sparke HELMORE LAWYERS

1882 - 2022

Celebrating 140 years



Sparke Helmore Lawyers– 140 years in the making!

In the beginning...

Imagine it is 1 September 1882. Queen Victoria was in the 45th year of her reign. The British sporting press were in uproar over Australia's first test cricket win over England at the Oval just two days earlier. One newspaper printed an obituary, lamenting that English cricket had died and 'the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia', thus setting up the infamous Ashes contests of the future. Lars Ericcson, a celebrated Swedish telephone designer, had just launched his most sleek and modern 'wall mounted' telephone.

Closer to home, the population of New South Wales was reported to be close to 800,000. In Newcastle, the dusty red streets were bustling with horses and carts. A Newcastle building society was offering loans of 200 pounds with an interest rate of 51% per annum. And on that day Edmund Barton, who would go on to become the first Prime Minister of Australia, moved the admission of William Sparke. Then two days later, Mr Sparke embarked on his 65 year career as a solicitor in Newcastle and laid the foundation for the firm that we know today as Sparke Helmore.



From 1882 through to 1888, the firm was located on Hunter Street. In 1888 Mr Sparke and his new partner Godfrey Millard moved into the AMP Building on Watt Street. This building was one of the most decorative buildings of its time in Newcastle. Sparke & Millard existed in that building until 1922 when Mr Millard retired.



Photo taken from the General Post Office balcony in Newcastle, NSW in 1947

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In the same year, Basil Helmore replaced Godfrey Millard as Mr Sparke's named partner. Sparke and Helmore continued to operate from the AMP building until 1936.

It turned out to be a great commercial location. Half of the shipping agents and steam navigation companies were also located in Watt Street. The officers of those companies were dubbed the 'Watt Street Admirals' and had a huge influence over Newcastle port and shipping operations.

Customs House, the Court House, the Police Station and the Post Office were also located on Watt Street and nearby on adjoining Hunter Street. Mr Sparke deliberately chose to set up his practice in the heart of local maritime and insurance operations, ensuring there were many opportunities to represent clients. It was this entrepreneurialism and commercial awareness that helped pave his path to success.



A view of Watt Street, Newcastle, [1920]



A.A. Company's Hamilton Pit Colliery, Hamilton South 22/6/1889

Newcastle Museum - Search (nsw.gov.au)



New Pit, Glebe, Newcastle NSW, 1887

Ralph Snowball, Norm Barney Collection, Cultural Collections

In 1889, William Sparke represented the Crown in the inquest into the Hamilton pit disaster.

William Sparke secured the highest amount of damages then possible for his clients under the *Employers Liability Act*. Effectively this was the firm's first employers liability case.

William Sparke was so successful in acting for the plaintiffs and for the unions against mining companies that John Brown asked him if he'd act for his family mining company J&A Brown. The long-standing relationship acting for J&A Brown went for over 40 years from the late 1890s to the 1930s. During that time Mr Sparke represented J&A Brown in every court, from small debt claims through to the Privy Council and House of Lords.

J&A Brown eventually became Coal and Allied in 1958 and finally became part of Rio Tinto.



Subject Newcastle Port Newcastle Harbour, NSW [1900]
Newcastle Port, NSW, [1900] | Living Histories

Newcastle Courthouse in 1892 – ten years after William Sparke opened his office.



Penny farthing bicycles outside old Newcastle Court House, Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW, 3 September 1892 | Living Histories



Mr William Sparke and family at 57 High Street, Waratah 1901. The Sparke family bequeathed the house to St Philips Anglican Church and it is now the reception building of St Philips Christian College.

https://newcastle-collections.ncc.nsw.gov.au/imu/request.php?request=Multimedia&method=fetch&key=10171

Basil Helmore had been articled to William Sparke prior to serving in France in WW1. On his discharge from military service in 1919 he resumed his training, becoming a partner in 1922.

Dr Helmore was a consummate scholar. He loved books and created one of the finest libraries of its time. He also purchased the copyright of textbooks written by Godfrey Millard on Property and Commercial Law and repeatedly revised and published them. These textbooks are still used today.

Not only did Dr Helmore obtain a PhD from the University of London, but he took a great interest in the education of others. He was actively involved in the establishment of the University of Newcastle and served as Deputy Chairman in 1956 and as Warden of Convocation in 1957.



