



Gold Coast District Law Association AGM and luncheon  
QT Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast  
Friday 3 June 2011

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

President, Chief Judge, Judge Wall, special guest Mr Sahba Abedian, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you again. This is I believe the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive annual luncheon I have been privileged to attend, in as Matthew Harman has said, its 11 year history.

I begin by paying tribute to Ross Lee for his two years Presidency of the Association. Ross has enthusiastically led the Association through its regular initiatives, the annual seminar – to be graced this year by Michael Kirby, the regular seminar breakfasts and drinks after work, and of course “Ipso Facto” begun some years ago by Ted Skuse. In addition, Ross is I understand spearheading the establishment of a community legal centre on the Coast modelled on the Caxton Legal Centre, which is an excellent prospect. That he secured today the presence of Mr Adedian illustrates his capacity and initiative. I thank Mr Abedian for his inspirational address. It is important for lawyers to be reminded that there is a justice dimension which transcends the law.

As Ross recorded in the latest edition of “Proctor”, “the best thing about the DLA’s is they are informal, relaxed and social types of associations, that have no need to take themselves too seriously”. Nevertheless as I have said before, the Association plays an important role in securing cohesion in the regional profession, including providing mentors and sounding boards for younger practitioners especially, and involving the universities, as represented today. I repeat my annual commendation for the efforts that you all bring to bear in ensuring that the Association meets its goals.



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Let me remind you briefly of the provenance of the Association.

Lex Bell's memory is that the Association was established in about 1968, with his father as founding President. The first firm of solicitors to practise on the Coast was Ken Price Solicitor: Kenneth 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 25-30 solicitors attended the inaugural meeting.

At 43 years old, the Association approaches the 51 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 74 years just falls behind the Queensland Law Society now in its 83<sup>rd</sup> year. I note the presence of the QLS President and Vice-President.

It is interesting to compare the smallish size of the Gold Coast profession as at the establishment of the Association four decades ago, with its present substantial composition, a reflection of course of the massive development which has occurred on the Coast over that period. With 825 solicitors and 30 barristers, you constitute far and away the largest regional branch of the profession in Queensland, and you account for approximately 9% of the Queensland profession which presently totals 9,162 practitioners. The Queensland profession itself accounts for about 10% of the overall Australian profession.

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 violent robberies, standover men and a rampant drug culture; and we hear of a State record extent of homelessness.



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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, and all who generously engaged in the relief of flood victims.

Speaking of history reminds us that this year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court commenced on 7 August 1861, with assent to the *Supreme Court Constitution Amendment Act 1861*. A Supreme Court had sat in the colony before that, in fact in May 1850, the Presiding Judge being Mr Justice Therry, but of the Supreme Court of New South Wales; and as then Justice McPherson noted in his history of our Supreme Court, Mr Justice Therry then adjured the future Queensland public against "the hotbed from which crime springs", noting the colony's then reputation for drunkenness (Supreme Court of Queensland, Butterworths p 8).

The sesquicentenary of the Supreme Court is an achievement of which the State as a body politic may be proud, for, obviously, the feature of the court's predictable reliability. It is a sesquicentenary which we will mark appropriately, although not over-zealously. We Judges presently intend a ceremonial sittings in Brisbane with the profession on 5 August, a Friday, because the anniversary falls on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup>. This will be modelled on what occurred in 1986, for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the court, when I had been a Judge of the court for but one year. There will be a dinner, and on another occasion, the launch in the Banco Court of a high quality book on the history of the court.

Now it is a pity that the new metropolitan courthouse will not be complete and able to be opened until probably mid-2012. That opening will however be a major public event, probably on a Friday with the Supreme and District Courts not sitting. The opening would be followed by a public inspection of the building. I hope the opening will be characterized by a degree of flourish – expect something memorable. Then the next day we presently



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intend a seminar looking forward, with prominent overseas presenters, perhaps the Master of the Rolls for example, and distinguished Australian judiciary commentators, a seminar open of course to the profession and the public. That would, looking prospectively, sit symmetrically with the historical perspective delivered in the previous, this the sesquicentenary year.

Over 150 years, the significance of the Supreme Court has been assured by the independent support of the legal profession. The new metropolitan courthouse will signify the vibrancy of that profession in all its branches, and our best way into the future.

The sesquicentenary celebrations, and the ceremonial opening of the new metropolitan courthouse, will remind us of the desirable tradition of the law, tradition which in turn reminds us of our historical roots and goes on to inform our professional development. I look forward very much to our joint participation in the marking of the sesquicentenary this year, and the opening next of the metropolitan “headquarters” of the judicial branch of the government of this State in mid-2012.

And I conclude, ladies and gentlemen, by wishing you all continuing fulfilment and prosperity in the conduct of your practices in this historically significant year, in this very important part of the State.