



Downs and South West Queensland Law Association
Annual Gala Dinner and
Presentation of Life Membership Award to Mr John Edward Cleary
Saturday 15 May 2010, Empire Church Theatre, Toowoomba

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice

Kaye and I relish the annual prospect of being with you at this glittering event. I congratulate Carolyn (Howe) and her helpers: the occasion becomes even more vibrant from year to year.

You may already know that the Downs and South West Queensland Law Association dates from July 1937, so at 73 years, it is the oldest of the District Law Associations. You are to be commended for supporting the Association: it is a strong force for cohesion in this regional profession.

In fact, at 73 the DSWQLA is far and away the oldest of the regional law associations. By contrast, the Northern Association is but 50 years old, and the Central Association is 51. At 73 you just trail the QLS itself, which is now 82 years old. So congratulations!

The Association actually goes back into the late 19th century. It was quiescent for a while, and instrumental in its revival in 1937 were the revered J A Clewett and Edward W Cleary. Significantly this evening, we will be honouring Edward's son, Mr John Edward Cleary, to be admitted as a life member of the Association.

Over the years the Association has spawned as many as four Presidents of the Queensland Law Society, Justin O'Sullivan, George Fox, Tom Sullivan and Megan Mahon, which is quite extraordinary in a sense, noting as a point of departure the present numbers: 219 practising solicitors and four members of the bar. It demonstrates the real commitment of the Downs profession to the profession State-wide. The region also



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proudly boasts a former Attorney-General in Kerry Shine, and let us not forget T J Byrnes, the 19th century Solicitor-General, Attorney-General and Premier of Warwick fame.

I repeat my annual expression of esteem, ladies and gentlemen, and my sincere wish that you achieve professional and personal contentment. Thank you as always for your warm welcome: you all have my enthusiastic support, and now I am privileged to induct Mr John Edward Cleary as the first life member of the Downs and South West Queensland Law Association.

Mr Cleary, a former President of the Association, was admitted to practice as a solicitor in 1949. He practised for 55 years until 2004. He served articles under his father Edward W Cleary. From 1951 Mr John Cleary practised in the partnership Edward W Cleary and Lee, for the last three decades mainly in commercial and estate law.

A distinguished and highly respected solicitor in Toowoomba, he can boast a stable of illustrious associates, including, from his Downlands College days, F G Brennan, and then at the University of Queensland H E Peterson and J L Kelly.

Beyond the law, Mr Cleary was the Chairman of the Concannon College Council at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education as it then was, and Honorary Secretary of the Downlands Past Students' Association. He compiled much of the history of the Gorman's Gap Crossing, an important track up the Great Dividing Range for early European settlers. His work included mapping of the track and he was also involved in the placement of the cairns marking the top and bottom of the track.

The Association has resolved that Mr Cleary be appointed a life member, for his notable contribution to the delivery of legal services in Toowoomba and on the Downs, and for his distinguished service to the Association.



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Unfortunately ill-health precludes his being here to receive his award in person this evening. Simon Cleary, Mr John Cleary's son, is here to accept the award on his father's behalf. Simon, you may know, is currently the Deputy Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman in Canberra. Mr John Cleary is particularly proud that Simon followed him into the profession of the law.

I am very pleased to present this certificate now to Simon on his respected father's behalf.