

MICHAEL KIRBY

b. March 18, 1939

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

“If every gay person in Australia stood up and said this is me, get over it, the whole shabby charade would be finished.”

In 1991, Kirby received the Companion of the Order of Australia, the nation’s highest civil honor, and the Australian Human Rights Medal.

Michael Kirby is a former justice of the High Court of Australia. He is the world’s first openly gay justice of a national supreme court. When he retired, he was Australia’s longest-serving judge.

Kirby was born in Sydney, Australia. He attended Fort Street High School, which is renowned for the accomplishments of its graduates. He earned three bachelor’s degrees and a Master of Laws degree from the University of Sydney.

Kirby practiced law for 13 years. In 1975, he was named deputy director of the Australian Conciliation & Arbitration Commission. Subsequently, he served as judge of the Federal Court of Australia, chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission and as president of the New South Wales Court. In 1996, he was appointed to the High Court.

A pioneering AIDS activist, Kirby served on the World Health Organization’s Global Commission on AIDS and the United Nations Global Commission on HIV and the Law.

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In 1999, Kirby came out when he named his long-term partner, Johan van Vloten, in his listing in “Who’s Who in Australia.” The couple has been together since 1969.

In 2010, Kirby received the Gruber Justice Prize for his work on sexual orientation discrimination and international human rights law, including laws relating to privacy and HIV/AIDS. In 2011, his biography, “Michael Kirby: Paradoxes/Principles,” was published.

Kirby lives with his partner in Sydney, where he advocates for LGBT equality and for people with HIV and AIDS.