Dr Basil Helmore 02/03/1953
Newcastle Library - Search (nsw.gov.au)



Above Interim Council University of Newcastle 1962: (L to R) - Hon. Frank Finnan (President Hunter Dist. Water Board Bd, former State Minister); Lester Saddington (businessman); Dr Basil Helmore (lawyer, member NUEG etc) Dr Ivan L. Rose (Head of Maths Dept, rep of Staff); Ken Booth, MLA (former member NUC Staff); A.E. ("Bert') Rogers (chief Engineer, BHP, Chairman of first building committee); D.L. McLarty (Chairman); Professor J.P.Baxter (Vice-Chancellor UNSW); Professor James Auchmuty (warden); J. Foley (College registrar, secretary to council) George Edwards (managing Director Courtaulds); Professor J.A. ALLEN (Prof. of Chemistry, staff rep.); Dr T. Hamiton (Surgeon); Dr H.K. Worner; (Director BHP Research Lab. Former Prof. Metallurgy, University of Melbourne.

Like William Sparke, Basil Helmore was prominent in the Newcastle business community. He served two terms as President of the Newcastle Business Club. For many years he was on the Board of Newcastle Gas & Coke Company Limited (later Newcastle Gas Company), which the firm acted for from its incorporation in 1947 until it was taken over by AGL in 1979. He was instrumental in the establishment of Hunter Valley Research Foundation, which marked its 66th year in 2022. Hunter Valley Research Foundation, now part of the University of Newcastle, is recognised nationally for the value of its research on the economy of the Hunter region.

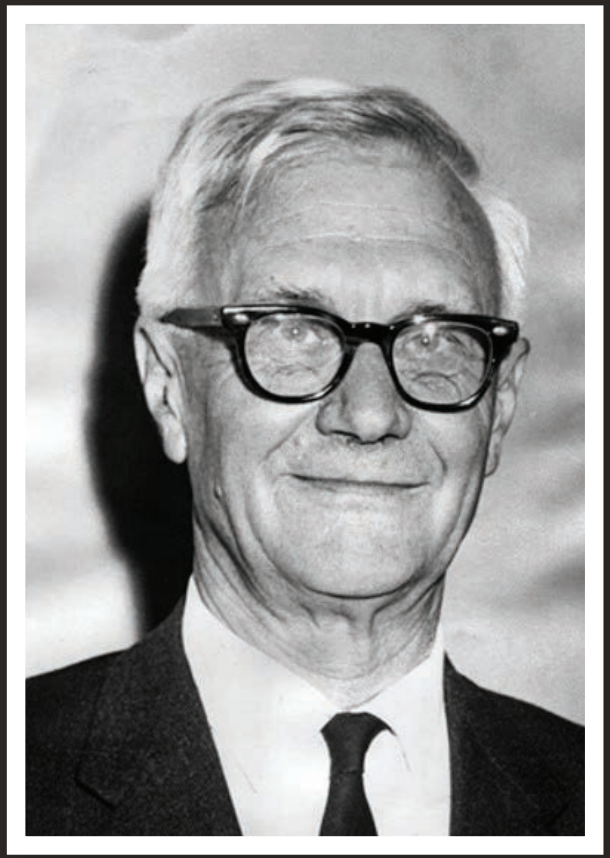


Basil Helmore also served on the Council of the Law Society of NSW, and was awarded an OBE in 1971. He passed away in 1973.



Board of Directors, City of Newcastle Gas and Coke Company Ltd

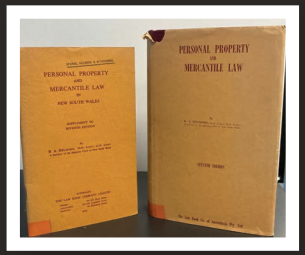
22/07/1953 Newcastle Library - Search (nsw.gov.au)Major-Gen. W. L'Estrange Eames (seated) with from / left:- Gen Mngr. (Mr A. Spence), Director, G.R. Beath), / Director (Mr E.R.H. Merewether.),Chairman of Directors (Mr / B.A. Helmore), Secretary (Mr V.N. Hugh), Mr. B.B. Rodd, Director.'

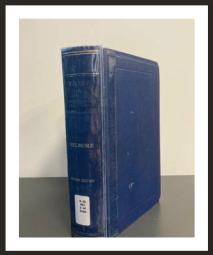


Dr Helmore's attitude was,

"Take any job that comes and get to know a bit about everything. A good solicitor must have experience in practically everything."

Dr Helmore contributed to the education of generations of lawyers through the books he authored that were used to teach law throughout all NSW universities for decades.





This song was composed by Mr Charlton, editor of the "Sydney Mail" for a dinner to celebrate William Sparke's 50th year as a solicitor. According to a report in the Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate, guests sung it with much gusto!

