

# **Central Queensland Law Association Annual Conference**

**YEPPON**

**SATURDAY 24 AUGUST 2002**

**Conference Dinner**

**Toast to the Law**

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## **Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC**

May I commend you for the spirit of the occasion. The Judges like to see a happy profession! Distant greetings, by the way, from the Central Judge, who is cycling in Canada, and Judge Britton who has temporarily succumbed to the metropolis. They are both great contributors to the region, and we will not begrudge them leave passes! I also acknowledge tonight the leader of the Central Queensland Bar, Mr Duncan McMeekin SC, who so kindly and competently helped me in my presentation this morning.

I am very pleased to see so many Central Queensland practitioners attending the conference. You may comprise only a small percentage of the population of the profession State-wide, but your acumen and collegial spirit are invariably high, and I congratulate the District Law Association for its role in bringing that about: your executive works hard, and not the least to ensure this conference annually satisfies the highest expectations: I am sorry, I should say, in the language of the lawyer, the highest “reasonable” expectations!

The conference takes its toll on the Presidents of course. Last year Steven Deaves was compelled to wind down by tramping through the Pyrenees. I understand that Andrew Palmer this year prepared in advance, taking it easy in cherry blossom land and graciously saving his energies for us! We await an idiosyncratic approach in 2003!

When asked some time ago to define “the Outback”, the current Young Australian of the Year reportedly said it was that part of Australia where the smile was broadest and the handshake firmest. Maybe, but the people of all districts exhibit their particular charms, and it would be difficult to cap the spirit of the people of Central Queensland.

Kaye and I delight in the annual opportunity to experience the vibrancy of your company, to renew warm friendships and to offer encouragement for your professional endeavour. Thank you, as always, for making us so welcome. We have not, since my appointment almost five years ago, missed any of these annual Conferences, which frankly have become very important to us personally – quite apart from our recognition that we must be here to reflect the Statewide support which you deserve, and in fact enjoy.

I was personally very pleased to be in Rockhampton for the opening of the law year church service on 12 July 2002, and then to sit in crime in Mackay for a week from 5 August. It’s not that I have any aversion for Brisbane! I should say that I am particularly pleased that Kaye is with us this weekend, as I am sure you are.

Now it is very good to see the Council of the Law Society so substantially supporting you by its presence. The Council, especially the President, are under enormous current pressure, and they are responding well to what is obviously a crisis situation – grasping nettles with candour and initiative. The Council has my strong support. I will continue to offer encouragement, as necessary publicly, and you may be sure ladies and gentlemen that it is directed to your wellbeing, so far as it advances the interests of the people, the beneficiaries of our professionalism.

I have been asked to say something more specific. I have been reported as favouring an independent, freestanding monitoring body. That would, on any

reasonable view, be a good model. Whether it comes to that, however, remains to be seen. The Law Society should be given, is being given, the opportunity substantially to recraft the current mechanisms. I am satisfied that it is going about that task conscientiously, and that it appreciates time is short. The real challenge is responsibly to reassure a regrettably sceptical public. One way or another that challenge must be met. The Society has my earnest support as it works expeditiously to overcome these very real difficulties.

I regret that my tribute, this evening, to “the Law”, has been cast in tones so serious! I have not spoken of expeditions on bicycles or dilated on the golfing prowess of various participants. This year there is reason for a somewhat different temper. Ours is a serious mission. Many of our current problems are serious. And our responses must be serious. Life may be just a bowl of cherries, but some of the currents within that bowl are more than evanescent.

Will you please rise and join me now in acknowledging that stipulation for civil interaction, that noble system upon which our public service so essentially depends: ...”the Law”!