

**Curriculum Vitae of  
The Honourable Chief Justice Robert French AC**

**1. Personal Background**

Robert Shenton French is a citizen of Australia, born in Perth, Western Australia on March 19, 1947. He married Valerie French in 1976. They have three sons and two granddaughters.

**2. Education**

Chief Justice French was educated at St Louis Jesuit College, Claremont in Western Australia and then at the University of Western Australia from which he graduated in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in physics and in 1970 with a Bachelor of Laws. He undertook two years of articles of clerkship with a law firm in Perth.

**3. Professional History**

Chief Justice French was admitted to practice in Western Australia in December 1972 as a Barrister and Solicitor – the profession in Western Australia being a fused profession. In 1975, with three friends, he established a law firm in which he practised as both Barrister and Solicitor until 1983 when he commenced practice at the Independent Bar in Western Australia. While in practice he served as a part-time Member of the Western Australian Law Reform Commission, the Western Australian Legal Aid Commission, the Trade Practices Commission (now known as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) and as Deputy President and later President of the Town Planning Appeal Tribunal of Western Australia.

On November 25, 1986, Chief Justice French was appointed as a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia. He continued to serve as a Judge of that Court until September 1, 2008. As a Judge of that Court he sat in both its original and appellate jurisdiction dealing with a wide range of civil cases including commercial disputes,

corporations, intellectual property, bankruptcy and corporate insolvency, taxation, competition law, industrial law, constitutional law and public administrative law.

While serving as a Federal Court Judge, Chief Justice French was appointed, in 1994, as the inaugural President of the National Native Title Tribunal responsible for the administration of the new Native Title Act 1993 (Cth), an office which he held until 1998. From 2003 to 2008 he served as a non-resident member of the Supreme Court of Fiji and as an additional Judge of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory. From 2005 to 2008 he was a Presidential Member of the Australian Competition Tribunal and from 2006 to 2008 a part-time Commissioner of the Australian Law Reform Commission.

On September 1, 2008, he was appointed as Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.

#### **4. Law-related Services and Activities**

Chief Justice French helped to establish the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia in the mid-1970s and served as its Chairperson for three years. He served as a member of the Barristers Board of Western Australia, the regulatory body for the legal profession in that State from 1979 to 1986. He was also a member of the Council of the Western Australian Bar Association from 1983 to 1986. He was a Council Member of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration from 1992 to 1998 and served as President of the Australian Association of Constitutional Law from 2001 to 2005. From 2007 to 2008 he acted as the Convenor of the Indigenous Issues Committee of the National Judicial College of Australia. He has served as a Foundation Member of the Australian Academy of Law from 2007 to the present and is currently its Patron. In 2012 he was selected as a member of the American Law Institute.

## **5. Activities Outside the Legal Field**

Chief Justice French served, from 1988 to 1990, as Chairman of the Council of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education which, in 1991, became Edith Cowan University. He was the inaugural Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, serving from 1991 to 1996.

## **6. Other Affiliations**

Chief Justice French is an Honorary Bencher of Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences and an Honorary Life Member of the Australasian Law Teachers Association. In 2010 he was appointed as a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

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