

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE5428

Mullins, Debra Ann

(1957 -)

Nationality Australian

Born 1 January, 1957, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Occupation Barrister, Judge, Lawyer, Senior Counsel, Solicitor, Tribunal Member

Summary

Debra Mullins is a Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland, a Trustee of the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation and the Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane. She is the patron of Justice and the Law Society based at the University of Queensland and a member of the Visiting Committee of the Griffith Law School. She is also extensively involved in judicial education through her work with the National Judicial College of Australia.

Details

Debra Mullins was born in 1957 in Sydney, to Ken Curtis, bookmaker, and Laurina Curtis (née Holz). She has two sisters, Karen Curtis and Roslyn Curtis. She attended Coorparoo State High School from 1969 until 1973, where she was dux of her year. Debra was interested in a career in the law and enrolled in a dual degree of Commerce and Law at the University of Queensland in 1974. Throughout this period and into her professional life, Debra was strongly supported and encouraged by her family.

Debra completed her undergraduate degrees at the University of Queensland in Commerce in 1977 and in Law with Honours in 1980. During her university years, she taught speech and drama.

Debra was admitted as a solicitor in 1980. She had completed her articles of clerkship at Kinsey Bennett and Gill, where she then worked as a solicitor until 1984. During this period, she worked closely with her master, Graham Macdonald, who greatly influenced the development of her areas of expertise in the law, particularly in property law and landlord/tenant law.

Debra married Patrick Mullins in 1981. They have three children. Debra describes her husband Pat, who is also a lawyer, as her greatest supporter. Debra went on to complete a Master of Laws in 1987, again at the University of Queensland, which was upgraded to a Master of Laws (Advanced) in 1999.

In 1984, Debra was admitted to the Bar, where she worked predominantly in commercial, property and estate matters. She did experience occasional reluctance of clients and solicitors to brief female barristers, but considered they were the losers by depriving themselves of complete choice from the available pool of talent at the Bar.

There was an underrepresentation of women at the Bar, and Debra sought to remedy this through involvement with the Law Council of Australia's Equalising Opportunities in the Law Committee, as well as chairing a similar committee for the Bar Association of Queensland, and through her mentoring of junior women barristers. Debra became a member of the Women Lawyers Association of Queensland in 1980 and has continued to be a loyal supporter of its activities.

In 1998, Debra was appointed Senior Counsel. She performed duties as a part time member of the Queensland Building Tribunal and as a part time member of the Queensland Law Reform Commission.

Debra was appointed to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court of Queensland on 16 March 2000.

During her career on the bench, Debra has continued to be involved in the legal community through a variety of organisations. As well as involvement with her judicial peers through the National Judicial College of Australia, Debra regularly assists with the Bar Practice Course, assessing and encouraging trainee barristers. She also regularly volunteers her time to assist lawyers in furthering their professional development, presenting on a wide range of topics.

Mentoring has also been a part of Debra's activities. Through mentoring the young law students from Justice and the Law Society, acting as a judge in moots, to staying in touch with her long list of former associates, Debra is much involved with assisting subsequent generations of legal professionals. Debra was the inaugural Judge in Residence at the Griffith Law School for a week in September 2014.

Debra's life is also marked by her Christian faith and her involvement in the Anglican Church. In 2004, Debra was appointed Deputy Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, a position which she held until appointed Chancellor in July 2014. Debra has been a member of the Chapter of St John's Cathedral, Brisbane, since 2002.

In 2009 the Queensland Law Society awarded Debra the Agnes McWhinney Award in recognition of outstanding achievement by a female practitioner.

In 2010 Debra was admitted by Griffith University to the honorary degree of Doctor of the University for her contribution through her membership of the Griffith Law School Visiting Committee to the development and maintenance of close relations between the Griffith Law School and the legal profession.

Events

2019 - 2019

Officer of the Order of Australia (AO): For distinguished service to the law, and to the judiciary, to professional development and legal education, and to women.

Published resources

Book Section

Debra Mullins, Gregory, Helen, 2005

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Author Details

Debra Mullins

Created 6 October 2015

Last modified 12 June 2019

Digital resources



Title: Debra Mullins

Type: Image

Date: 3 May, 2023