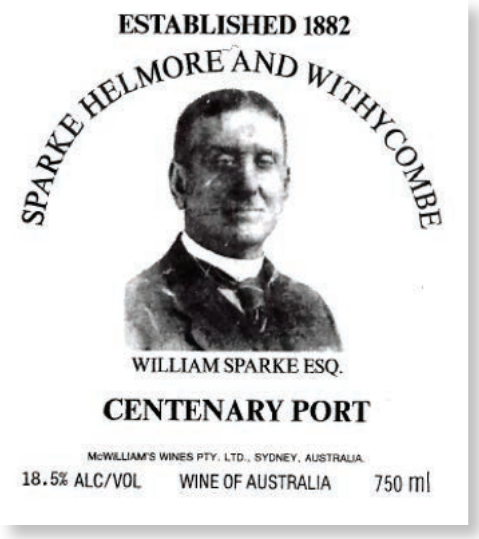
William—Billy—why not Bill ?
Pray forgive us, for we still
Need your wisdom and your
vision day by day;
Times are queer, but we'll pull
through,
And some praise will be your
due
When the storm-clouds of de-
pression pass away.
(Chorus)

Armstrong, Greenway, Watson,
Brown—
Ev'ry coal-man in the town—
McDonald, Barrett, Cooper,
Paton, Cant and Clark;
Honest, simple folk, by Gad !
And for "coalies" not too bad !
But in quite another class from
Billy Sparke.
(Chorus).

Watch the legal seraphim
Fill their glasses to the brim—
Rankin, Braye, O'Neill and Reid
and all the rest;
Be they far or be they near,
William Sparke to them is dear,
For a great heart beats within
that manly breast.
(Chorus).

Fifty years! what memories!
Fifty years! what heaps of fees!
Fifty years of helping us our
burdens bear;
Fifty years! and gathered here
Are some friends who give you
cheer,
Where the fragrance of sweet
friendship fills the air.
(Chorus).

DAVIES & CANNINGTON LTD., PRINTERS.



Label from a special bottle of port created by McWilliams Estate Wines to celebrate Sparke Helmore's centenary in 1982.



Mr Peter Withycombe and his wife Chloe Withycombe,
Newcastle Law Society 1963 Newcastle Library - Search (nsw.gov.au)

Peter Withycombe was the third of our named partners from the early years. He was one of Basil Helmore's articled clerks. Peter was admitted in 1939 but instead of settling in to practice, he enlisted and joined the allies to fight in WWII. Mr Withycombe was captured and spent several harrowing years as a prisoner of war, first held in Changi before being moved to the notorious Burma-Thailand railway and ending up in the treacherous copper mines in Japan.

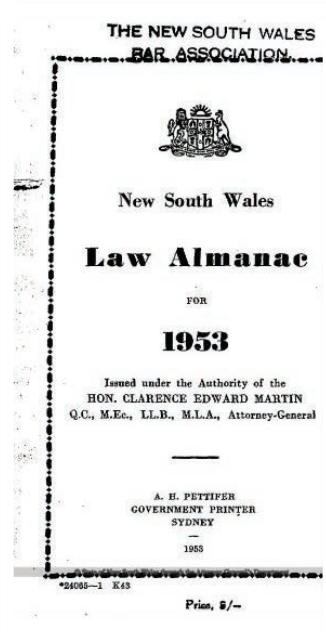
Fortunately he survived, and after being discharged at the end of the war, he was recalled to duty in late 1945 to give evidence against 19 Japanese officers, including Naval Captain Murakami, at a trial in Morotai. Captain Murakami was in charge of the prisoner camp that provided labour to the Niihama-Besshi copper mine, where many prisoners of war had been killed. The Captain was sentenced to hang, while others on trial received various terms of imprisonment; and some were acquitted.



The photograph of Peter Withycombe in uniform was taken in 1946 at Yokohama District Court as he testified against the accused Japanese soldiers.

We can never know the true horrors and adversity that he faced, but his resilience in returning to civilian life and pursuing a successful 36 year career as a lawyer is inspiring. The firm became Sparke Helmore and Withycombe in 1950 until we returned to the shorter name of Sparke Helmore in 1993, as was the trend at the time.

Edward John Chiplin (known as John) was a partner of the firm for some 15 years, joining as an articled clerk to Peter Withycombe in 1950 and becoming a partner in 1953. Mr Chiplin played a significant role in the growth of the firm in the early days, right through to his retirement from the partnership in 1968.



