

Ceremony to mark the restoration of the Maryborough Courthouse Wednesday 29 August 2001

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC

Master of Ceremonies (Director-General), Mr Attorney, Chief Judge, His Honour Judge Brabazon, Chief Magistrate, Mayor Councillor Alan Brown, Mr Andrew McNamara MP Member for Wide Bay, Magistrates Smith and Proctor, ladies and gentlemen.

The restoration and upgrading of this fine courthouse is a matter of great joy to us all. The Executive Government is to be congratulated on having embraced the project with such enthusiasm. The people of Maryborough will have been greatly reassured to witness the return to former glory – and efficiency - of a building which typifies the serene dignity of a most attractive part of the State.

The courthouse dates from 1878. It was designed by the colonial architect, FDG Stanley. With its pleasing architectural style, and ambient situation by the park and the river, the courthouse is undoubtedly a most attractive structure, and one which materially continues to reflect the dignity and significance of the work of the judicial arm of government.

The courthouse has now been used, continuously and substantially, by all three State courts, for as many as 123 years. It is not often that the heads of all three State jurisdictions are present together: I am very pleased today to acknowledge the presence of Chief Judge Wolfe and Chief Magistrate Fingleton. The “circuit court”, as provincial Supreme Courts used to be known, was in fact established at Maryborough under the judicial office of Mr Justice Lutwyche, from Brisbane: that happened in 1859, some 18 years earlier than the inauguration of this building. The circuit was formally recognised by proclamation on 7 December 1861 under the Supreme Court Constitution Amendment Act of that year.

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I have been intrigued by the gold-leaf designations of seating for those attending sittings here. In his history of the Supreme Court, Mr Justice McPherson records (page 48) that “justices of the peace were required to attend circuit sittings, which explains the provision for seating magistrates still to be seen in the old courtroom at Maryborough”.

Visiting Maryborough is, for me, always a nostalgically precious experience. I fondly recall the four years I spent here as a boy, from 1953 to 1957. My returns as a barrister arguing cases in this grand courtroom, then regularly as a circuit judge, and more recently as Chief Justice, have always held great personal significance for me. And so as a proud Maryborough “old boy”, I am delighted to see now the fulfilment of this excellent project – and to have had the opportunity to make some small contribution of my own. I warmly congratulate and thank the architect, the builders, and again, Executive Government, on a splendid initiative superbly accomplished.

I will be very pleased, a little later this morning, to sit here formally for a short time to receive the presentation of an indictment in the Supreme Court’s criminal jurisdiction.
