



Valedictory ceremony for the late the Hon Sir Dormer Andrews,  
former Chief Justice of Queensland  
Banco Court  
Monday, 19 July 2004, 9:15am

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

We gather, as Judges and Magistrates and Tribunal members, to mark, with the other branches of the legal profession and the public, the death of Queensland's 15<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice, the Honourable Sir Dormer George Andrews, and to commemorate his judicial contribution to the government of Queensland. In doing so, we express our sympathy, upon his passing, to Lady Andrews and other members of the Andrews family, including of course the son who followed his father to the Bar, Mr David Andrews SC, and welcome them all here this morning.

I am very pleased to note the presence of Chief Judge Wolfe and Judges of the District Court, the Chief Magistrate and other members of the Magistracy, and tribunal members. Mr Justice Chesterman is presently sitting at Toowoomba, and regrets his inability to be here and asks to be associated with the remarks I am about to make, as do Judge Wall QC, and retired Judges Lee and Demack. So does the Rt Hon Sir Harry Gibbs. I welcome former Judges of this Court, Justices Ryan, Shepherdson, Pincus and Ambrose.

Sir Dormer's death on 28 June, just into the court's winter vacation, meant some of us, being out of Queensland, were unable to attend his funeral. I am



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personally very grateful to have had the privilege of spending time with my erstwhile friend and colleague just days before he died.

The controversy attending Sir Dormer's appointment in July 1985 as Chief Justice dogged public reporting of the manner of his discharge of that significant role. But that was an albatross he appeared to bear lightly. Having made mention of that feature, I focus this morning, if briefly, on his judicial contribution.

It was a contribution which spanned three decades: from 1959 to 1971 on the District Court, including from 1965 as its first Chairman – the office now designated Chief Judge – and 18 years on the Supreme Court, the last three years nine months as Chief Justice. He brought considerable scholarship to his judicial role, having been an Open Scholar, and doing well at University, being awarded the Virgil Power Prize. He was at the bar only 11 years prior to appointment to the District Court in 1959, and obviously regarded highly, to be appointed at the age of only 40 years. For nine years prior to appointment to the Supreme Court, he chaired the Law Reform Commission. He was knighted in 1987.

As an ex-serviceman, indeed one of heroic proportion, Sir Dormer thereby brought to bear, in the view of many, an enhanced capacity to see through the detail of a case to its essential truth and justice. Enduring substantial deprivation as a prisoner-of-war exposed him to the raw essentials of life. It must be said, however, that to the limited extent he could be induced to break his reticence about that war service, he plainly regarded it as no more than a dreadful necessity.



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Sir Dormer was widely considered a very effective Judge and Chief Justice, in the latter capacity distinguished as one of the early court leaders with a genuine interest in case management. In his earlier role as Chairman of the District Court, he passed the most rigorous of tests, in that he attracted the good regard of his judicial colleagues and the profession, and he achieved something often elusive within a substantial, disparate court – judicial harmony.

As Chief Justice, he went out of his way, as did Lady Andrews, to welcome and help newly-appointed Judges. My wife and I were the grateful beneficiaries of that warm concern. The Andrews were exceptionally kind to us, and to our children.

Kaye has reminded me of a time Sir Dormer and Lady Andrews came to our place for dinner. Our children were then very young – as, I suppose, were we, comparatively – I had just been appointed to the Supreme Court. We told the children in advance of how the Chief Justice had lost his arm, and of the great fortitude with which he bore that adversity. We achieved our objective, in that the dinner went off without any child raising with Sir Dormer the fate of the absent limb. A little while later, we entertained another Judge and his wife to dinner, drawing the advance question from one of our brood: “Mummy, how many arms does this Judge have?” I will not identify the child.

I assert Sir Dormer would have suffered with good humour my recounting that story today. Like the controversy to which I earlier referred, he carried his physical disability with apparent ease – but was it really, valiant stoicism?



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Those of us who served as judicial colleagues of Sir Dormer Andrews, and as lawyers in courts before him, remember an effective Judge and a respected Chief Justice: one who melded, in near perfect proportion, high intelligence and immense experience of life, enduring common sense, an acute lawyerly instinct, and redoubtable good humour. His judicial legacy, and the unstinting support of the utterly devoted Lady Joan Andrews, should be remembered most favourably, and with considerable gratitude. I cannot ordain it, but so far as it matters, I hope that will be the judgment of history.

Mr Solicitor ...

Mr Martin QC ...

Mr Ferguson ...

I acknowledge the presence of Justice Spender of the Federal Court, Ms Rachel Hunter the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and as I believe Sir Dormer would wish, his dedicated driver Mr Rod Travers.

Let these proceedings be recorded. Adjourn the court.