

THE GRAHAM HILL ANNUAL AWARD FOR 2008

Fellow judges of the Court; judges of other courts; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Chief Justice, who apologises for not being able to be here this evening, I welcome you to the presentation of the Graham Hill Annual Award for 2008. This is the third presentation of this Award and already, in its short life, it has won a profile and reputation befitting the person whose memory it honours. I am particularly pleased that Ute and Katrina can again be with us this evening.

This Award was established on the initiative of Mr Robin Speed and he and his firm continue to be a catalyst and driving force in its public recognition. The Federal Court, not surprisingly, has supported and assisted Robin where it could, in particular, by providing these premises to 'house' the annual presentation ceremony.

The Award was established in recognition of the outstanding contribution the late Justice Hill made to revenue law in this country – as a scholar, as a teacher, as an author, as a solicitor, as an advocate and last, but by no means least, as a judge of this Court. He was, as Professor Richard Vann described him at the time of his death, 'a Titan' in the field. Consequently, the Award seeks to recognise outstanding contribution by an individual in the revenue law field; not necessarily at the same level or profile as that reached by the late Justice Hill; that is not what the Award is about; but a contribution in a form and medium which he would have acknowledged and recognised as outstanding.

On the last occasion, the Award Committee recognised the contribution of Professor Lee Burns for the reasons given at the time. This time, the form and medium of the Award recipient's contribution is totally different; but no less outstanding. I am not going to say much more lest I give the game away, but I can say, from my personal experience from both sides of the fence, that the acumen, judgment, balance, industry and integrity which she has brought to tax litigation in which he has been involved, is a role model for all legal representatives of tax litigators, whether they represent the Commissioner or taxpayers.

The recipient of the Graham Hill Annual Award for 2008 is Catherine Leslie from the Australian Government Solicitors Office in Sydney and I would ask her to come forward to accept a small token of the Award.

[PRESENTATION]

I would now invite the Commissioner of Taxation, Mr Michael D'Ascenzo, who is with us this evening, to say a few words. He will be followed by Mr John Durack of Senior Counsel, after which we might be lucky enough to hear from Catherine.

Richard Edmonds

31 March 2009