



## Court snub claim angers Bar Association

THE appointment of Premier Will Hodgman's best man to a \$430,000 job as a Supreme Court judge was made despite a selection panel recommending another candidate, the Greens have claimed in State Parliament. During question time this morning, Greens leader Cassy O'Connor asked Mr Hodgman whether the successful applicant, Gregory Geason, had initially applied for the role or was prompted to do so by the Government.

## Premier's best-man becomes the kissing judge as revelling lawyers party in Grand Poobah nightclub

Controversial Supreme Court judge Gregory Geason made the front page of the *The Mercury* newspaper (above) recently after reports he was reprimanded for "a late night intimate kiss" in a nightclub with a junior court employee.

He is the junior's boss.

A photograph apparently has captured the pair at the Grand Poobah nightclub in Hobart on Friday 29 January 2021, on the night of formal opening of the legal year, in what has been described as a consensual 'pash' embrace.

Geason was a controversial appointment. The Tasmanian Greens claim he was appointed to the \$430,000 Supreme Court job over another candidate recommended by the selection panel. The Bar Association was reportedly not impressed (see photo (right)).

Geason has been reported as being best man at the wedding of Wil Hodgman, who was state Premier when Geason was promoted to the judiciary. Hodgman can no longer be quizzed on the matter in the parliament, He stepped down in 2020 and in 2021 became Australian Ambassador to Singapore, which is pivotal position usually reserved for people with appropriate diplomatic experience.

Chief judge Alan Blow has "counselled" Geason, reports say.

Reports say the only option open to deal with the kissing judge is counselling by head judge Alan Blow. Next step up is suspension or removal from office by the Governor of Tasmania if both Houses of Parliament vote for for that.

The rules around judges in Tasmania (and elsewhere in Australia) are archaic. They date from 1857 in the island state.

## Blow for top judge's bid for job extension, more remuneration

A spokesperson for chief judge Blow said judge Geason was summoned back to Hobart after he wound up a criminal trial in Burnie.

The spokesman said there the move came "largely because of concerns that publicity about the judge's conduct might result in jurors not giving full concentration to cases in which he presides".

He said there was a "risk that jurors may not pay proper attention to the proceedings if they were distracted by the thought that there may be some sort of inappropriate relationship between the trial judge and [the employee], or by thoughts about the personal morality of the trial judge."

Judge Blow is leading a push – complete with PR appearances in the media – for Tasmanian judges to have their gigs extended from forcible retirement at 72 to 75. His reasons for the extension include to “alleviate recruitment problems” as well as enable current judges to make better provision for their retirements.

He also said it “seemed inevitable that recruitment and retention of talented judges would become more and more difficult”.

This is a total furphy, CLA believes: the very high likelihood is that younger judges would be better educated and more attuned to the modern world than the aged incumbents.

There is absolutely no reason why the majority of judges or magistrates should come from the ranks of barristers, as has been common practice. Being a barrister and being a judge are two radically different pursuits: think of barristers as prize fighters, and judges as referees.

If the Blow push succeeds, six male judges will likely be entrenched on the Supreme Court of Tasmania for another 18 years in total. Instead, CLA believes, any extension of the retiring age should apply to judges appointed from now on, not to the incumbents.

A new round of appointments now would allow for 50% of Tasmania’s Supreme Court judges to be female. Under judge Blow, it is currently one in seven, or 14%.

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