



Opening of the Law Year service St Joseph's Cathedral, Rockhampton Monday, 21 July 2008, 9am

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

A lawyer who could not attend a parallel service in Brisbane a fortnight ago wrote to me expressing his regret. Having regularly attended the Brisbane service over past years, he expressed this sentiment:

"I find it valuable in redirecting my efforts as a solicitor for the coming year: it helps particularly with ensuring a focused balance between my professional and spiritual lives, and making sure that they can exist in harmony rather than tension."

You will be unsurprised to hear that the solicitor is Mr Jim Demack, a surname very familiar in this region, a son and brother represented in the congregation this morning.

Just as our parliament begins each session with prayer, just as many if not most witnesses before giving evidence take an oath on the holy book of their faith, it is entirely appropriate that we join, to mark the formal commencement of the court year, in a service of religious worship.

At this particular time, it is significant we join in St Joseph's Cathedral, acknowledging World Youth Day, and the presence in Australia of His Holiness the Pope.

By these particular means, we acknowledge the gravity of our responsibilities as practitioners and judicial officers. Our mission is ultimately to uphold the lynchpin of civilized society, which is observance of the rule of law. We all play a potentially important part in securing that goal, however pedestrian a particular task may seem.

We reflect on these issues this morning in surroundings which, to many of us, have a particular significance which is predominant and abiding.



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I warmly thank Father John Daley for leading today's service and the other clergy present, a presence greatly appreciated.

I commend the Central Queensland profession, from judge – Justice McMeekin and Judge Britton – to novice clerk, for this vibrant demonstration of commitment to our pivotal mission, and the high ideals necessary to ensure its fulfilment. Thanks are due to Gerard O'Driscoll for his annual organizational effort.

I have been privileged to attend this annual service, in my capacity as Chief Justice, for a decade. I regard it as an immutable obligation, and one I willingly embrace. I am however here ultimately at the invitation of the Central Judge, Justice McMeekin. This is his "territory", though he would not claim it as such, and for his courteous invitation, I am ever grateful.

I commend our related agencies, the offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid, and the Queensland Police Service, whose members daily endure risk to personal security in the selfless protection of the security of us all.

Our mission is inclusive, regardless of personal difference, and I especially commend our indigenous colleagues, including the elders present who contribute selflessly and seriously to the effective working of the Murri Court especially. In so doing I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands.

Our mission is also timeless, and the presence of so many students here this morning is reassuring, as a reflection of the continuity of our commitment.

On behalf of the Central Queensland community, and the State, I thank you all for your continuing dedication and contribution. I thank you for taking your role appropriately seriously, and for your preparedness to declare that publicly, as you now do.