



**Thursday Island, community greeting and official lunch
Trawq Community Council
Trawq Hall
Monday 30 September 2002**

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

On 29 April in the year 2002, visiting Bamaga to inspect a new community justice centre, I stood at the tip of Cape York and looked over the dazzling turquoise waters of the Torres Strait. The Strait takes its name of course from the Spanish navigator who traversed it in 1606. But your ancestors, ladies and gentlemen, may have been in these parts, it is said, for as many as 70,000 years. By contrast, European settlement of Thursday Island is very recent, dating from only 1877.

Gazing across the Strait that day, I vowed that I must visit you here. We are fellow Queenslanders. I am your Chief Justice. Just as I wish to meet and speak with you, you are entitled – if you wish – to meet and speak with me, though my language is limited: I am afraid I cannot speak Torres Strait Creole. From my side, I am overwhelmed by your warm welcome: it is a great privilege to be with you.

You are a peace loving, law-abiding people of great culture and tradition. I am enormously impressed by the bustling community you enjoy, with people of so many backgrounds living and working comfortably together. Congratulations on your determination to preserve and promote your unique culture, Ailan Kastom, one of your great sources of unity and strength. Before coming here, I read Margaret Lawrie's excellent book "Myths and Legends of Torres Strait", published in 1970. Like you, she was concerned that your traditions not be lost.



**Thursday Island, community greeting and official lunch
Trawq Community Council
Trawq Hall
Monday 30 September 2002**

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

I hope you will continue to strive to maintain your traditional way of life. Today's feast, I know, is part of that. It is spectacular, and you do my office, and the whole judiciary, great honour.

Now the islands are remote, and that is one of their great strengths. You are about 1,000 kilometres from the nearest city – and that's no disadvantage! Yet it is reassuring to learn about the substantial upgrading of infrastructure which has occurred and is occurring, and I congratulate the Torres Strait Regional Authority on that.

Ladies and gentlemen this is, I believe, the first time the Chief Justice of Queensland has visited Thursday Island. The first resident police magistrate was appointed here in 1877. In 1989, Justice Moynihan of the Supreme Court of Queensland sat on Thursday Island taking evidence in the Eddie Mabo case – and Justice Margaret White of our court, then at the bar, appeared for the State of Queensland. In more recent times, Magistrates and Judges of the District Court have regularly visited, and from the Supreme Court, Justice Jones, the Far Northern Judge who resides in Cairns, has had the privilege of serving you here. I am truly delighted that I have now been able to fulfil that vow I made 2½ years ago.

As the native title process progresses, as the process of reconciliation moves on, if slowly, as the Queensland Government develops an even clearer focus on the needs of the Torres Strait Islander people, I believe that our sense of kinship, our being Queenslanders, Australians, one and all together, is strong, and strengthening. I hope the fact that your Chief Justice has come to be with you,



**Thursday Island, community greeting and official lunch
Trawq Community Council
Trawq Hall
Monday 30 September 2002**

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

while hopefully along the way dispensing some justice according to law, will itself reinforce that bond.

In terms of the law, I am pleased to note that the government has committed almost \$2.5 million to the construction of a new, streamlined courthouse on the Island. It is hoped that construction will begin in the second half of next year. It is important that you, as a community, be substantially involved in the planning for that, and I know departmental representatives have already sought your assistance. It would be greatly valued. Just as that planning process should be inclusive, so courts are increasingly realising the need to work with communities, to produce more productive results, rather than courts simply imposing their own sanctions. Fostering community justice groups, and the courts' adopting a more consultative approach, aid that process.

And now in conclusion may I say how honoured and humbled I am to be with such fine fellow Queenslanders. Thank you for welcoming me to your island: uniquely beautiful for its land and seascapes, and for the culture and friendliness of you its people!