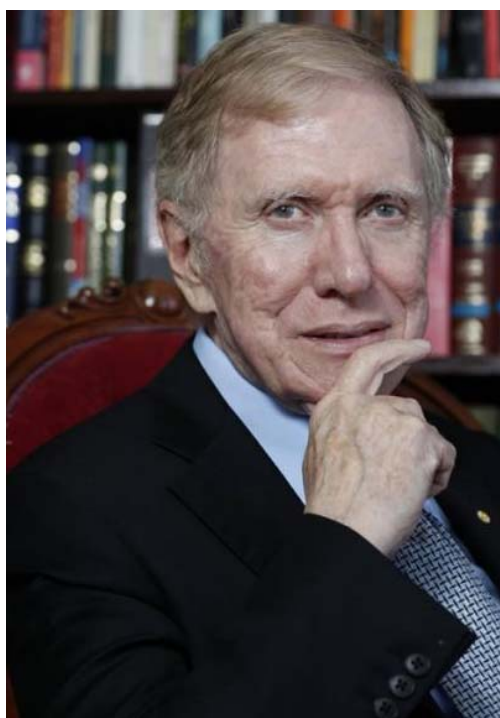


The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG

Justice of the High Court of Australia (1996-2009)

Message to the ASRC



“I am delighted to add my words of congratulations on the tenth-anniversary celebrations of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. I wish I could have been with you to join in the festivities.

I honour the clients who teach the lawyers, civil society organisations and citizens the critical lessons concerning the importance of living in a rule of law society which upholds the dignity and rights of everyone. I honour the staff and volunteers who have played such a crucial part in the work of the centre. I honour the supporters who have helped to make it possible.

Sometimes, the experience of working in and for the centre will have been discouraging. The provisions of the enacted law and the limited avenues of judicial and other redress are bound to produce frustrations, anxiety and stress, not least amongst the asylum seekers themselves, their families, supporters and professional helpers.

Those engaged in the centre must not only seek to provide assistance to asylum seekers. They must also become advocates for a better and more just legal regime in Australia. After all, they can draw upon their uniquely intense experiences. And about them, they should never be silent. They should speak up and seek to persuade their fellow citizens, including politicians, to adopt a more human rights respecting approach in the law and policy of this land.



Biography

When he retired from the High Court of Australia on 2 February 2009, Michael Kirby was Australia's longest serving judge.

He was first appointed in 1975 as a Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation & Arbitration Commission. Soon after, he was seconded as inaugural Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission (1975-84). Later, he was appointed a judge of the Federal Court of Australia, President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal and, concurrently, the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands. His appointment to the High Court came in 1996 and he served thirteen years. In later years, he was Acting Chief Justice of Australia twice.

In addition to his judicial duties, Michael Kirby served on three university governing bodies being elected Chancellor of Macquarie University in Sydney (1984-93). He also served on many national and international bodies. Amongst the latter have been service as a member of the World Health Organisation's Global Commission on AIDS (1988-92); President of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva (1995-8); as UN Special Representative Human Rights in Cambodia (1993-6); a member of the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee (1995-2005); a member of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Judicial Reference Group (2007-) and a member of the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights (2004-).

Since his judicial retirement, Michael Kirby was elected President of the Institute of Arbitrators & Mediators Australia from 2009-2010. He also serves as Editor-in-Chief of The Laws of Australia. He has been appointed Honorary Visiting Professor by twelve universities. And he participates regularly in many local and international conferences and meetings. He has been awarded eighteen honorary doctorates.

In 2010, he was awarded the Gruber Justice Prize. He is also presently a member of the Eminent Persons Group which is investigating the future of the Commonwealth of Nations; and has been appointed to the UNDP Global Commission of HIV and the Law. In 2010, he was appointed to the Arbitration Panel of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (World Bank).

