

QUEENSLAND LAW SOCIETY'S PRESIDENT'S DINNER

Friday 28 July 2006, 7.00 pm, Customs House

SPEECH PROPOSING THE TOAST FOR THE QUEENSLAND LAW SOCIETY

by the Hon Justice Margaret McMurdo*

Although it is July not January and at the beginning of the financial rather than the calendar year, the double-faced Roman god Janus, the god of transition, of gates and doors, beginnings and endings, and who gave his name to January not July, is my muse tonight.

As I look with Janus one way I see Rob Davis. Thank you Rob for your visionary stewardship of the solicitors' branch of the Queensland legal profession during your term. Rob's thoughtful leadership style has reflected his broad experience as a legal practitioner and his diverse educational qualifications (two Master's degrees in law and a degree in psychology). He has been a "big picture" president, reminding QLS members of their most fundamental responsibility as lawyers to independently uphold the rule of law. Rob has restored balance to the debate about the so-called insurance law crisis. He has called for restraint in the war on terror and the safe guarding of human rights and civil liberties. He has stimulated debate in the legal profession as to whether Queensland should have a Bill of Rights. He has encouraged discussion on the best method of judicial appointments. As a judge, I am especially grateful for his response to Queensland Police Union president Gary Wilkinson's attack on judges' sentencing in early January this year when many lawyers and judges were away on annual leave. He reminded the public in his letter as President of QLS to the *Courier-Mail* that "[e]very case has its distinctive characteristics and courts have the advantage of being able to consider all of the facts. The fundamental strengths of our justice system include the independence of the judiciary and the discretionary sentencing powers of magistrates and judges. Any slavish adherence to a simplistic 'one size fits all' policy would compromise those strengths". It has been a busy term for Rob and I am sure one that has placed added strains and burdens on Lorraine and their children. We wish Rob, Lorraine and their family well as Rob closes the door on QLS with justifiable pride and satisfaction and opens another door to life's next stage.

I now look with the Janus head facing towards Joe Pinder. Joe is Cairns-born and-bred. He is well-prepared for his new role as President because he has been on the Council for 12 years. He has, therefore, no illusions about what lies ahead. Nor does he underestimate the heavy responsibility he has assumed and the demands it will place on Nadiya, their two school-aged children and him. He expects the Law Society's challenges during his stewardship will include overseeing the incorporation of legal practices, the continued development of multidisciplinary practices and amendments to the *Civil Liability Act 2003*

* President, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Queensland.

(Qld) to develop and improve a fair and affordable personal injury compensation scheme. Above all Joe has a grassroots commitment to QLS members and the institution, the Law Society itself, which has served the State and its legal profession so well for 78 years. Joe, you enter the door into your term as President of QLS with our highest expectations and our warmest wishes.

The Queensland legal profession is fortunate to be served by people like Rob and Joe and that they are supported in their tough roles by people like Lorraine and Nadiya. They are why the Queensland Law Society has not merely survived but flourished over the past 78 years.

Ladies and gentlemen, would you please rise with charged glasses and join me in toasting the Queensland Law Society.