THE NEW SOUTH WALES BAR ASSOCIATION

New South Wales

Law Almanac

FOR

1953

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HON. CLARENCE EDWARD MARTIN
Q.C., M.Ec., LL.B., M.L.A., Attorney-General

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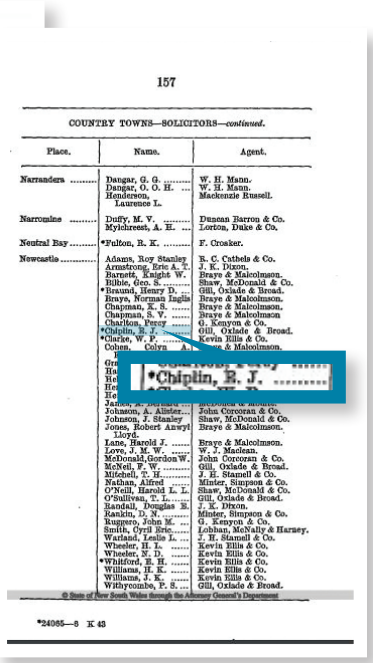

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COUNTRY TOWNS—SOLICITORS—*continued.*

Place.	Name.	Agent.
Narrandera	Dangar, G. G.	W. H. Mann.
	Dangar, O. O. H.	W. H. Mann.
	Henderson, Laurence L.	Mackenzie Russell.
Narromine	Duffy, M. V.	Duncan Barron & Co.
	Mylchreest, A. H.	Lorton, Duke & Co.
Neutral Bay	*Fulton, R. K.	F. Croaker.
Newcastle	Adams, Roy Stanley	R. C. Cathels & Co.
	Armstrong, Eric A. T.	J. K. Dixon.
	Barnett, Knight W.	Braye & Malcolmson.
	Bilbie, Geo. S.	Shaw, McDonald & Co.
	*Braund, Henry D.	Gill, Oxlade & Broad.
	Braye, Norman Inglis	Braye & Malcolmson.
	Chapman, K. S.	Braye & Malcolmson.
	Chapman, S. V.	Braye & Malcolmson
	Charlton, Percy	G. Kenyon & Co.
	*Chiplin, E. J.	Gill, Oxlade & Broad.
	*Clarke, W. P.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	Cohen, Colyn A.	Braye & Malcolmson.
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	[illegible]	[illegible]
	Johnson, A. Alister	John Corcoran & Co.
	Johnson, J. Stanley	Shaw, McDonald & Co.
	Jones, Robert Anwyl Lloyd.	Braye & Malcolmson.
	Lane, Harold J.	Braye & Malcolmson.
	Love, J. M. W.	W. J. Maclean.
	McDonald, Gordon W.	John Corcoran & Co.
	McNeil, F. W.	Gill, Oxlade & Broad.
	Mitchell, T. H.	J. H. Stamell & Co.
	Nathan, Alfred	Minter, Simpson & Co.
	O'Neill, Harold L. L.	Shaw, McDonald & Co.
	O'Sullivan, T. L.	Gill, Oxlade & Broad.
	Randall, Douglas E.	J. K. Dixon.
	Rankin, D. N.	Minter, Simpson & Co.
	Ruggero, John M.	G. Kenyon & Co.
	Smith, Cyril Eric	Lobban, McNally & Harney.
	Warland, Leslie L.	J. H. Stamell & Co.
	Wheeler, H. L.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	Wheeler, N. D.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	*Whitford, E. H.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	Williams, H. K.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	Williams, J. K.	Kevin Ellis & Co.
	Withycombe, P. S.	Gill, Oxlade & Broad.

*Chiplin, E. J.

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*24065—8 K 43

Mr Chiplin retiring from the partnership opened the door for a new partner to join the fold and George Smith was welcomed to the partnership in 1968 and spent some 20 years contributing to the firm's success, retiring in 1989. Mr Smith had been the head of the Stamp Duties Office in Newcastle prior to joining Sparke Helmore so, moving into an insurance and shipping litigation practice was a big change for him.

Doug Potts was a partner in the firm from 1961 until his retirement in February 1981. Initially he worked in Newcastle but his main client, Coal Mines Insurance, required him to spend much of his time in Sydney and in circuit courts in Wollongong and Lithgow. It was his initiative which led to the firm opening an office in Sydney in 1962, the first step in laying the foundations for the subsequent growth in that office.

Paul Anicich is another Sparke Helmore luminary. Paul began work with Sparke Helmore & Withycombe in 1965, aged 17 and articled to Peter Withycombe. Paul was admitted as a partner in 1971 and was chair of the firm from 2002 to 2006. He led the Commercial Services Practice Group for a number of years and retired from the partnership in 2008. Paul's integrity, energy and commitment to the firm was widely recognised and celebrated.

The growth of the Sydney office from the 1980's was largely attributable to the efforts of Nick Meagher (later a president of the Law Society of NSW) and Gary Flowers (later a CEO of Australian Rugby Union) who became partners of 1972 and 1981 respectively.

