



FAREWELL SPEECH TO MAGISTRATES PROCTOR & BRENNAN

Saturday, 15 July 2006

Bowen

**Judge Marshall Irwin
Chief Magistrate**

Members of the magistracy, retired magistrates, Court registrars, Judge Pack, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen-

I acknowledge the traditional and spiritual owners of the land on which we gather and I am delighted to share in this celebration to farewell Craig Proctor as he embarks upon his retirement.

Over the last 8 days, the Magistrates Court of Queensland has said “farewell” to four very experienced magistrates each of whom commenced their working life as young clerks in a regional office of the Court in the early to mid 1960’s and whose years of service to the Court total some 167 years. Last night I attended a function at Redcliffe to farewell Ross Woodford after 42 years service to the Court – on the previous Friday – Friday 7th July - the Court held a valedictory ceremony at the Dalby Courthouse for Ian Rose which marked the end of his 40 years of service in the Magistrates Court. Friday 7th July 2006 also

marked the official retirement date of two of our most experienced magistrates in North Queensland - Craig Proctor and John Brennan.

Whilst there was an official function in Townsville last night to farewell John, because of my prior commitment to attend Ross Woodfood's send off, I was unable to share in that celebration at Townsville, so I hope you will forgive me if, on this occasion with Craig's permission, I take a few moments to reflect on John's career as well as that of Craig's.

Craig commenced duty at the Magistrates Court at Maryborough as a young lad of 15 years on 7 February 1966 – strangely enough, the very same day another young lad named Gordon John Brennan commenced duty at the Magistrates Court in Bundaberg having just turned 16 years of age. After 4½ years in the Maryborough Registry, Craig was transferred to Thursday Island for a 12 month posting in August 1970 and I can imagine that year was a life changing experience for a young man of nineteen or twenty years. In the 1970s Craig developed his legal knowledge and registry management skills at Beenleigh and Brisbane and in March 1982 he was elevated to the position of Clerk of the Court at Blackwater which was followed with 12 months consecutive duty in that capacity at Mitchell, Cunnamulla and Bowen Courthouses.

Now, when Craig commenced duty at the Magistrates Court in Brisbane in April 1975, who was there to greet him but John Brennan who, after completing almost 6 years at Bundaberg followed by 2 years at Dalby had been transferred to Brisbane the year before Craig. Craig and John worked together in Brisbane for almost 5 years before John was appointed Clerk of the Court at Clermont in January 1980 and over the next 5 years John built on his legal knowledge by gaining experience in

that role at larger registries at Inala, Ayr and Maryborough. Throughout his service at these courthouses, John was often required to act as a Magistrate and his ability in this capacity was recognised when he was appointed to the bench on the 5 April 1988 and constituted the Queensland Magistrates Court at Charters Towers, Bowen and Townsville for the following 18 years.

Whilst John was in charge of the Registry at Maryborough, Craig managed the Registry at Bowen where he became an active member of the community for 4 years from June 1984 and during those years he capably acted as a Stipendiary Magistrate when the need occurred. In 1988, Craig was transferred to the Mackay courthouse, where as Clerk of the Court he was not only responsible for the management of the Magistrates Court but also capably facilitated the constant circuits of the Supreme and District Courts at that centre.

In September 1991, Craig was appointed to the bench at Bowen where he remained for just under six years before being transferred to Mt Isa for 2 years followed by a 4½ years posting at Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast. In December 2004 Craig returned to Bowen where he has constituted the court for the past 18 months as well as serving the communities of Mackay and Proserpine on circuits. After serving as a magistrate for just under 15 years, Craig Proctor retired on – 7th July 2006 strangely enough, the very same day on which, Gordon John Brennan retired as a Magistrate in Townsville. Is there any truth in the rumour that these two chaps are fishing mates?

Both these men have each invested over 40 years of work which have required them and their families to disrupt their lives to serve in many

different localities throughout Queensland. Between them they have served the justice system at over 18 different localities some of which were far from congenial. Whilst there were no doubt times of hardship and a discomfort at some of their postings, these men are of the ilk that faces adversity as a challenge and their grounded backgrounds enabled them to convert each challenge into an opportunity to promote community access to justice or gain a true insight into the community's expectations of the justice system.

As I mentioned earlier, the loss of such experience and ability is greatly felt in our ranks. Whilst it is essential to bring new blood into the court, we will miss the depth of knowledge, the sense of commitment and the true professionalism of these judicial officers which has been demonstrated by them on a daily basis in the interests of justice and for the benefit of their community.

John and his family are now settled in Townsville and I am sure his pursuits in retirement will not detract from his sense of commitment to that community. It is no secret that Craig Proctor is a proud member of the community of Bowen and it is fitting that he should choose to retire here.

As officers of the Court you both demonstrated a readiness to serve and contribute to communities across the breath of the State. As magistrates you applied your knowledge of the law and sense of justice to practical effect, upholding public confidence in the administration of justice and enhancing public respect for the Court.

Craig, John, thank you for your generous service. I would also like to publicly acknowledge the support and assistance give to each of you by your families throughout your service to the Court. On behalf of the magistrates and acting magistrates of the Queensland Magistrates Court I thank you for your loyalty, hard work and the sense of collegiality and friendship you so readily extended to us.

Congratulations to each of you on an outstanding career and our best wishes to you and your family for the future. May you both enjoy good health, continued friendship and lots of great fishing.