



**MAGISTRATES  
COURT OF  
QUEENSLAND**

**Pine Rivers Courthouse Official Opening  
Saturday, 13 September 2008 at 9.30 am  
Pine Rivers Courthouse  
374 Gympie Road  
Strathpine**

---

**Judge Marshall Irwin  
Chief Magistrate**

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are gathered today. I acknowledge their wisdom and culture. Thankyou for the smoking ceremony and welcome to country by Uncle Joe Kirk.

I also acknowledge the Premier Anna Bligh, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Kerry Shine, Member for Kurwongbah, Ms Linda Lavarch, Member for Aspley, Ms Bonny Barry, Senator Mark Furner, Member for Kallangur, Mr Ken Hayward, the member for Glasshouse, Ms Carolyn Male and the member for Murrumba, Mr Dean Wells, Director-General, Julie Grantham, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased that Judge Butler and his wife Diane can be with us today. Next week His Honour will assume the role of Chief Magistrate. As I said yesterday at my valedictory ceremony I am very happy that he has been appointed as my successor and his appointment has been enthusiastically received by our court.

Today's celebration is particularly special for me, because this is my last official engagement as Chief Magistrate. As I will be presiding at the mock trial of Jack Beanstalk later today – it will be a fairytale ending for me.

Over the past five years, it's been my pleasure to attend quite a few courthouse openings around the state, but together with the big one in George Street, this would have to be the pick of the crop in terms of visual appeal and general amenity.

Although the Pine Rivers Courthouse may not be as imposing as the Brisbane Magistrates Court and it certainly didn't cost as much, what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in style. It is far removed from the lack of visual appeal and general amenity which characterised its predecessors and about which I am sure you will hear more from the other speakers.

This achievement is all the more impressive when you remember what the site was like just a few short years ago.

Before work started here in 2006, the most notable feature of this block was a large culvert stormwater drain.

That is why the ground floor of the courthouse is so much higher than surrounding levels – it had to be built over the top of the culvert, in line with council specifications.

This project has turned a very challenging, less than appealing block of land into one of the street's most attractive landmarks.

My compliments to the architects and builders.

I can't help but think of the former courthouse up the road at Petrie.

As many of you would know, downstairs was dark and cramped; and upstairs in the courtroom, you could barely hear yourself think when it rained, because of the din from the roof.

I haven't actually been there during a storm, but I'm assured the insulation is vastly superior.

The rest of the facilities speak for themselves and the changes are not just cosmetic.

In the past, there was a tendency to build our courthouses like fortresses and regard their clients simply as criminals. Sometimes the courthouse staff who worked here must have felt the same way. Security is still important, but our courts now play a much broader role in the modern justice system – particularly our Magistrates Courts which are grassroots people's courts, where 96% of criminal charges are heard and determined.

These days they offer a range of innovative programs and sentencing alternatives, in parallel with other important justice services such as mediation and dispute resolution.

There is also a greater focus on the victims of crime, other vulnerable persons, witnesses, police, lawyers, court volunteers, justices of the peace and other members of the community who use the court – and also court staff and magistrates.

Some of those persons are very vulnerable and deeply distressed, so it's important to provide for their special needs when they have to attend court and give evidence – therefore there is now the ability to give evidence by video link and CCTV, and there are vulnerable witness and domestic violence rooms.

This wonderful new courthouse has given Pine Rivers the capacity to meet these challenges and accommodate further innovation well into the future, with two courtrooms and capacity to expand into a third.

One thing that has not changed is the lead role played by our Magistrates Courts at the front line of justice administration.

Last financial year, they dealt with nearly 370,000 criminal charges and 58,000 civil claims.

Of those, the former Petrie courthouse dealt with more than 4,900 criminal charges and 1,100 civil claims – so your local magistrate and staff have certainly been earning their keep. This is likely to increase in future, if as I anticipate a current review results in an increase of our court's criminal and civil jurisdiction – in the criminal jurisdiction,

an increase in the maximum sentence which can be imposed from 3 to 5 years; and in the civil jurisdiction, an increase from \$50,000 to \$100,00 or more.

I have argued that courthouses and judicial resources should be regarded as part of our state's infrastructure in the same way as water storage, roads, railway lines, electricity, schools and hospitals. I was therefore pleased to hear the Premier say in her *State of the State* address earlier this week that courthouses are part of the state's infrastructure.

We now have a courthouse befitting their efforts of the magistrate and staff and the needs of the Pine Rivers community.

I congratulate the court staff and our magistrate, Steve Guttridge on their efforts which have seen a seamless transition to this new courthouse. It is also pleasing that Magistrate Guttridge's predecessors at Petrie, Michael Halliday and Jim Barbeler are able to be with us today.

On behalf of the magistracy, I extend my thanks to the Premier and Minister and the local member for making this possible.