



North Queensland Law Association Conference 2008 Mackay

**Presentation of Traditional 'White Gloves' for Mackay 'Maiden Assize'
Friday, 30 May 2008, 9:45am**

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

In accepting these gloves, I respectfully commend the law abiding citizens of Mackay and the Pioneer region. There is no criminal work sufficient to justify my sitting in Mackay next week, as had been intended.

I also commend the Mackay Bar, through Mr Aberdeen, for reviving here a tradition which in England dates back to the 17th century.

Mr Aberdeen's research suggests that the last recorded example of the observance of the tradition in Queensland occurred before Mr Justice Chubb at the Supreme Court in Brisbane in 1899. Mr Justice Chubb, incidentally, was the second Northern Judge, serving in Townsville from 1889 until 1908. He must have been in Brisbane in February 1899 conducting what we used to call a 'Circuit'.

In accepting the gloves on that occasion, there being no 'prisoners' to be tried or sentenced, Mr Justice Chubb said that 'he was always glad to be relieved of, to him, the unpleasant duty of having to try persons for criminal offences. This was only the third time in the nine and a half years of his service that he had been the recipient of a pair of gloves. As to whether there was crime in this district or not he was too recently from the North to express an opinion, but he hoped there was not more than there was rumoured to be. He thought that serious crime, on the whole, did not exist to any great extent in Queensland. He had had very simple cases to try for many years, and very rarely was there a case of serious crime ...' ('Brisbane Courier', 20 February 1899).

I have regrettably to acknowledge there is never a maiden assize in Brisbane, and there is in Brisbane no shortage of serious crime to be tried.



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But to the citizens of Mackay I say, may this experience be regarded as a precedent most worthy of repetition – but it largely depends on you!