

Briefcase: Power dressing with Lady Deborah Chambers and other matters

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BRIEFCASE

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I think we may be on to something with this fashion blogging. I've never had such an outpouring of heartfelt emotion and strong feelings. Barristers, senior solicitors, in-house counsel and others emailed to vent their collective spleen about poorly dressed "Friday fashionistas" who dress down the wrong way.

One actually played in a skiffle band but took the point. Another wrote of a lawyer who looked as if he slept rough given his crazy hair and beard. Another pointed out how many ridiculous middle-aged men had tried to look like "young thrusters." Even the Fairfax empire has entered the fray, with a business page story highlighting the sharp (very Christchurch indeed) pinstriped Serena Kelsey

suit worn by Brendon McCullum's lawyer, Chapman Tripp's Garth Gallaway, when attending the Cairns perjury trial.

Who cares about match fixing when you have a Serena Kelsey suit? I'd never heard of Serena Kelsey but she's very much the tailor to the legal stars, trumpeting the sharp suits at places like Bankside and Shortland Chambers, Queen's counsels, virtually all the major firms and, of course, Brendon McCullum, who is evidently a brand ambassador, rather like former Justice Minister Judith Collins who made a transition from car crusher to painted-up car cruiser sponsoring Crimewatch and Judith Collins.

The Chambers matter

Of course, no one dresses more like the professional woman than Lady Deborah Chambers, a Bankside inhabitant, who therefore may also be power-dressed by Serena Kelsey. The current fuss over the estate of her late husband, the posthumously knighted Supreme Court judge Sir Robert Chambers signals all the sort of family trouble that can occur in any remarriage, particularly one involving money and new wives and the death of a natural parent.

The couple had been together for 12 years and the estate is valued at about the same number in millions of dollars.

It presumably also brings to the fore in circumstances that she must find richly ironic, the issues about which she has specialised and written in works such as the co-authored text on domestic property law and estates, *For Richer For Poorer*, as well as her representation of aggrieved parties in trust and matrimonial property cases. Facing Jim Farmer QC for John Chambers, the son, will see the issues fully tested, nodoubt.

Justice and The Art of War

Justice Stephen Kos is rapidly assuming the mantle of one of the Bench's most readable judges. It is always nice to have a literate and clearly expressed judgment and that is what our higher courts offer. However, Justice Kos's ability to have a little fun on the way through, as well as writing concisely, is appreciated in the interests of throwing some diamonds into the rough.

The decision ([read it here](#)) provides a useful run-through of Property Law Act issues on lease cancellation but also examines how things can so easily be misinterpreted, even by lowly district court judges and standards committees. In the case involving lawyer Boon Gunn Hong, who was referred to the Law Society

by a district court judge who had made unacceptable assumptions and interpretations and it is a case that merits reading by any lawyer in the property area or not.

The case involved Mr Hong's client, a Chinese restaurant that was going broke and issues relating to lease cancellation. Mr Hong's advice to his client was the subject of complaint to the Law Society. Justice Kos noted that the restaurant's landlord was about to take action to terminate the lease. He notes at one point: "Taking a leaf from Sun Tzu, the landlord appreciated that the supreme art of war is to defeat the enemy without fighting."

The judge goes on to describe Mr Hong's inept application for judicial review against the committee as " an overpacked Cook's Tour of judicial review." His decision, however, is castigating of both the district court judge's incorrect assessment of the evidence, as well as the manner in which the committee dealt with the complaint before it.

A good read. Another excellent dresser, too, Justice Kos.

John Bowie is publisher of [LawFuel](#)

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#1 by **Don Sweet**  3 hours ago

You are right John, that judgment is a great read. A corollary of Justice Kos' reasoning is that Mr Hong might fairly have expected the Law Society's support is rebutting the complaint of the District Court Judge. Therefore (and without lionising Mr Hong) it is remarkable that he prevailed against the opposition of the Law Society.

