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FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA

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## FOREWORD

by **The Honourable Chief Justice Michael Eric John Black, AC**

The Federal Court of Australia first sat on 7 February 1977. An important milestone in the history of the new Court was reached on 17 July 1984 when the first part of Volume 1 of the *Federal Court Reports* was published. In common with the Supreme Courts of the States, and other superior courts elsewhere, the Federal Court of Australia now had its own series of authorised reports.

In Australia, as in other common law countries, authorised law reports are an important part of the system of justice. The reasons for the decisions that courts make need to be available in a form that is accurate, timely and accessible. A special feature of an authorised series of reports is that the judges who make the decisions are themselves involved in supervising the accuracy of the reports and the quality of the headnotes and other aids to accessibility.

In the period covered by the first 100 volumes of the *Federal Court Reports* the work of the Court, and the scope of its jurisdiction, has greatly expanded. In the year in which 1 FCR was published, 366 first instance judgments and 132 Full Court judgments were delivered. The comparable figures for the year 2000 are 1565 and 374 respectively – a five-fold increase in first instance judgments and nearly a three-fold increase in Full Court judgments.

The Federal Court is now a court of general jurisdiction in civil matters arising under federal law. Volumes 1 to 100 of the *Federal Court Reports* record the substantial growth and development of that law, and areas of the general law as well, through the decisions of judges of the Federal Court over the past 17 years. The volumes record, too, the developing jurisprudence of new areas of law, such as native title.

It is important to the work of the Court to have authorised reports in which significant cases at both appellate and trial level are selected by the Editor, and published under the supervision of the judges. The publication of Volume 100 of the *Federal Court Reports* is an appropriate occasion to reflect upon the value of these reports to the Court and to the wider community, and to congratulate the publishers, the Editor and the reporters on their achievement.