John Davis joined the firm in 1976 and became a partner in 1978. He served two terms as National Managing Partner contributing a great deal to the success and longevity of the firm.



Pictured: Paul Anicich



Pictured: Nick Meagher



Pictured: Gary Flowers



Pictured: John Davis

Foundations for growth...

We have continued to learn from the commitment and the vision of the founding partners, as Sparke Helmore went from strength to strength through the decades. From that original office, opened in 1882, the next 100 years were spent building up a presence around Australia.

Our Sydney office opened in 1962. At that time Sparke Helmore was doing all of the compensation work for the Joint Coal Board or Coal Mines Insurance, which was based in Sydney. The primary motive for a Sydney presence was to follow and secure the work of Coal Mines Insurance, the start of a constant trend in the growth of the firm from that date forward.

The next big milestone that saw another office added to Sparke Helmore's growing footprint was in 1989, when Comcare was established. With our experience in state-based statutory compensation matters it made perfect sense to try and capitalise on that by venturing into the Commonwealth scheme. The firm did that initially with work from Australia Post and Telecom.

In early 1991 it was clear that maintaining and increasing the level of work for Australia Post and Telecom—both headquartered in Melbourne—we required a presence in Melbourne. We dipped our toe in the Melbourne waters initially with a serviced office for several months before leasing space in the famous Rialto Building on Collins St in 1992.

At a partners meeting in Terrigal in 1995 the firm first started to formulate specific practice groups, particularly in the commercial area, and started to move toward specialisation.



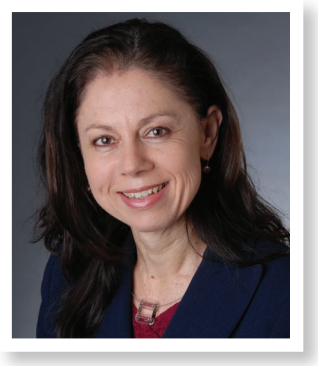
At about this time, the Commonwealth Government established a Competitive Tendering and Contracting Panel. Emboldened by our success with Comcare, the decision was made to respond to this opportunity and perhaps to the surprise of some both inside and outside the firm, we were successful. This of course lead to the opening of the Canberra office in 1996.

Opportunities that had been developing in the Brisbane market led to Sparke Helmore opening its fifth office in that city in 1999.

In Adelaide and Perth we started working with Norman Waterhouse in Adelaide and Downings in Perth. There were partners in each of those firms who were profiled in our successful tenders and we set up reporting systems so that we were able to provide a seamless service across all locations under the Sparke Helmore banner. In 2001 and 2002 respectively the relevant partners from Norman Waterhouse and Downings jumped ship and became the partners of the newly opened Sparke Helmore offices in those locations.



Meet two remarkable women



Desiree Scholz was Sparke Helmore's first female partner; she was a partner for 17 years and with the firm for close to 24 years. Desiree was also a member of the firm's Board and Executive Committee and leader of the Dispute Resolution Group.



Jann Gardner joined the firm in August 1989 and was with the firm for 22 years. Jann was the first female partner in Newcastle and was Managing Partner of our Newcastle Office from 2002 to 2011, making an outstanding contribution to the growth and stability of that office. She was also a Board member from 2007 to 2009, elected by the partners to the firm's newly constituted Strategic Board.

December 2002 marked the move of the Newcastle office to the current Honeysuckle location. The 1990s saw the formation of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation (now the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation) and the start of the shift westward of the Newcastle CBD to the area around Honeysuckle. For the previous 120 years the office had been in the block bounded by Hunter, Watt, King and Bolton Streets, which was the heart of the CBD. Realising that was changing, we took what was then seen as a bold and slightly controversial decision to relocate to Honeysuckle Drive. We were the first business in Newcastle to do so and it was lonely in those surrounds until others started to follow a few years later.

Our small local Muswellbrook office opened in 2000, following from the merger with Fitzgerald White & Talbot, a long-established firm in the Hunter Valley.

In 2002, we celebrated 120 years as a firm.
Paul Anicich's quote from that day is as relevant now as it was in 2002.

"A firm such as this cannot achieve as we have without the dedication of so many.

On such occasions I think of the future, rather than the past.

It is exciting to think how this firm will look and feel in 20 years, let alone 120."

1987: 8 partners



Pictured left to right: Nick Meagher, Paul Anicich, Gary Flowers, John Davis, George Smith, Richard Anicich, Paul Gavazzi, Geoff Woolf

1992: 12 partners


Paul Anicich


Nick Meagher


Geoff Woolf


Paul Gavazzi


John Davis


Gary Flowers


Richard Anicich


Tony Deegan


Alan Arnold


John Loughnan


Desiree Scholz


Michael Snell



2004: 43 partners



May 2016: 65 partners

which increased to 71 partners by October 2016





In 2017, Partner Geoff Woolf retired after 41 years!

