



Judicial Conference of Australia

**MEDIA RELEASE BY
THE HON JUSTICE STEVEN RARES
PRESIDENT, JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF AUSTRALIA
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**Personalised campaign against
District Court judge should cease**

The President of the Judicial Conference of Australia, Justice Steven Rares, today expressed concern about the recent personal attacks on Judge Clive Jeffreys mounted in the media and the New South Wales Parliament. These include an article by commentator Ray Hadley today which addresses a case yet to be determined by the judge.

A speech by Andrew Constance MP in the Parliament and a number of the articles drew attention to various sentences imposed by Judge Jeffreys that were overturned on appeal. However they neglected to place those decisions in the context of the numerous sentences imposed by Judge Jeffreys in his four years on the bench and included various comments attacking the judge personally.

“The decisions of any sentencing judge are obviously a matter for legitimate debate.” Justice Rares said. “However personalised attacks on a judge are grossly unfair. It must be borne in mind that judges cannot respond to such attacks without compromising their role”.

Today the *Daily Telegraph* published an article by Ray Hadley attacking the judge’s decision to exclude certain evidence on one charge that led to its dismissal and making reference to sentencing

proceedings on other charges due to be heard today. "Any media commentary on forthcoming proceedings that could be construed as an attempt to pressure the presiding judge should be avoided at all costs" Justice Rares said. He emphasised that the role of a judge is to apply the law to the facts of a case without fear or favour. The independence of judges from external pressure means that everyone in our society is treated equally and fairly. "And, like all human beings, even media commentators and politicians, a judge occasionally can make honest mistakes. That is why we have courts of appeal and not mob rule."

"Some of the recent criticism of Judge Jeffrey was unfair to the judge and an attack on judicial independence" Justice Rares stated.

The Judicial Conference of Australia is the professional association of judges and magistrates in Australia.

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