



Q150 celebration, Townsville Friday 29 May 2009

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC Chief Justice

I begin by complimenting the North Queensland legal profession upon its initiative in convening yesterday's celebratory event in Bowen, and this ceremony here in Townsville today. As I said in Bowen, the sesquicentenary of the State affords an important opportunity to acknowledge the contribution, to the peace, order and good government of the people, by the third, judicial branch of government. Doing so now has added significance, with its being the 50th anniversary year of the re-established District Court, and with the 150th anniversary of the Supreme Court but two years ahead of us.

Although modern transport and communications greatly facilitate state-wide interaction within the profession and among the various court centres, the legal pioneers in North Queensland faced comparatively arduous conditions, and we should recall their contribution with gratitude, from the arrival in 1864 of the first solicitor to practise in North Queensland, Charles Beaufort Grimaldi. Then in 1874, legislation mandated there be a northern judge, with Edmund Sheppard arriving at Bowen in that year. It was in 1889 that the Northern Judge was moved from Bowen to Townsville, to sit in the original wooden courthouse on Cleveland Terrace.

The people of North Queensland have been well served by the profession and the courts. The northern judges have themselves exhibited the diversity of talent and varying commitment one would expect, from Edmund Sheppard unsuccessfully engaging in various manoeuvres to return to Brisbane; privileged Sir Pope Cooper, who went on to become Chief Justice, but is remembered largely for turmoil over circuit expenditure; the well-rounded Charles Chubb; the exceptionally careful William Shand; the universally admired Sir James Blair, who also went on to become Chief Justice, but apparently not a particularly effective one; R J Douglas, an effective northern judge for as many as 30 years, and commendably exhibiting no desire to leave the Townsville he loved; Thomas



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O'Hagan, plagued by ill-health and dying at the age of only 55 years; the earnest Bernard Jeffriess; the painstakingly careful Russell Skerman; the legendary Sir George Kneipp; and the incumbent Justice Cullinane (cf, generally, McPherson: Supreme Court of Queensland, Butterworths, 1989).

My great respect for Justice Cullinane is well known and documented. I was personally delighted on 5 May to attend a ceremony at Government House in Brisbane at which His Honour was invested into the Order of Australia. It is an honour most amply justified: Justice Cullinane has contributed immensely to the community, in many respects.

I add today my expression of appreciation for the dedicated commitment of Judges Pack and Durward of the District Court, and the Magistracy.

We gather at the court. As I said in Bowen, the history of the courts in North Queensland is one of stability and reliability. It is the immutability of our mission, the delivery of justice according to law, which has always taken the courts forward. In times of global turmoil and insecurity, people tend to find reassurance in values, beliefs and institutions of unchanging fundamentals: the courts of Queensland are such institutions, inspiring for their reliable discharge of their mission over many years past, and reassuring for the confidence that they will continue to do so indefinitely into the future.

And in the discharge of their mission, the courts are always greatly assisted by the conscientious application of the profession. Long may that continue.