

Admissions Ceremony
Monday 13 November 2000

Ladies and Gentlemen

Congratulations on your substantial achievements. You have all demonstrated a capacity to do very well indeed. We Judges sincerely trust you may!

Like much worthwhile human endeavour, your achievements are likely not the product of just your own application. Parents, brothers and sisters, partners, friends: their support is usually instrumental to high performance, and I know you would wish me warmly to acknowledge that today. You have all achieved to a very high standard.

You now enter a profession which depends, for acceptance, on a clear focus on public service. You ultimately serve the public, as members of the legal profession, by protecting the rule of law: honestly driven, you will uphold the law, whatever the idiosyncratic direction of the particular client; you will fulfil a clear overriding duty to the court, however strong the temptation to promote a particular client's perhaps doubtful contrary interest.

We sometimes rather coyly say the law has nothing to do with morality. While it is of course true that judges are absolutely constrained by the law, the reality is that the law does generally reflect orthodox perceptions of morality. The jurisprudential study of the law is fulfilling: the morality which bases it, and the mental rigour necessary to pursue it, will always benefit you even if you do not enter into legal practice as such.

The successful practice of the law can be enlivening, inspiring, fulfilling. It can also, however, with some, consume their lives to the point where they become tediously one-sided and narrow. A challenge is to remain interested, and interesting, human beings. You will be much more effective lawyers if you take a broad approach to human affairs, especially if you read widely, participate in community affairs, and value and look after your family and friends.

In the "adversarial" system a system which by the way I believe works very effectively in securing justice, judges are substantially assisted by the parties' legal representatives, lawyers who duty bound to the court discharge a role importantly complementary to that of the judges. The public is, therefore, vitally dependent on the quality of both those parts: the judges, and the lawyers.

We judges do our best to ensure, through our boards, that persons of requisite

competence and right character are admitted to practise: you now join them.

It falls, on the other hand, to the executive government to ensure a meritorious judiciary. This court, and thereby the people of Queensland, will next March suffer an enormous loss with the recently foreshadowed departure of one of its eminent members, the Honourable Mr Justice Pincus, Judge of Appeal sitting this morning on my right. Executive government carries an immense responsibility in determining upon His Honour's successor, a matter of considerable current discussion within and outside the legal profession.

There must, in that process of selection, be uncompromising dedication to the criterion of merit which His Honour brilliantly exemplifies. "Meritorious" appointment to the Court of Appeal must recognise that those judges usually form the core of the effectively final appellate court for most litigants in this State: eminent demonstrated legal achievement and lengthy relevant experience are fundamental essentials.

I mention that to acknowledge, on the one hand, that these pivotal institutions of government evolve. The judiciary accommodates, frequently anticipates, desirable change, as does the legal profession.

But certain essential aspects necessarily remain static: our fundamental duty to the people and to the law, and uncompromising devotion to meritorious performance. That will be assured to the people by the appointment, to this highest State court, only of those patently qualified to deliver "justice according to law", in determining the difficult and significant work of this court, with the greatest facility.

May I finally urge you to spare more than a thought for the members of our society who lack your substantial advantages. Do what you can, and in no merely token way, to assist the poor, the marginalised, the friendless; and also do your creative best to help address the law's persisting overwhelming deficiency—limited accessibility to justice.

And now, as you go forward, know that you do so with the confidence and warm good wishes of the judiciary.