

University of Queensland

TC Beirne School of Law

Annual Cocktail Party

Thursday 30 March 2000, 5.30pm

The Hon Paul de Jersey

Chief Justice of Queensland

It is a delight for Kaye and for me to be here, and to be here together. The Law Library indeed does have, for us, a romantic connotation: we met here, occasionally cuddled in the corner, and upon my graduation from the law school we married each other. I will spare you a blow by blow account of our subsequent almost three decades together. I will not embarrass you or the University with an overdose of sentimentality. We are very honoured tonight to be your "guests of honour". The occasion brings up aspects of the past in a constructive way.

Kaye and I were somewhat bemused as few years ago, attending a Law Students Association Annual Dinner, to hear the incoming President, in his rousing address, at least purport to demolish the outgoing President who was also present, by foreshadowing his own intended regime as a "Phoenix arising from the ashes". Now Kaye and I knew nothing of the small "p" politics of the then Student Association. We did nevertheless feel that the claim resonated with a degree of rather brash self assurance.

For all that, many of us experiencing, or at least sensing, the UQ Law School of the year 2000, do recall and I hope not brashly or insensitively the image of the Phoenix, that mythical bird fabled to be the only one of its kind, and to have lived five or six hundred years in the Arabian desert, after which it burnt itself to ashes on a funeral pile, and emerged from its ashes with renewed youth to live through another cycle of years (SOED).

The Law School of today, under the leadership of Professor Tarr, and with the obviously active support of the Vice Chancellor, exudes energy and vision: it is rejuvenescent!

The past nevertheless may usefully inform the present, as we see in the splendidly re-established moot courtroom. Furnishings from the old Supreme courthouse, which operated from 1879 to 1968, will inspire the law students of what some are

already terming, if inaccurately, the new millennium. The bench came from that courthouse which the religiously inclined David Bertram Brooks burnt down in the early hours of 1 September 1968. Mr Brooks then reminded us Judges of our ultimate Achilles heel by pinning a note to the associate's desk in the No. 1 civil court reading: "JUDGE NOT LEST YOU BE JUDGED. SINNER. His admonition did not, however, deter Mr Justice Hoare, who went on to sentence him for his arson to six years imprisonment with hard labour. Incidentally, Brooks was prosecuted by Mr Gibney, later the District Court Judge, and defended by Mr Demack, for the last 22 years the Central Judge of the Supreme Court stationed at Rockhampton. All of those players were graduates of this law school all I should say, save Mr Brooks.

Kaye's and my fond feeling for the Law School is typical of the regard felt by its alumni. And may I record that it remains the fact that all of the current Judges of the Supreme Court of Queensland are graduates of this place, except Mr Justice McPherson and Justice White and they at least lectured here! There is a general feeling far surpassing mere relief, indeed a feeling of sheer excitement, that plainly the Law School is significantly regenerating: drawing great benefit from the past, but with an eye keenly fastened on the future. Congratulations and best wishes to you all!