



OPENING BY PREMIER OF HERVEY BAY COURTHOUSE EXTENSION

Friday, 22 April 2005, 10:30am

**The Hon P de Jersey AC,
Chief Justice**

Mr McNamara, Mr Premier, Mr Attorney, Chief Magistrate, Mayor, Director-General, ladies and gentlemen,

I begin by thanking Aunty Joyce Smith, representing the traditional owners, for being here today. The ancient lineage of the Butchulla people could remind us today of the timelessness of the mission accomplished within this courthouse. Your presence inspires us, as we continue to explore other ways of approaching indigenous people as they come before our courts with regrettable frequency.

The Chief Judge of the District Court regrets her inability to be present today because of sitting commitments at Southport.

Mr Premier, I am greatly encouraged by your obvious own commitment, and that of your Ministers, to the provision of up to the minute, technologically advanced and aesthetically pleasing contemporary courthouses. In comparatively recent times, we have seen an impressive redevelopment at Mackay, the spectacular Magistrates Court construction in Brisbane, and we are about to witness the opening of the new building on Thursday Island. Today we see an excellent extension at this busy centre, an extension which will serve the District Court and the Magistrates Court especially, very well.

I look forward to the courts at Maryborough and Hervey Bay working effectively in conjunction. While both will be used by the Magistrates Court, and the District Court now as necessary for jury trials as well as sentencing and civil and planning work, the Supreme Court will continue to operate primarily from Maryborough, although with the prospect of some sittings here where the convenience of the case favours that course. I am concerned to emphasize the court in Maryborough will continue to operate actively, with



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this excellent adjunct facility being used in a complementary way. By those means, the people of the whole region will be well served.

It is a sign of good progress that courts be given the capacity to sit in all their jurisdictions proximately to the site of the alleged crime, or the civil dispute. In principle, courts should go to the people they serve, not vice versa. Also, those who allegedly offend should be judged by the people of the community within which the alleged crime occurred. In this huge State, these things are not always practicable, although especially in recent years, we have seen Judges and Magistrates sitting not infrequently in centres once considered so remote as to be unreachable.

This also places a heavy burden on executive government. In this vast State, Magistrates sit in as many as 101 centres, District Court Judges in at least 40, and Supreme Court Judges in (now) 13. All of those centres need courthouses and court staff. It is the immensity of that geographical commitment which is unique to the State of Queensland, of all Australian jurisdictions. I am pleased to acknowledge the government's willing commitment to all Queenslanders in relation to the provision of these necessary, and expensive facilities.

I am personally delighted to see advancement in this region. My four to five years spent as a child living in Maryborough have left me with some of the most treasured of the memories I have. In those days we came to the Bay for picnics. My current mission leaves little scope for those.

I conclude by again congratulating executive government, and as always, thanking the Director-General and her staff for their willing consultation with the judiciary to ensure a construction which optimally meets all reasonable needs.