

POLICY PAPERS

Ceremonial Sitting in Honour of the late Honourable Justice Nicholas Kirriwom, CMG 21 April 2021, Waigani Supreme Court

(Speech Delivered by the Attorney General, Dr Eric Kwa, PhD)

Opening Address

May it please the Court, his Honour, the Chief Justice, Deputy Chief Justice, Judges, Chief Magistrate, Deputy Chief Magistrate, Magistrates, distinguished guests, members of the legal fraternity, family and friends of the late Honourable Justice Nicholas Kirriwom. It is a privilege to rise on behalf of the State Legal Services of Papua New Guinea and the law and justice sector of Papua New Guinea to pay tribute to the service and life of the late Justice Nicholas Kirriwom.

Address to the Court

His honour, has created a legacy that is quite admirable. A very senior member of the judiciary with vast legal experience that spans 43 years since his admission as a lawyer in 1978. The PNG legal fraternity and the judiciary have lost a wealth of experience that can only be built over a career span as that of the late judge.

His honour commenced his career as a legal officer of the Public Solicitor's Office from 1978 to 1986. Within a period of three years, he was promoted to Principal Legal Officer and Deputy Public Solicitor and immediately after, as Public Solicitor of Papua New Guinea. His career progression demonstrates his honour's ability to adopt quickly and his sharp legal skills that were required to perform such a prominent role in the law and justice sector. His honour also had experience in the private sector after his term as Public Solicitor.

From 1988 to 1992, he was the Principal of Kirriwom and Co. Lawyers. Earlier from 1987 to 1988, he was Managing Partner of Narokobi Mosoro Enda Lawyers and from 1986 to 1987 he was lawyer with Narokobi & Co Lawyers. Within a period of 10 years, his honour sailed through his career becoming Public Solicitor of Papua New Guinea, Managing Partner for a private firm to running his own law firm as principal.

This is no easy feat within such a short timeframe. Only a visionary with determination and passion could achieve such a colourful career. He was then appointed on 6th May 1997 as a judge and since then has diligently served in this capacity till his death while serving as Senior Resident Judge in Wewak and Judge Administrator of East Sepik, West Sepik and Manus Provinces.

His honour still had a desire to continue his academic aspirations. Despite him reaching the pinnacle of any lawyer's dream by becoming a judge of the National and Supreme Courts, he

pursued postgraduate studies. In 2018, he attained his Master of Laws in Dispute Resolution at the Bond University, Australia during which, he was awarded the Academic Excellence Award for attaining High Distinction (First in Class) in Common Law and Legal Skills.

This demonstrates his honour's ability to keep adapting to the changing circumstances and needs of society and pushing limits. It is truly an admirable trait and a great example. His Honour also had a heart for community issues and gave time from his busy schedule to a number of social platforms such as the Surfing Association of PNG and the Tupira Surf Club which he is the founder and patron of. Through his contribution to such platforms, he was able to bring the community together and assist the community to be engaged in productive activities. His honour initiated ongoing community development and improvement programs in health, education, economic and social sectors at the community level. In recognition for his contributions, he was knighted as Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (CMG) to the legal profession and judiciary.

As the clan chief of the Aringasua Clan from Meiwok Village, Bogia District in Madang Province, His honour was able to lead by example and truly reached the heights of his career that only comes with passion and dedication to the service of the people. So much can be learnt from the life of this stalwart of a man who is a great role model for the legal fraternity in PNG. His role in the public service came at a time when PNG was just birthed as a new nation. Being a young lawyer in the public service, his contribution in the law and justice sector cannot go unnoticed as he, amongst those in the early years of nation building that set the foundations of which we now stand upon.

His life as a senior judge also sets a great example. A judge that was able to still adapt to current situations and circumstances. His contribution to the expansion of PNG jurisprudence is also acknowledged. In paying this tribute, I also want to acknowledge the people in the life of his honour that enabled him to excel in his career and life goals. I honour his parents, his dear wife, Mrs. Kirriwom and his dear children and grandchildren and his people of the Aringasua Clan. With your undivided support and love, your son, husband, father, grandfather and chief gave his best and contributed immensely in service to the people of Papua New Guinea.

May God bless you all and give you the peace that only He can give.

Final Remarks

In closing, I would like to leave this challenge with those of us in the legal fraternity to aspire to build legacies as that of the late Justice Kirriwom.

We have recently lost late Justice Sagu and others who were still serving in the National Judiciary. This has created a huge void that needs to be filled. This void needs to be filled with men and women whose work ethic, professional life, community life and personal life emulate those of leaders such as the late Justice Kirriwom.

May late Honourable Justice Nicholas Kirriwom's soul rest in eternal peace until the golden day when we all meet.

Thank you.