



**Vincent's' Specialist Accreditation Convention**  
**Hilton Hotel, Brisbane**  
**Friday, 17 March 2006, 8:45am**

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

Last evening I delivered a closing address at the Queensland Law Society Symposium. A major point was the advent of specialization within the practice of the law in Queensland over the last few decades. In case some of you were then present, I will endeavour not to repeat the sentiments I expressed yesterday. If particularly interested you may read them on the courts' webpage.

Some idea of the extent of specialization in the more formal sense, in the solicitors' branch, may be gathered from the number of accreditations by the Queensland Law Society. Over the last 10 years, while the accreditation scheme has been operating, the Society has accorded specialist accreditation to the following numbers of practitioners: family law 152; personal injury law 130; succession law 23; property law 29 and immigration law 1. It is a popular initiative.

On the litigation side, we are, within the Supreme Court, and no doubt the District Court also, the grateful beneficiaries of specialization. In the Supreme Court, we have two specialized lists which assume specialization among the practitioners involved. They are the Commercial List and the Mental Health Court. In the District Court, the Planning and Environment Court caters for highly specialized practitioners and the needs of their client. There are other areas of litigation practice in which the practitioners often develop distinctly high levels of speciality: personal injuries litigation, once comparatively routine, but now beset with pitfalls thanks to complex legislative regimes; medical negligence; probate law; the criminal law; and in the federal sphere, family law, migration law and taxation.

The potential advantages of specialization to the client are obvious. And in law, unlike medicine, the client does not first have to be referred to the specialist by the generalist. One advantage to the broader community is that it helps keep high level legal work within



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the State, which has some possible economic consequence, but is also good for local esteem. There should be absolutely no occasion for leakage of such work to the south.

The potential advantage to the practitioner is also clear. Focusing on a particular field of interest and developing high level expertise should ordinarily prove stimulating. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, some practitioners will see greater interest in commanding a range of various areas of practice. Also, for some a broader command is necessary. I have in mind country practitioners, and sole practitioners, although work which is beyond one's capacities must be referred elsewhere.

This is a profession where maintaining one's interest level is very important, in one's own interests and the interests of the client. Justifying one's accreditation as a specialist in a particular field, then utilizing that accreditation, can refresh a career, perhaps just as much as vertical progression – junior counsel to senior counsel to Judge; employed solicitor to associate to partner.

I congratulate the Society on its specialist accreditation programme, and I thank Vincents for their sponsorship of this seminar. The Society now offers accreditation in eight areas of law and it is a qualification not for the asking, but granted only after success in a rigorous course of assessment.

I commend you, ladies and gentlemen, for your participation today. The brevity of these remarks is intentional: my wish is to expand rather than curtail the time available to Mr Farr-Jones. In opening the conference, I wish you well for a challenging and instructive day.