

Tasmanian Supreme Court judge 'counselled' after being photographed in embrace with junior court employee

By [Fiona Blackwood](#)

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Tasmanian judge Gregory Geason has been counselled by the Chief Justice. *(Supplied: Supreme Court Of Tasmania)*

A Tasmanian Supreme Court judge has been counselled by the Chief Justice after he was photographed at a Hobart nightclub in an embrace with a junior court employee.

The photograph was taken at the Grand Poobah nightclub in Hobart on Friday, January 29 — the evening of the opening of the legal year.

The photo appears to show Justice Gregory Geason in an embrace with the female staff member.

A statement from a spokesman for Chief Justice Alan Blow said the Chief Justice had investigated the matter following concerns expressed about

Key points:

- The photograph was taken at Hobart's Grand Poobah nightclub last month
- A spokesperson for Chief Justice Alan Blow said the Chief Justice viewed the judge's actions as being "sufficiently serious to warrant counselling"
- Gregory Geason was appointed to the

a judge's conduct involving a staff member.

Supreme Court of Tasmania in 2017

Concerns about the conduct were raised by members of the legal profession.

The spokesman said the Chief Justice had counselled Justice Geason in relation to the allegations concerning his behaviour, and may take further steps, depending on what he considered appropriate.

"The Chief Justice views Justice Geason's actions as sufficiently serious to warrant counselling," the statement said.

"The Chief Justice's actions have been taken to protect the reputation of the court."



Photograph was taken at the Grand Poobah nightclub in Hobart. (ABC News: Luke Jen)

The statement said the staff member involved had not made a complaint.

It said there was no evidence of the present or past existence of an intimate relationship between the trial judge and the staff member.

The staff member has been provided with information as to all the options, and offered support.

Court response embargoed until conclusion of trial

Arrangements are being made for Justice Geason to return to Hobart upon the completion of a criminal trial before him in Burnie.

The spokesman said the arrangements were being made "largely because of concerns that publicity about the judge's conduct might result in jurors not giving full concentration to cases in which he presides".

He said there was no impact on the trial Justice Geason has been presiding over the in the north-west because the court response had been embargoed until after the conclusion of the trial.

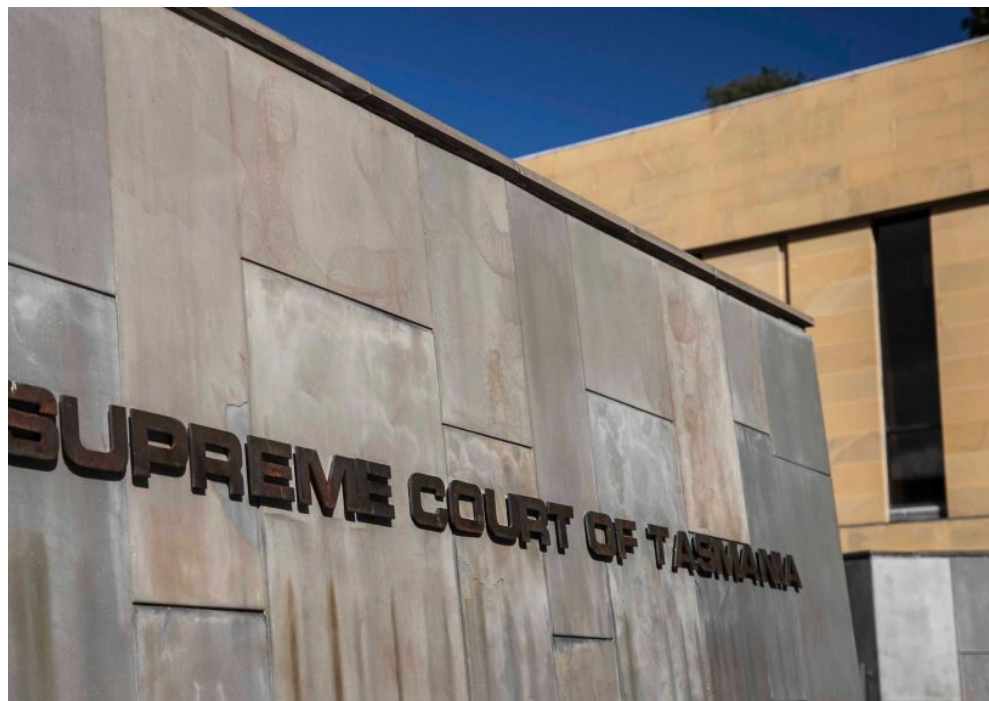
He said this was "to avoid the risk that jurors may not pay proper attention to the proceedings if they were distracted by the thought that there may be some sort of inappropriate relationship between the trial judge and [the employee], or by thoughts about the personal morality of the trial judge."

The statement said the court was aware that a photograph was taken at the venue of the incident, but was unaware who took it.

The spokesman said the only sanctions available were counselling in the first instance.

The only formal sanction against a judge on misconduct grounds would be suspension or removal from office by the Governor upon the address of both Houses of Parliament.

It's an act which dates back to 1857.



Gregory Geason became a Supreme Court judge three years ago. (ABC News: Bowden)

Judges and magistrates are expected to comply with conduct guidelines which include discretion in personal relationships and being especially vigilant in observing appropriate standards of conduct, both publicly and privately.

The Law Society of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Bar Association said in a statement that they would not comment on the specifics of individual cases, to ensure natural justice to all persons if allegations were

raised.

But both organisations confirmed they were aware of an alleged incident after the conclusion of a dinner to mark the opening of the legal year.

The Law Society and Tasmanian Bar Association have passed on members' concerns to the court and are satisfied they are being heard.

Justice Geason became a Supreme Court judge three years ago.

He has worked on both sides of the bar — with the Department of Public Prosecutions and also in litigation.

Justice Geason is a friend and worked in the same law firms as former Tasmanian premier Will Hodgman.

Mr Hodgman stated in Parliament that he excused himself from the selection process around Justice Geason's appointment given his relationship with him.

A spokesman for Tasmanian Attorney-General Elise Archer said she would not comment on the matter.