

**EXCHANGE OF CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
and
PRESENTATION OF SENIOR COUNSEL
Banco Court
9.30am
Wednesday 12 December 2001**

Chief Justice's observations

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I invite the recently appointed Senior Counsel to make their announcements.

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Would those Senior Counsel now please come forward to sign the roll?

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On behalf of the Judges, I congratulate the newly appointed Senior Counsel on their considerable personal achievement.

Consultation between the Judges and the Bar Council led this year to some refinement of the process of consideration of applications for appointment as Senior Counsel. I have each year followed a consultative and collegial approach to this important decision. Now the Judges have the additional assistance of recommendations from a newly established body called the Senior Counsel Consultation Group, which this year comprised Mr Glynn SC, as President of the Bar Association; Mr Glenn Martin SC, its Vice President; Mr Sofronoff QC and Mr Hugh Fraser QC.

Having received that Committee's recommendations, we embarked on our own process of comprehensive consultation. We then determined upon our own

individual recommendations, and it may be taken that no small degree of judicial independence characterised that stage. Most interestingly, however, the leading contenders for appointment, as collectively distilled from those judicial recommendations, were the same as those recommended by the Bar's Senior Counsel Consultation Group. I believe the newly refined process worked very well in this its inaugural year, and that is the view also held by my colleagues.

The Senior Counsel Appointment Protocol, as endorsed by the Judges, lists these as the qualities which should essentially characterise Senior Counsel: skill and learning, integrity and honesty, independence, diligence and experience; and the Protocol requires that they be evident in "high degree".

We are convinced, gentlemen, that you exhibit those qualities: may the discharge of your now elevated professional responsibility corroborate that conviction!

Ladies and gentlemen

While acknowledging, this morning, the particular achievements of our new Senior Counsel, I wish immediately to express the Court's gratitude to all members of the profession for their diligent support over the last year. That support greatly facilitates the Court's efficient fulfillment of its immutable goal, with the result being lists manifestly up-to-date, following the just and timely disposition of our workload.

With goodwill being the signature of the season, I wish to acknowledge especially those many members of the profession who voluntarily discharge publicly beneficial roles, for neither financial reward nor particular recognition. This past year saw the germination within the State of a co-ordinated scheme for the delivery of pro bono services, called the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated. It is an initiative of a number of law firms, community legal centres, the Bar Association, the Law Society, Legal Aid and Griffith University.

It should be acknowledged the Bar has long provided a formalised pro bono scheme for those members of the community who, because of financial limitation, would otherwise be denied reasonable access to the justice system; and that continues. There is other commendable bar commitment to the public good.

Earlier in the year, individual members made substantial financial contributions to a Bar Association initiated fund, under the supervision of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, directed to the reconstruction of Soibada Secondary College which is located in the eastern highlands of East Timor. This helped enhance the availability of education and training to the youth of East Timor, and in turn assisted the rebuilding of that strife torn country.

Many solicitors' firms continue to demonstrate a dedicated commitment to pro bono work. I was privileged in October to launch in Queensland the "Mallesons Stephen Jaques in the Community" scheme in this State, centred around pro bono work, workplace giving and volunteering. Also that month, the Caxton Legal Centre celebrated its 25th Anniversary: 25 years delivering valuable legal services, largely gratis, thanks to, at any one time, more than 200 altruistically oriented, community minded lawyers.

We Judges salute a profession which, more than ever, is recognising the goal of public service which should distinguish it.

Unfair criticism of the legal profession, as being egocentric, did for a time erode the respect of the people. Similarly, until some years ago, a perception that the courts were unduly aloof meant they were not properly appreciated for the truly governmental role they so effectively fulfill. Just as the people should be reassured by the profession's increasingly evident embrace of its public responsibility, so the Court has, I believe, in various ways, engendered a much more willing respect in those we serve, but this is not the occasion to expound on that.

The disastrous events of 11th September underscored the professionally confirmed obligation of all lawyers to promote the rule of law: fearlessly to uphold the law as the touchstone for the resolution of differences, and to do our best to foster community awareness of the overwhelming importance of the stipulation. In this stable society, the rule of law is at considerable risk of being taken for granted. It

is part of the professional responsibility of all lawyers to ensure that it is not, and that it remains respected as the key to the maintenance of civilised society.

Although we gather here this morning in Brisbane, the benevolent greetings we exchange are symbolic of the publicly advantageous relationship between the Court and the profession throughout the State. Travelling to other Supreme Court centres around the State in the course of any year, I relish the opportunity to meet with both the local practitioners, and local court staff. The dedicated contribution of the registrars and other court officers in centres outside Brisbane is greatly valued, as it is here. So is support for local courts by regional practitioners. I am continually encouraged by the warm collegiality which characterises the activities of the District Law Associations and regional bar groupings.

We thank you, Mr Attorney and the Director-General, Dr Levy, for the great assistance and support you have provided over the last year. We thank all who have facilitated the fulfillment of our mission, and that, importantly, includes our spouses and partners.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Judges, I express warm good wishes to all for the Christmas and New Year holiday periods: as the Court Christmas card annually records, our wish for you is "Peace with Justice".