



Official Opening of the Mareeba Courthouse

**Thursday, 19 February 2009
11:30am - 12:30pm**

**Mareeba Courthouse
14 Hort Street, Mareeba**

**Judge Brendan Butler AM SC
Chief Magistrate**

Today's celebration is particularly special for me, because it is my first official opening as Chief Magistrate.

It's amazing how quickly your new courthouse has taken shape.

This time last year, the tender had not even been let.

Even six months ago, we would have been standing on a grey concrete slab surrounded by little more than a steel framework.

Today Mareeba can lay claim to one of the most modern courthouses in Queensland.

My compliments to the architects and builders for their excellent design and workmanship.

The facilities speak for themselves.

These days, there is a much greater focus on the court's more deserving clients, including victims of crime, witnesses and other members of the community.

Some of those clients are very young, very vulnerable and deeply distressed, so it's important to provide for their special needs when they have to attend court and give evidence.

This new courthouse has given Mareeba the capacity to do just that and accommodate further innovation into the future.

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 across the state.

Of those, Mareeba dealt with over 3,000 criminal charges and 100 civil claims, so your local Magistrate and staff have certainly been earning their keep.

As most of you would know, Magistrate Tom Braes is a North Queenslander born and bred and has been serving the law in one capacity or another for more than 30 years.

In the 1970s, he started out as a clerk of the court and mining registrar and, since then, has worked for Crown Law and in private legal practice before his appointment as a Magistrate.

Mareeba is very fortunate to have a magistrate with such strong local ties and breadth of experience.

I also take this opportunity to formally welcome your new Registrar, Raimund Heggie, who took up his appointment here just last month.

Raimund too serves as an acting magistrate from time to time and again, Mareeba is very fortunate to have the benefit of his considerable knowledge and experience.

I would also like to acknowledge acting Registrar Melissa Allen, who has done such an outstanding job of organising today's celebration in recent weeks while Raimund has been serving on the bench elsewhere.

Thank you all for a job well done.

The true strength of our justice system derives from the integrity, dedication and hard work of our people.

They now have a courthouse befitting their efforts and the needs of the Mareeba community.

On behalf of the Queensland magistracy, I extend my thanks to the minister and government for making that possible.