Geoff developed and helped grow a substantial insurance practice that led to the establishment and growth of our public liability, CTP and workers' compensation teams and he also established the Workplace practice.



Newcastle business leader and former partner Richard Anicich received an AM in 2018 Australia Day Honours List for "*significant service to the community of the Hunter, to business development, and medical research, and to the law*".

Source: Newcastle Herald



We opened our doors for business in Darwin on 1 August 2018. The office is adjacent to the courts, Parliament House as well as the city's newest entertainment precinct, The Waterfront. The office hosted a “Delighted to be in Darwin” event in September to officially launch our new Darwin office.

With growth on the agenda, we moved into new, larger premises in late 2022.

Sparke Helmore welcomed a 25-strong team from ClarkeKann Brisbane in September 2019.

The five Partners—John Toigo, Paul O'Dea, Shane Williamson, Brad Vinning and Steven Cardell—are outstanding practitioners. Their client base ranges from SMEs, public companies and start-ups to government and government-owned corporations. All five have formidable reputations in the Brisbane market. These new Partners were joined by 20 lawyers and support staff.









Growth to meet client demand is a cornerstone of our strategy and in 2020 Sparke Helmore joined forces with Newcastle firm Laycock Burke Castaldi, in a move that echoed Mr Sparke and Dr Helmore's traditions of 'keeping it local'.

Our best is yet to come...

Sparke Helmore Lawyers today is a truly national award-winning firm that covers five core areas of law and has more than 30 specialised areas of expertise. From our humble beginnings, we're now over 800 people strong across nine offices, servicing a loyal client base of Australian and global organisations.

Our two Hunter locations currently have a combined 13 partners who are each leaders in their fields and with their teams, service clients across many sectors including property, resource development, defence, health and education.



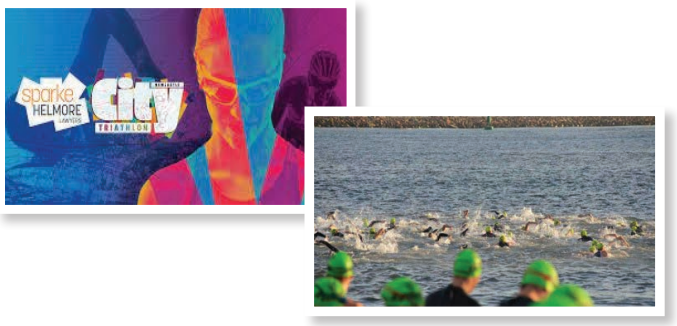
As we head into our 140th year in our "spiritual home" of Newcastle, we reflect on the many great businesses we have partnered with over the years and will continue to work with into the future to drive the growth and transformation of our regional economy. The future of the Hunter has never been more positive and our aim is to continue to provide high quality legal services to enable regional businesses to participate in and profit from the continued evolution of Newcastle and the Hunter.

