



UQ School of Law centenary celebration
Thursday, 21 October 2010, 6pm
Stamford Plaza Hotel

It is of the human condition to pause to acknowledge major historical milestones, especially where past achievements are such as may be celebrated. But it would be hollow to celebrate the centenary of an institution unless the celebration focused on the aggregation of individual people who have constituted it.

And so it is people we recall this evening, beginning with the pioneering commitment of those who in 1910 inaugurated the University of Queensland, as the State's first university. The Law School operated, for the first 26 years, as but a "shadow faculty" conferring honorary degrees, as with Sir Samuel Griffith, who was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws in 1912. The commencement of actual teaching, in 1936, was enabled by the generous philanthropy of Thomas Charles Beirne the previous year, pledging the equivalent of \$3 million in today's money to establish a functioning law school. Una Prentice, Queensland's first woman barrister, was also the Law School's first graduate, in 1938. The following year's, 1939 cohort, numbered 30, with one of the five LLBs going to Harry Talbot Gibbs.

The graduate body boasts its fair share of notables, including many judges and practitioners of high rank. But our acknowledgement tonight embraces all graduates, and importantly, the accomplished academic staff who facilitated their graduation. The tradition of the Law School embraces substantial personal achievement at many levels; the aggregation of this century's achievement is well worth celebrating.

Now our celebration this evening would also be rather hollow absent confidence in the continuity of the TC Beirne School of Law, and the University's deployment of this last century's achievement as a springboard for further progressive development.



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There have been periods, now fortunately some decades ago, when there was doubt whether the school was achieving optimally in the academic stakes; and at the anterior level, whether the University authorities were resourcing and otherwise supporting the Law School in a truly equitable way. My own direct experience was of a time when notwithstanding the Vice Chancellor was a lawyer, the law library for example offered no more than the technology of a propelling pencil.

But fortunately I discern no reason to doubt respect for those stipulations now.

Biotechnology, which the University has embraced with such highly publicised relish, is not wizardry. It is a complicated scientific field. Its remarkable contributions to human well-being warrant the devoting of considerable resources to its study.

There was a time when study of the so called “humanities” was regarded by some as all very well for the student, but in no degree critical for society. Some of those cynics put the law into that category. As those people have matured over the years, as they have learnt of life in Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Fiji, and recently of restructurings necessitated by the GFC, as they have pondered how biotechnological advances, indeed, could not be bedded down were it not for complicated legal structures and frameworks, one hopes they may have come to accept the central need for full support of the law schools, the schools which spawn those highly accomplished graduates who not only deliver necessary expert legal services to other citizens, but who may also play an important role in securing the rule of law, that stipulation which most people simply take for granted.

As a grateful graduate of this Law School, I am personally very proud this evening to acknowledge a century’s fine achievement by all associated with it. I am confident this prestige establishment will continue to deliver legal education of the highest order.

I understand my fellow speakers will share some personal memories of their days at St Lucia. As to mine, I have I think been sufficiently revelatory in the past, from my library



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romance, through Hushpuppies and long socks in second year, to Tony Lee's approach to the Succession Law lecture on the day man landed on the moon. For anyone interested, those reflections and others have over the years been recorded on the world wide web.

I invite you now, ladies and gentlemen, to join me this centenary year in drinking a toast to ... "The TC Beirne School of Law".

...

I spoke earlier of the Law School's regarding past achievement as a springboard for further progress. Over the last two years, in close consultation with the profession, the School has comprehensively reviewed the LLM program. The objectives are, as a constant, academic excellence, and as something dependent on the times, the development of a course of study meeting contemporary expectations.

Consistently, under the new program:

- 70% of the courses will be offered intensively over four years (Thursday to Sunday) to help students organise study around professional and other commitments;
- increased flexibility will allow students to focus on one particular area of law, or to construct a more generalist program;
- there will be nine new specialist areas, many with a Queensland focus;
- the course will be taught by visiting academics and leading practitioners selected for their internationally recognised expertise and established professional profiles;
- and the new LLM program aims to give those completing it a professional edge within Queensland, Australia and internationally.



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I am pleased now to launch the TC Beirne School of Law new Master of Laws program, and in doing so, to commend the academy and the profession upon the initiative, and to express the hope that many will complete the course for the enrichment of the community.

And now, I understand, Topology will regale us with their musical take on the program, a medley based on the titles of the courses included in it.