

The Hon. John Dowd AO QC

After graduating from the Faculty of Law at Sydney University, John Dowd was admitted as a solicitor, becoming partner of a Sydney city firm before being called to the Bar in 1967, practising then in New South Wales, the ACT, and Papua New Guinea. In 1991 he was also admitted to the Bar of Ireland and became a member of the Kings Inns in Dublin. He was appointed Queens Counsel in NSW, in 1990 and the ACT, 1992.

In 1975 John Dowd was elected member for Lane Cove in the NSW Parliament, rising to Leader of the Opposition in 1981 until 1983, and eventually, on the Liberal National Party being elected to government, was appointed Attorney-General and Leader of the House, positions which he held until his parliamentary retirement in 1991.

As Attorney-General he was involved in reforms of the Supreme, District and Local Courts aimed at enhancing the courts' efficiency and carried out reforms of the criminal, tort and motor accident laws. He was also one of those instrumental in the establishment of Australia's first Independent Commission Against Corruption in 1988.

John Dowd was appointed to the Common Law Division of the Supreme Court of NSW in 1994, retiring in 2004. His judicial service included sitting on the Court of Criminal Appeal.

In 1974 John Dowd became a member of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and was subsequently elected President of the Australian Section. In 1999 he was appointed an International Commissioner of the ICJ, and elected Chairperson of the ICJ Executive Committee in Geneva, 2002-2008. He was then elected Vice-President of the international ICJ in 2008. He has carried out missions including to the Philippines in 1977 and 1987, to Hong Kong in 1991, East Timor in 2000, Nepal in 2003 and many times to Indonesia.

In 1997 John Dowd led the Australian Government delegation in Palestine to monitor the Palestinian Legislative Council Elections, and assisted in establishing the procedures for the Legislative Council.

For the period of 1992-1994 John Dowd was Consul-General for the Cook Islands to Australia.

In 1992 John Dowd was elected as a Director of the Spastic Centre and became Deputy President, retiring from that office in 1999. He was then appointed inaugural Goodwill Ambassador for the Spastic Centre.

John Dowd was for its lifetime a Director of the Alola Foundation, an organisation working to address the needs of East Timorese women in areas of advocacy, economic empowerment, education and literacy, maternal and child health and humanitarian assistance. That organisation has been replaced by a Timor L'este organisation.

In 2002 John Dowd was elected Chancellor of Southern Cross University, a regional University in New South Wales with campuses at Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast. Some one third of the university's students learn through distance education, primarily from Asia. In 2006 he was re-elected for a second term.

In 2005 John Dowd was appointed Protection Ambassador for Austcare, and subsequently a director and then Vice-President in 2008.

In 2007, John Dowd was appointed Deputy-President of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and in 2008 Chairman of a steel construction group, Lifese Engineering.

In 1977 John Dowd was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, in 1982 he was created a Knight Commander of the Filipino Order of the Knights of Rizal and appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1992. He was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001.