



**Opening of New Offices of Gilshenan & Luton  
Thursday 7 October 2004, 6pm  
Level 13, 259 Queen Street**

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**Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC**

I am privileged to have been asked to open these new premises of such a highly regarded Queensland firm. These days law firms increasingly find it necessary to reinvent themselves in various ways. I am reassured that our hosts have confined their effort to their premises: I presume to suggest their record shows no other 're-invention' is warranted.

This new office space reflects a firm striving for a creative and vivid image in a setting of modern elegance.

As we all know, in recent years the large national firms have become increasingly evident in Queensland's legal scene. What is plainly important is retaining the Queensland character of our larger firms: the notion of Queensland firms controlled or directed from the south does not excite me. But Gilshenan and Luton is fortunately not subject to that risk.

There is also talk, most of it fairly unproductive, of "top-tier" and "second-tier" firms. Delineations like that can tend to camouflage the reality that so-called "second-tier" firms are also providing first-rank service, to corporations, individuals and small to medium enterprises.

Firms like Gilshenan and Luton ensure a much needed balance in our provision of legal services. Just, as in a presently relevant parallel context, not all very high quality junior Counsel should feel driven to aspire to silk as if essential to their continuing professional significance.



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But back to our host firm. Founded in 1924, Gilshenan and Luton has over 80 years delivered high quality legal services for Queenslanders and many fortunate others. It is heartening to observe that the firm has, over those 8 decades, been able to control its growth, to the point where it now comprises 8 partners, 3 consultants, 36 lawyers and 115 staff. They display particular expertise in criminal law and dispute resolution generally. The firm also practises in the areas of administrative and employment law, compensation and insurance, family law, mortgage services and property.

I have a personal fondness for the firm, originating in the circumstance that the senior partner Bill Weir and I are virtual contemporaries. Bill even had the courage to brief me from the time when I was at the bar – though appreciating my marked sporting prowess, he was careful not to brief me on QRFL matters! I had the temerity once to appear in a criminal matter in the Magistrates Court in Maryborough against his uncle, the enormously talented and experienced Mr Ron Weir. I cannot remember the outcome. I assume I lost the case, because I don't recall Michael Quinn ever having the audacity to brief me in a criminal case – though I am sure Michael has been completely satisfied with absolutely all of my subsequent judicial rulings in that arena! I am quite confident in saying that, because his colleague Glen Cranny recently enlisted me to give a paper on crime at next year's Lawasia Convention. Now I do not know Paul Luton very well, but I have known his distinguished father Leo for many years, and with that lineage, I would be completely sanguine as to Paul's professional dedication. I have mentioned only four partners: all partners in the firm work well in diverse areas, and I imagine – there being 8 of them, they are also very good friends, which can only work well to the clients' great advantage.



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The public integrity of the firm was entrenched at the outset by one of the founders, Mr J.S. Gilshenan. As but one illustration, the minutes of the Queensland Law Society's annual general meeting in 1940 note that he supported the society's 'tough line against [trust account] offenders'. He 'felt that criminal prosecutions should always be launched against solicitors found by the Statutory Committee to have stolen money from trust accounts',<sup>1</sup> a sentiment fortunately still applicable today!

As Chief Justice, I greatly value the opportunity to acknowledge the solid commitment of the practising profession, of which of course the Judges are part, and to encourage practitioners to high levels of service and achievement. To do so is part of my role, though I have, I hope it is accepted, not been shy about acknowledging and condemning dereliction when that has been established. The profession has in recent years been blighted by the dereliction of a few, but I believe the contemporary mood is rightly optimistic. Notwithstanding occasional expressions of doubt, I also believe our public regards our profession highly.

Along with many enduringly professional firms, Gilshenan and Luton has made a very large contribution to guaranteeing that high public esteem.

I now take great pleasure in formally opening these fine new offices, and in doing so wish Gilshenan and Luton continuing good fortune, as it serves its valued clients, and thereby the people of Queensland, so very well.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Gregory, *The Queensland Law Society Inc 1928-1988 – A History* (1991) 88.