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Attorney General

Anthony Roberts
Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW CHAIR FOR STATE PAROLE AUTHORITY

A highly regarded District Court Acting Judge with more than 20 years' experience as a Crown Prosecutor has been appointed as the new Chairman of the State Parole Authority (SPA).

Attorney General Mark Speakman and Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections Anthony Roberts announced Acting Judge David Frearson SC will replace James Wood AO QC, who was Chairman of the SPA from 2013 until December 2019.

"Judge Frearson has had an impressive career in the criminal law with more than four decades of legal experience. Before he was elevated to the bench, Judge Frearson was Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions and one of the state's most successful crown prosecutors, conducting many complex trials and appeals," Mr Speakman said.

He was admitted as a barrister in 1977, became a crown prosecutor in 1985 and deputy senior crown prosecutor in 2000. In 2004, he was appointed a Senior Counsel. After a full-time judicial career on the District Court bench spanning ten years from 2009, his Honour was appointed as an Acting Judge.

Mr Roberts said Judge Frearson will play a crucial role at the SPA, an independent statutory body that makes decisions about whether certain offenders should be released on parole.

"Judge Frearson's substantial expertise in the criminal law will be a major asset to the SPA when making these difficult but very important decisions. Community safety remains our number one priority and I feel confident having someone of Judge Frearson's calibre at the helm," Mr Roberts said.

Outgoing Chairman of the SPA James Wood was a highly respected Justice of the Supreme Court for 21 years before retiring from the bench.

"In a long and distinguished career, Justice Wood held numerous appointments including Chief Judge at Common Law, Royal Commissioner leading an inquiry into corruption within the NSW Police Force and Chairman of the NSW Law Reform Commission," Mr Speakman said.

"I thank him for his outstanding service to the legal profession and for his leadership at the SPA and wish him well in his new role."

Judge Frearson will begin his term as Chairman of the SPA on 24 February.

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