau AM was sworn in as Victoria's 29th Governor, the first female in the role.

Governor Dessau was born in Melbourne in 1953, and was educated at St Catherine's Girls' School, matriculating in 1969, before attending the University of Melbourne, where she gained the degree of LLB (Hons). In 1975 she was admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

In her early years as a lawyer, the Governor practised in commercial litigation and family law as a solicitor at Wisewoulds, later specialising in family law after signing the Roll of Counsel at the Victorian Bar in 1978.

In 1982 she married fellow Victorian barrister, Anthony Howard, and together they took up roles as Crown Counsel, and later Senior Crown Counsel in the Hong Kong Attorney-General's chambers, where they prosecuted criminal trials.

Soon after returning to Australia in 1985, the Governor was appointed a part-time member of the Small Claims and Residential Tenancies Tribunals, taking her first judicial appointment as a Magistrate in 1986, at the age of thirty-three. In that role, she served in the Children's Court, Coroners Court and Melbourne Magistrates' Court where she ultimately headed the Civil division and later the Committal Court.

During her time as a Magistrate, the Governor coordinated a significant criminal case management project, culminating in the Pegasus Report, implemented across the three tiers of courts to help reduce cost and delay in the criminal justice system. In 1994 she was awarded the Percy Baxter Churchill Fellowship to further her study in criminal case management in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In June 1995, the Governor was appointed a Judge of the Family Court of Australia, where she served for 18 years until July 2013. During that time she chaired or participated in various national projects within and outside the Court in relation to child abuse, family violence, mediation, less adversarial trial procedures and case management, and represented the Family Court on the Commonwealth Family Law Pathways Advisory Group. She was a Board member of the US based Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, a Council member of the Legal Aid Consultative Committee, and a Board member of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

The Governor was actively engaged in the area of judicial education, including as a Director of the National Judicial College of Australia, and as a long-standing faculty member and facilitator of the National Judicial Orientation Program. For many years she helped create and teach judgment writing courses on behalf of the National Judicial College of Australia, the Judicial College of Victoria, and for courts and tribunals throughout Australia.

Outside the law, the Governor was engaged in a broad range of community organisations, including as founding Chair of the Essendon Football Club Women's Network, President of Middle Park Primary

School Council, Vice-President of Wesley College Council, a Board member of Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre, a member of the Royal Children's Hospital Ethics Committee and the La Trobe University Professional Consultative Council, and a Patron of the Epilepsy Foundation and One Umbrella (food recycling charity).

Immediately before her appointment as Governor, she was President of the Melbourne Festival, Chair of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Victorian Regional Committee and a national Board member of the Trust, a Commissioner of the Australian Football League, a Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, a Board member and former Chair of AFL Sportsready and Artsready, a Board member of the Unicorn Foundation, and a Patron of Sports Connect.