



Gold Coast District Law Association  
Annual luncheon meeting

Friday 18 June 2010, 12.30pm, L'Esprit on the Water Restaurant, Southport

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

I am very pleased to be with you again this year.

The first luncheon which I attended as Chief Justice was in the year 2003, on 14 March at Spargo's Restaurant. The next year we again enjoyed that spectacular outlook over the Broadwater, that time at Fellini's, and in following years, we have gathered at this idyllic L'Esprit.

From memory, this is the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive luncheon AGM of the Association I have attended. I admire your persistence.

Over those eight years, the webpage reminds me, I have addressed you on a variety of subjects. One of them with practical ramification was the Supreme Court's sitting at Southport, and I am disappointed the uptake has not justified that, but the court's willingness remains and one day may be matched by demand. That was I thought an interesting subject.

I was, I confess, somewhat less enthralled when the redoubtable Ted Skuse asked me to speak about the rule of law, but I did so and I hope not too heavily.

I pondered whether I should speak today about critical current issues, like the Moynihan jurisdictional reforms, and national legal profession reform, but I have expressed my views on those matters quite regularly and they have been reported, and they would I think be reasonably well-known to those practitioners who are interested.

In the result I have felt that I should talk for a few moments about you.



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A major reason why I have sought to attend this extremely pleasant annual event from year to year is my recognition of your corporate significance to the Queensland profession.

There is a numerical significance: with 794 solicitors and 27 barristers, you constitute far and away the largest regional branch of the profession; and you account for almost 9% of the Queensland profession which totals about 9,500 practitioners. The Queensland profession itself accounts for about 10% of the overall Australian profession of 100,000.

But apart from the size of this regional segment of the State and national profession, you are responsible for delivering legal services in a uniquely challenging part of the State where, in a paradisaal setting, contrasts seem somewhat more evident than elsewhere: fortunes are made and lost with facility; the gullible are often with minimal persuasion inclined to part with their property; we hear of standover men and a rampant drug culture; and we hear of a State record extent of homelessness. The particular challenge for the lawyer in that context is to recognize the public service which lies at the heart of every practitioner's professionalism.

I particularly commend those practitioners who engage themselves in the provision of legal services on a pro bono basis.

I spoke of contrast, then specified negatives. Let us not overlook the positives: capacity for development in an apparently over-stressed south-east corner; populations and communities anxious to support small businesses; and lifestyles rather detached from metropolitan pressures and other detractions. And who hasn't, flying Sydney/Brisbane over the Coast, on a fine Winter's day, yearned for a flight 20 minutes the shorter? I think I am saying, ladies and gentlemen, that I rather envy you!

May I pass briefly to the Association? Lex Bell's memory is that the Gold Coast District Law Association was established in about 1968, with his father as founding President. The first firm of solicitors to practise on this Coast was Ken Price Solicitor: Kenneth



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Bennion Price hung out his shingle in 1928. That is the firm which became Price and Roobottom. By about 1968 when the Association was formed, there were about 20 firms practising on the Coast, and 25 to 30 solicitors attended the inaugural meeting. At 42 years old, the Association approaches the 50 year seniority of the Central Queensland and North Queensland Law Associations, though all rather trail the elder statesman, which is the Downs and South West Queensland Law Association, which at 73 years just falls behind the Queensland Law Society now in its 82<sup>nd</sup> year.

The vibrant development of the Gold Coast, which suggests a youthful image, cannot be allowed to obscure the Coast's substantial important history. It also, however, throws up particular challenges for practitioners, and I have previously spoken about those.

The Association plays an important role in securing cohesion within this important regional profession, including providing mentors and sounding boards for younger practitioners especially, as they encounter professional conundrums.

I strongly commend the Association for its effective discharge of that important role, over so many years.

In commending the Association, I am really commending its office bearers, especially its Presidents, but I am also commending you, ladies and gentlemen, for your preparedness to come together as a professional grouping in a self-supportive way.

I invite you to rise now, ladies and gentlemen, and drink a toast to ... "the District Law Association".