



**WELCOMING ADDRESS**  
**Brisbane Magistrates Court Historical Display Official Launch**  
**Friday 6 June 2008 at 1.00 pm**  
**Level 7**  
**Brisbane Magistrates Court**  
**363 George Street, Brisbane**

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**Judge Marshall Irwin**  
**Chief Magistrate**

I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we gather. I respect and am grateful for the wisdom of the elders – past, present and future – and their dedication to their communities, and in preserving the knowledge and rich cultural heritage of Queensland for all.

I adopt these words from the Queensland Murri Court DVD which was unveiled at the recent stimulating and successful Murri Court Conference.

Those words also encapsulate the purpose of our gathering here today – playing our small part in *preserving the knowledge and rich cultural heritage of Queensland for all*.

I would also like to acknowledge the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Honourable Kerry Shine MP, Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, Your Honours of the Supreme, District, Federal and Family Courts, the Federal Magistrates Court and my colleagues of the Queensland Magistrates Court who are able to attend today, importantly the family of the late John Marsland – Eugenie, Melissa and David, the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Peter McKay, Mr Stewart SC, President of the Bar Association, my predecessor as Chief Magistrate, Diane Fingleton whose appointment as first female Chief Magistrate of Queensland is recognised in this display and the Attorney's predecessor, the Honourable Linda Lavarch MP, and all of you our distinguished guests.

I note apologies from Chief Judge Patsy Wolfe and Director-General Julie Grantham who are interstate today. Our first female magistrate, Ms Grace Kruger who is also featured in our display has also apologised, as has Federal Magistrate Jarrett, Ms Megan Mahon, President of the Queensland Law Society and Mr Ray Duncan.

Welcome all – and thankyou for taking the time to join us this afternoon for our official launch of the Brisbane Magistrates Court historical display.

In 1907 Mr W.R.O. Hill, ex-Police Magistrate and Gold Warden published a memoir entitled *Forty-Five Years' Experience in North Queensland 1861 to 1905 – With a few incidents in England 1844 to 1861* through “a desire to faithfully do my share in handing on to the future whatever can be remembered of interest in the past – such scenes and incidents as may otherwise be hidden in oblivion.”

As he observed:

“Queensland’s unwritten history is drifting rapidly to the rear. Every year some old colonist passes away, and takes with him interesting facts, perhaps known only to himself and which he alone could have told.”

This was written only 65 years after Captain John Clements Wickham who had served on *HMS Beagle* at the time that Charles Darwin and the artist Conrad Martins were on board, was appointed the first police magistrate at Brisbane.

These words are even more pertinent today as we approach Queensland’s sesquicentenary next year.

Most of the artefacts in our display on Level Seven which centres on the recording of evidence in our courts are only a matter of decades old, but are already quite rare.

Many of you would never have seen the noiseless typewriters introduced to our courts in the 1930s, and yet they were still being used in some circumstances as recently as the 1980s.

Reel-to-reel recorders were state-of-the-art technology just 30 years ago, but are also few and far between these days.

In another generation or two, our children and grandchildren will marvel at displays like this and the primitive nature of the courtroom equipment with which we were obliged to make do, just as we marvel at the hand-written records of early last century, also preserved here today.

By that time, I have little doubt even our new digital hardware will have been superseded by technology we can barely imagine today – with only its physical presence in another glass cabinet to remind us of past glories.

However today this digital technology is at the cutting edge – and this display is a fitting memorial to the late John Marsland, who made a very big difference in a very short time to the way our courts record and manage information.

It was John who ensured that this building and, progressively all courts throughout the state were provided with the latest in digital recording and communication facilities.

Items from the earliest hand-written Court Record Books to the latest computerised keyboards and screens, are on display.

It is an important display in that it shows our courts as being at the forefront in the use of the latest technology to assist in the efficient, cost-effective and comprehensive administration of justice.

To John's family, I hope you can draw some comfort from this modest but heart-felt expression of the fond memory and high esteem in which we, his colleagues, continue to hold him.

Our historical display also includes two other important components on Level One- entitled 'Our magistrates, our laws and more 1920 – 2010' and 'Brisbane Magistrates Court: waterhole to award winning building.'

This tells the story of the Brisbane courts leading to the development of the new building, sited at the place of what was a spring round which Indigenous groups would gather. It also shows an historical timeline from about 1920 to the present, with the work of our courts and the legislation and laws they administer outlined against the historic events of those decades, with illustrative and textual detail.

I hope you have the opportunity to take a look at them a little later this afternoon, once we've completed the formalities here and enjoyed some welcome refreshments. I also hope that you will take the opportunity to look at the quite wonderful public art work which is an integral part of the design of this building.

The work of our courts and the justice system more generally is so complex and challenging it can sometimes be overwhelming.

Displays like these on Levels One and Seven remind us how far we've come and how much we've accomplished, simply by striving to do that little bit better – day by day, year to year.

They help us to take in the wider canvas of our progressive improvement over an extended period of time and, in so doing, give us the inspiration to keep on keeping on.

To quote that redoubtable Southern General of the American Civil War, Robert E. Lee: 'It is history that teaches us to hope.'

I would like to think that this sentiment lives on. It is also important to remember and learn from our history so that we can advance in the future.

The catalyst of this display was the opening of this contemporary court facility about three and a half years ago. An inspiration was the historical displays in the Supreme Court.

The former Director-General of the Department Jim McGowan readily agreed to support this vision as a tribute to John Marsland, I publicly thank Jim who is unfortunately unable to be with us today.

However to realise this vision it was necessary to have a willing and enthusiastic person to do the day to day work. That person is retired Magistrate Gordon Dean who since his retirement twelve months ago has become our court's honorary archivist. His commitment to this project has been an inspiration. It would not have happened without him. I am pleased he can be here today with his wife Sue.

Gordon is now busily at work preparing a monograph giving an overview of the magistracy in Queensland, its "going bush" to serve in remoter, pioneering and developing regions and its evolution from the ancient office of Justice of the Peace to the vital and independent judicial office it is today. I thank the Attorney and the Director-General for their support for this project which we hope to launch to coincide with the celebration of our State's 150th birthday in 2009.

I also wish to thank Ms Carli Pearson and Ms Justine Martini of the Public Affairs Unit within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and all those with whom they worked, and Mr Denis Revell, Senior Project Officer within the Department, who were instrumental in establishing the displays. There were others who assisted, and we thank them.

It was Justine who breathed artistic life into Gordon's vision and the quality of these displays speaks for itself.

Thank you again for your tireless efforts and creative flair over the past nine months.

I hope today is but the first step in the journey of preserving and sharing the rich history of our court with future generations.

I therefore also hope that the launching of this display will provide a momentum to the collection of historical information and memorabilia from around the state.

Gordon and I welcome whatever can be provided to us. This includes items of current interest because what we do today is the history of tomorrow.

We hope that although we will depart from the scene what we have contributed to putting in place today is the first part of a continuous recording of the history of the magistracy in Queensland.

It now gives me great pleasure on Queensland Day 2008 to invite the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to officially open our new exhibition.