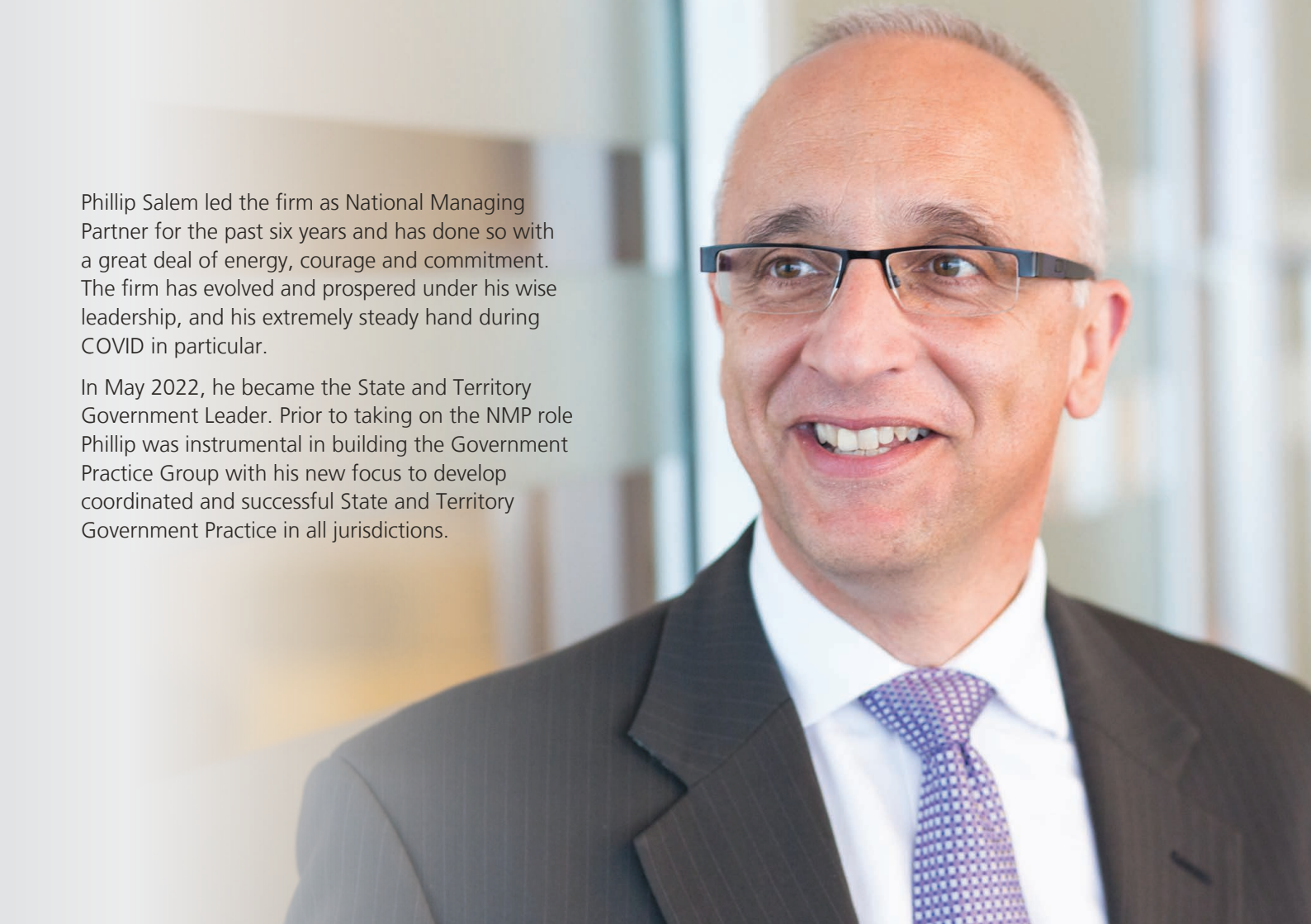
But there's so much more to Sparke Helmore than just the law. Since 2007 we have provided mentoring for women through our Six Degrees Network and we've also supported the University of Newcastle Law Students Association (UNLSA) Women in Law events since 2012. It gives us a great sense of purpose to nurture and encourage the next generation of talent; it speaks to who we are as a firm and to who we want to continue to be into the future.

We're also active members of the community through fundraising for local charities and not for profit organisations including as a proud sponsor of the Sparke Helmore Triathlon, run every year in November and now in its 29th year.

Andrew White, our 2022 National Managing Partner, said

"Sparke Helmore would not be where it is today without the support of our loyal clients and communities throughout Australia. Thank you—and we look forward to celebrating our 140th milestone with you over the coming 12 months."





Phillip Salem led the firm as National Managing Partner for the past six years and has done so with a great deal of energy, courage and commitment. The firm has evolved and prospered under his wise leadership, and his extremely steady hand during COVID in particular.

In May 2022, he became the State and Territory Government Leader. Prior to taking on the NMP role Phillip was instrumental in building the Government Practice Group with his new focus to develop coordinated and successful State and Territory Government Practice in all jurisdictions.



Workplace Group Partner Roland Hassall was appointed Chair of Sparke Helmore's Board in February 2022.

Roland joined Sparke Helmore in 1992 and has more than 30 years' experience guiding executives and managers to direct and resolve employment issues ranging from the highly complex to the more commonplace.

