

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE5576

Symon, Helen

Occupation Barrister, Lawyer, Queen's Counsel, Solicitor

Summary

Helen Symon QC is a leading advocate with wide experience in taxation law as well as commercial and administrative law. She appears regularly in the High Court of Australia, the Federal Court of Australia and the Supreme Court of Victoria. One of the most experienced taxation silks in Australia, Symon has been, professionally, 'outstandingly successful – for a woman. That,' she says, 'sums up both my professional achievements and my professional frustrations.'

Details

Helen Symon graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws (Hons) at the University of Melbourne. She was admitted to practice in April 1984 and has progressed since to become one of Australia's leading advocates in taxation, commercial and administrative law. She was appointed silk on 28 November 2000 and appears regularly in the High Court of Australia, the Federal Court of Australia and the Supreme Court of Victoria. Despite this, or perhaps, because of this, she has encountered the frustrations of gender discrimination along the way. In an interview in 2007 she said, 'Women know that they are seen in a different light, or their skills are seen in a different light, or they're not recognised to the same degree that some of the men are and it is a real frustration because you've got this little voice in your head saying, 'Well I'm okay, I'm doing a good job.'"

Symon has been active in professional associations. In 1996, she was the third convenor of the Women Barristers' Association and has campaigned on such matters as rental subsidies on chambers for women with young children. She was an advocate member of the Legal Profession Tribunal from 1997 to 1999 and a member of the Victorian Bar's Readers' Course Committee from 1988 to 1999. She was involved in teaching advocacy from as early as 1987, first in the Victorian Bar Readers' Course and, from its inception, at the Australian Advocacy Institute. She was Chair of the Leo Cussen Institute (now Leo Cussen Centre for Law) from 2009 to 2013, during which time the Institute's government funding was withdrawn and it was re-invented as a business.

Symon was a member of the Victorian Bar Pro Bono Committee from 2006 to 2008. In 2016 she is Chair of the Victorian Bar Ethics Committee and a member of the Federal Court Users' Committee. From 1999 to 2002, she was President of the Buoyancy Foundation of Victoria which provides drug and alcohol counselling services. She has also served as Chair of the Hunger Project Australia. From 2008 to 2014, Helen served on the board of the Australian Art Orchestra.

During the 1998 Constitutional Convention, Symon was a Candidate on the Women's Ticket – An Equal Say. She was an elected Board member of the Victorian Women's Trust from 1999 to 2002.

Published resources

Resource Section

Even it Up: A Conversation with past and present WBA convenors, Brodsky, Juliette and the Women Barristers Association, 2007,

http://oralhistory.vicbar.com.au/WBA_film_home.asp

Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm>

Site Exhibition

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Author Details

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Digital resources

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