

***Launch of “Mallesons Stephen Jaques in the  
Community”  
Level 30 Waterfront Place  
Wednesday 31 October 2001  
4.30pm***

*The Hon Paul de Jersey AC  
Chief Justice of Queensland*

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An ideal of public service is said to distinguish a member of a profession from others who follow equally respectable callings. This is a theme at admission ceremonies in particular. That public service is manifested primarily, in the day-to-day law office setting, in the provision to members of the public of high quality legal services for no more than reasonable remuneration. But in actuality, the commitment goes much further: lawyers lend their considerable talents to many community organisations, for example, and they complete substantial amounts of professional work on a pro bono basis.

Much of what is worthwhile about our community is not the result of governmental action – it flows from the voluntary work of a lot of good people! Good government simply could not be assured if the executive were denied the supplementary, volunteer based support on which it critically depends. In that context, it has been unsurprising to hear, for example, the Prime Minister urging financially substantial corporations to support charities.

The Australian Red Cross and The Smith Family are glowing examples of volunteer-based charities which operate very effectively: targeting the relief of the distressed and disadvantaged, and without administrative waste. Mallesons Stephen Jaques is regarded nationally, indeed internationally, as a very successful firm in the professional sense. It is a firm whose members and staff would, by many in the community, be regarded as privileged and materially advantaged. It is therefore heartening to see such a firm so directly embracing a commitment to assist the distressed and disadvantaged, and I applaud the initiative.

One could not help but be impressed to read, from the brochure, the extent to which the members and staff of the firm already participate in worthwhile community endeavours to assist others. It is hoped this new initiative, "Mallesons Stephen Jaques in the Community", should build substantially on what is already being achieved. It should refresh an appreciation of the importance of the public service imperative, and by encouraging participation in these various commendable ways – through pro bono work, workplace giving, volunteering – lift the firm's community commitment onto a dazzlingly new plane.

I particularly note the comprehensiveness of the scheme: it is national, with partners throughout the country responsible for co-ordination. It has been prepared and presented with great attention to detail: the brochure illustrates that, and so do the inclusions on the firm's home page. The firm is plainly serious about this, and I acknowledge that with gratitude and respectful commendation. But I should be more precise: those who are driving the initiative are real people, not a firm name, real people who are driven by a compassionate regard for others less fortunate.

The overall object is altruistic. Helping lift the welfare of others should be the concern of all who have the capacity to assist. Self-sacrificial endeavour does carry its own reward, not only for the individual who makes the sacrifice, but also in this case the firm, and more broadly, the profession. I have previously expressed disappointment that the extent of unpaid community commitment on the part of lawyers is not more strongly proclaimed. While acknowledging the unselfish motivation behind this initiative, I do nevertheless hope that the firm will not be shy about publicising the endeavour: there is certainly some distance to go in our dispelling the less than generous regard held by some towards the profession.

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I warmly congratulate Malleons Stephen Jaques on this excellent example of professional leadership, commend all those members of the firm and staff who have, with such apparent enthusiasm and care, brought the proposal to this point, and encourage all to participate to ensure the scheme's success. I am honoured now formally to launch "Malleons Stephen Jaques in the Community".