

The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG

Australia's Longest Serving Judicial Officer and Keynote Speaker

The Hon. Michael Kirby was one of the seven Justices of Australia's highest constitutional and appellate court, the High Court of Australia, until his retirement in February 2009. One of the country's greatest intellects, he is a much sought after speaker and lecturer on law and justice, in both the broad and practical senses of these ideals.



Michael Kirby was the first Australian to be awarded the Gruber Justice Prize in 2010 and has been Patron of the Kirby Institute on Blood Borne Diseases in UNSW Sydney, Australia since 2011. In May 2017, he was invested by Japan with the insignia of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star in Tokyo, with an audience with the Emperor of Japan. In 2018, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales (Est. 1866). He was also named for the 2018 United Nations Honour by the United Nations Association of Australia.

More about the Hon. Michael Kirby:

The Hon. Michael Kirby was Australia's longest serving judge when he retired from the High Court of Australia on 2 February 2009. He was first appointed in 1975 as a Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation & Arbitration Commission. Soon after, he became inaugural Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission (1975-84). Later, he was appointed a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, then President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal (1984-96) and, concurrently, President of the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands (1995-6). His appointment to the High Court of Australia followed 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 has 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); as President of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva (1995-8); as UN Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia (1993-6); as a member of the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee (1995-2005); and as a member of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Judicial Reference Group (2007- 9). He became a member of the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights in 2004.

Following his judicial retirement, Michael Kirby was elected President of the Institute of



Arbitrators & Mediators Australia from 2009-2010. He served as a Board Member of the Australian Centre for International Commercial Arbitration (2009-14). 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 a number of honorary doctorates at home and abroad. He was engaged as Editor-in-Chief of The Laws of Australia in 2009.

He served 2011-12 as a member of the Eminent Persons Group on the future of the Commonwealth of Nations. He was a Commissioner of the UNDP Global Commission of HIV and the Law 2011-2012. He was appointed to the Advisory Council of Transparency International, based in Berlin in 2012. In 2013- 2014, he was appointed Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights Violations in North Korea. He was a Commissioner of the UNAIDS Lancet Commission on AIDS to the Right to Health (2013-2014); the Global Fund's Equitable Access Panel (2015-16); the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Access to Essential Medicines (2015-16); and UNAIDS/OHCHR's panel on overreach of criminal law (2017). He was appointed Co-Chair of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute in 2018.

Client testimonials

“ Justice Kirby discussed the lessons he had learned from a life in the High Court - from the reasons behind interpretations of the Constitution, to the importance of having people understand why judges make certain decisions. This was a fascinating talk, and a wonderful end to the year's Breakfast Series.

- *National Trust of Australia*

“ Michael was the highest rated speaker with 86% of delegates saying he was excellent. There were many delegates that came out of the session commenting how great he was and they would also like to see more speakers like Michael in the future. One person commented Michael was the grand finale!

- *Aged Care Standards & Accreditation Agency Ltd*

“ Michael was engaging and inspiring, skilfully aligning the wealth of his experience and his views with the theme of the conference. The majority of staff and members (over 80%) participating in the conference rated the keynote presentation by Michael excellent or very good.

- *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)*

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