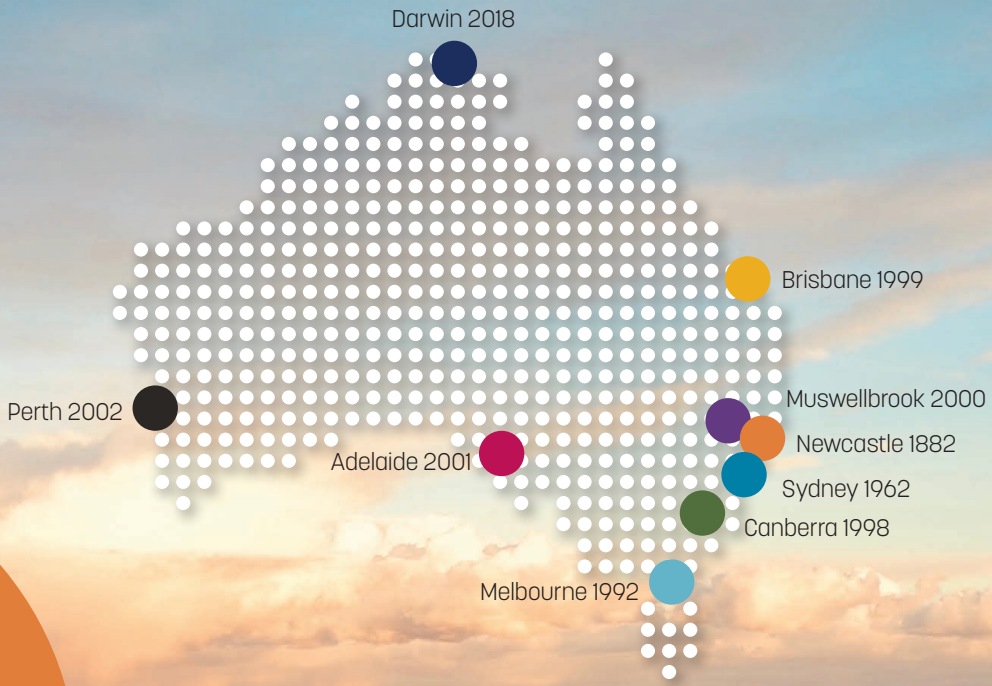


Andrew White was elected as National Managing Partner in March 2022, having previously served as Chair since May 2018.

Andrew is a commercial lawyer practising in primary industries. He was Chair of the firm's Board from 2018 until February this year. "I'm honoured to take on this role. As we are hopefully emerging from the most troublesome business effects of COVID, I am optimistic and excited to continue to develop Sparke Helmore's position as a market-leading Australian national law firm. With a wholehearted commitment to an inclusive culture and over 140 years behind us, we are focused on remaining truly personable and expert advisers to, and partners of, our clients," said Andrew.

Our national footprint

Today, we are a truly national award-winning firm that covers five core areas of law and has more than 30 specialised areas of expertise.



91 partners
800+ employees
9 offices

2022: 91 partners

- Rani Aria Retnam
- Ian Bennett
- Anella Bortone
- Robyn Brewster
- Seamus Burke
- Suzy Cairney
- Malcolm Cameron
- Steven Cardell
- Theo Casimatis
- Julien Castaldi
- Brendan Charles
- Peter Charteris
- Dalvin Chien
- Nick Christiansen
- John Coorey
- Gillian Davidson
- Mark Doepel
- Mia Donald
- Ben Dube
- Michael Dwyer
- Felicity Edwards
- Karwan Eskerie
- Maxine Feletti
- Andrew Ferguson
- Nick Giourgas
- Emma Gruschka
- Greg Guest
- Roland Hassall
- Matthew Hawker
- Kiley Hodges
- Luke Holland
- Carlie Holt
- Jackson Inglis
- Sam Jackson
- James Johnson
- Andrew Johnston
- Ian Jones
- Wayne Kaplan
- John Kehoe
- Adrian Kemp
- Julie Kinnear
- Andrew Knight
- Bill Kritharas
- Michael La Vista
- Natasha Leedman
- Dino Liistro
- Arelene Lowry
- Stuart Marris
- Jehan Mata
- Scott McDonald
- Julian McGrath
- Patrick McGrath
- Alan McKelvey
- Emily McKeowen
- Yvette McLaughlin
- Larissa Mepstead
- Belinda Michalk
- Kristina Miller
- Catherine Morton
- Helen Murray
- Ben Nicholls
- Garry Nutt
- Paul O'Dea
- Emanuel Oros
- Kent Owen
- Joanne Palamara
- Shannon Platt
- Darren Rankine
- Bernadette Rayment
- Chris Rimmer
- Laura Rush
- Renée Sadler
- Mark Sainsbury
- Leon Sakaris
- Phillip Salem
- Matthew Seisun
- Naomi Simmons
- Michelle Taylor
- Kerri Thomas
- Chantal Tipene
- Paul Tobin
- John Toigo
- Brad Vinning
- Robert Watson
- Sally Weatherstone
- Liana Westcott
- Andrew White
- Katherine Whittemore
- Catherine Wilkinson
- Shane Williamson
- Luke Woolley



With a respectful nod to our amazing past and the many wonderful people who have passed through our doors—we are one of the oldest surviving companies in Newcastle and one of the oldest law firms still operating in Australia—Sparke Helmore celebrates its 140-year anniversary!




sparke
HELMORE
LAWYERS
140
1882 - 2022
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