



**Caxton Legal Centre Forum**  
**“Public order law in Queensland”**  
**Banco Court, Tuesday 8 June 2004, 6pm**

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**Chief Justice, Paul de Jersey AC**

Minister, Your Honours, Magistrates – including the Chief Magistrate, ladies and gentlemen,

At the “Christmas Greetings” ceremony held in this courtroom last December, I sought to express in my own way some meaningful recognition of the great significance to our work in the courts of the indigenous community. The warmth of our special indigenous guests on that occasion, who included Ms Jianna Richardson and Ms Boni Robertson of the Gumurrii Centre, encouraged me to say something about the issue of reconciliation – in the context of what we all know and deplore, which is the gross disproportion in the representation of indigenous people in our prison population.

Other very important practical issues arise at a more micro level, and I instance two: when Aborigines are tried, how can the limited representation of indigenous people on the juries be justified, especially in centres with large indigenous populations; and how can courts be confident indigenous accused understand the nuances of the criminal justice process?



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Courts and Judges are acutely conscious of those and other concerns, and we actively do our utmost to try to accommodate them. Our effectiveness is of course for others to assess.

This evening's forum will address other matters of fundamental concern, and I am gratified the forum follows fairly closely – in legal machine terms, 'fairly closely' – upon the ceremony here last December: and also, of course, closely upon Reconciliation Week.

I am very pleased the Caxton Legal Centre has taken the considerable trouble of convening the forum: these events, unlike magic we are told, do not simply happen. We are honoured by the presence of elders and other Aboriginal and Islander people, and I add, that I am pleased to have met, and to welcome here today, Mr Murrandoo Yanner. I also add my welcome to the Deputy Chief Magistrate from Victoria, Ms Popovic, Professor White from the University of Tasmania, Ms Tamara Walsh from the Queensland University of Technology, and Mr Phillip Lynch, from the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic in Victoria.

I also particularly welcome the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, the Hon Liddy Clark, and her colleagues from the Legislative Assembly. Also present are the Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, Ms Jackie Huggins, Ms Boni Robertson, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner



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Ms Susan Booth, the Director of Legal Aid Mr John Hodgins and the President of the Civil Liberties Council Mr Ian Deardon: welcome to you all.

There is one other thing to which I will briefly refer. On 26 February, my wife Kaye and I visited for the first time the Murri School at Acacia Ridge. Mr Andrew Boe kindly facilitated that visit. I must say we were enthralled by the effectiveness of the work being accomplished there. In mid-May, following upon that visit, students from the Murri School came to the Supreme Court, and I was privileged personally to welcome them. Why do I mention this tonight? Only to emphasize that it is deeply depressing to think the promise evident in those bright, inspired young faces could, may, be blighted one day by the sorts of considerations which will I expect be explored here this evening.

At the ceremony last December, I suggested we needed to listen more in relation to these issues. I have spoken more than enough, recalling my object has been simply to welcome you – now let me, let us all, listen. I pass you into the capable hands of Mr Stephen Keim.