

## ***District Court Judges Seminar***

***Wednesday 19 April 2000***

***9.00am***

### ***Chief Justices remarks***

Although the Judges of the courts regularly meet formally (and less formally on countless occasions) and although the Judges have the opportunity to attend national and international conferences, and fortunately do so, these seminars have I believe for both courts become a focus, symbolically and practically, for the commitment of the State s judiciary to productive continuing judicial education.

The people of Queensland fortunately have judges who are enthusiastic about the further development of their already considerable talents. These seminars aid that process, but so, it must be acknowledged, do the other approaches I have mentioned. Judges read widely. They participate daily in intellectually based discussion, with their colleagues and in the courtroom. But it is important, on occasion, to withdraw from the regular routine, to take the opportunity in somewhat different style to discuss topical issues from a challenging while informed base. I congratulate those who have assembled the seminar program: it is interesting and diverse, extending to the intensely practical.

You begin with a subject which invites Judges of the 21st century to allow their compassion to moderate, appropriately, the broad licence generally afforded the accused. I believe this area, children s evidence, is an area, like sentencing, where the public rightly scrutinizes our performance. The people expect an enlightened approach, and I congratulate you on a preparedness to discuss the issue other than behind closed chambers doors.

Apart from the goal of judicial education, these seminars provide us with an important opportunity to come together as collegiate bodies, especially with the presence of resident judges from other parts of the State. May I welcome those judges to Brisbane, and also express my own welcome to the new members of the court who have joined since this seminar last year.

I recall that when the Supreme Court Judges first considered holding such a seminar in the mid 90s, we anguished over the public acceptability of courts operating on a minimal basis. We were anxious too about whether the seminar should be given publicity.

For both courts the seminars are now established as valuable parts of their annual programs, and valuable instruments in the presentation of a progressive modern judiciary. I venture to suggest that the people would strongly encourage us in these initiatives and now frankly express surprise that the Judges should ever have felt any concern about the desirability of such ventures.

Especially at this stage in history, and looking to the future, we seek to draw what is good from the past. There is, I sense, a lively interest, in the courts and the profession, in publicly displaying the State's judicial and legal heritage. The excitement of the Rare Books precinct initiative is still with us. I may now announce that the Library Committee has been granted, by the Centenary of Federation Committee, the sum of \$90,000, with which to create a replica of the Smoking Room of the "*Lucinda*" at the other end of the second floor public corridor of the courthouse: complementary to the Rare Books Room. Some additional funding will be sought through donations from the profession. What an interesting project, I suggest, on the eve of the Centenary of Federation, and so proximate to Griffiths "own" court. As well as being visually spectacular, it will be educationally significant, including interactive computer driven displays. The possibilities multiply: last night I met with the State Library Foundation, responsible for restoring the portrait of Sir James Cockle now proudly resident in the Banco Court. That Foundation is encouraging donations from the Judges and the profession to facilitate restoration of two other historically most important works of art. Last year we tracked, to the Queensland Art Gallery, the definitive portrait of our first Judge, Alfred James Lutwyche. There happens also to be a companion portrait of his wife. The portraits need substantial restoration. Great institutions can work well together. The Library Foundation will restore them, with financial help from the profession encouraged by the courts, and the Gallery for its part will graciously let them hang in their natural home at the courthouse. As I say, in looking to the future, we are particularly drawing what is good from the past. The past, while not controlling the present, should inform and inspire it. I hope you agree that these are well informed times, increasingly so, and also inspiring times.

I warmly wish you well over the next two days, and thank you all very much for affording me the opportunity this morning to express my personal and respectful encouragement and support.