

Launch of Anglicare Legal Service

Webber House, Ann Street, Brisbane

Friday 25 February 2000 - 5.00pm

The Hon Paul de Jersey
Chief Justice of Queensland

When the Court of Appeal admits new barristers and solicitors, I urge them to acknowledge public service as the essence of their newly confirmed professionalism. I express the hope that they will have regard to the welfare of those without benefit in our society, the weak, marginalised and friendless. I believe that the bright eyes which then greet me reflect commitment in that altruistic direction.

In fact many lawyers do a lot of extremely valuable work providing legal services for no monetary reward. This feature is not generally publicised. It is that sort of community commitment, divorced from any notion of personal financial reward, which makes this Service possible today. I begin by thanking those practitioners who have already involved themselves in it.

Inaccessibility of justice has become an unfortunate catchcry of recent and not so recent times. There are many legal services now operating designed to help alleviate that problem. A particular feature of this new Anglicare Legal Service is that it becomes part of a well established, enormously beneficial agency of the Anglican Church. I speak of course of Anglicare, the Church's "social welfare arm".

Those who seek assistance through Anglicare generally face more than one discrete problem, sometimes a myriad of problems. A client of Kinections, for example, which provides what was generally called marriage guidance, may expose a legal problem which needs resolution. Such a client may now, through the Anglicare Legal Service, quickly refer to a barrister or solicitor of the Supreme Court who, at no charge, will tender the requisite advice.

I do not want this afternoon to repeat unduly cliché-ic references to the pressures of modern society, beyond asserting that they do seem to be increasing, with the complexity, sometimes called sophistication of the world in which we now live. Frustrations can lead to abuse, problems with family members, landlords, neighbours and eventually sometimes, sadly, the police. Where do people faced with these problems, and lacking resources, turn for help?

If they have had a religious connection, the parish priest has been an early port of call. But the priest will not often have had the knowledge necessary to solve legal problems in an effective way. And what of those, in unfortunately increasing numbers, without religious affiliation?

Anglicare, and the comparable agencies of the other churches, discharge an enormously important, broad, community responsibility, with great dedication and competence. Those seeking help with a variety of problems may now be confident that, should legal issues beset them, Anglicare will now at least be able to point them in the right direction.

I again commend those legal practitioners associated with this new service. I congratulate the Church on acknowledging a deficiency which is now being rectified. I thank Anglicare itself for embracing this initiative. And finally, I encourage members of the public without resources to tap into the legal system, to use this service as at least a first point for advice on legal problems.

I have great pleasure in formally launching the Anglicare Legal Service.