

Julian McMahon AC BA(HONS), LLB, LLM

When Julian McMahon's father sat down in the evenings to watch *Rumpole of the Bailey*, a British TV series that depicted an elderly London barrister who defended the underdog, he didn't realise he was sparking his son's interest in criminal law.

Aside from a shared love of *Rumpole*, Julian also inherited his father's diligent work ethic. While his father worked his way out of poverty after growing up in rural Australia, eventually becoming a member of the board of the agribusiness company, Elders Ltd, Julian himself showed equal tenacity in pursuit of his studies.

Thanks to the "sweat and blood of my parents' hard work", as Julian says, he was able to attend a prestigious private secondary school, Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview, in Sydney, before enrolling at Trinity College at Melbourne University. He says: "Both my parents worked all the time to give their children as good an education as they could possibly obtain for us."

Once there, Julian did not squander the opportunity. He studied classics completing his degree with honours and also enrolled in law. Balancing a young family – Julian now has four children – he left his job as a classics tutor to become a lawyer. Perhaps thanks to the enduring influence of *Rumpole of the Bailey*, Julian switched to criminal law in 1995.

Throughout his career as a barrister and, even more importantly, as a human rights advocate, Julian has defended the right to life with unfailing courage and enormous selflessness. A fierce and formidable opponent of the death penalty, he has drawn on more than 19 years' experience at the Victorian Bar to represent Australians who have been convicted of crimes overseas and sentenced to death. He has tirelessly pursued every avenue for appeal and clemency for his clients, most recently two reformed members of the Bali Nine in Indonesia. He also worked to save the life of another Australian drug trafficker in Singapore in 2005.

Willingly making great personal sacrifices, Julian has defended the lives of those he has represented while working without charge and generously giving his time and expertise. His commitment to the defence of human life, including the lives of prisoners and criminals, goes to the heart of Catholic life and the shared commitment to serving the common good.

As a leading voice in human rights advocacy, Julian is often called upon to share his insights and extensive experience in criminal law. He spoke about courage and truth in a powerful oration delivered at the “Review, Reimagine, Renew” Catholic Social Services Conference in 2016. He has also presented at numerous conferences around the world on the death penalty, including at the World Congress against the death penalty in Oslo last year, and in Malaysia and Vietnam this year.

In recognition of his unflagging commitment to his work as well as his longstanding community involvement, Julian earned the Victorian nomination for Australian of the Year in 2016. This year, he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC). He has also received the Law Council of Australia President’s medal and the Victoria Law Foundation Distinguished Pro Bono Service Award.

Julian is a passionate proponent of ongoing education, and he continues to play a positive role in the lives of Australians, whether at home or abroad, while valiantly defending the universal human right to life.