



Swearing-in of Mr James Dawson Henry SC as a
Judge of the Supreme Court, in the Trial Division,
and as Far Northern Judge
Supreme Court, Cairns
Wednesday 14 September 2011, 9:15am

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland

In welcoming all persons present this morning, I particularly note the presence of the Honourable the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General by video link from Brisbane. I know the Deputy Premier regrets his inability because of another Brisbane commitment to be here in Cairns: he told me that yesterday. I record the court's appreciation for his attendance at recent court ceremonies in Townsville and here in Cairns as recently as 2 September.

All members of the court who can be present are here today, either directly or by video link from Brisbane: all would wish to be associated with my following remarks.

I note the presence in Brisbane of Judges of the Federal and Family Courts, the Chief Judge and the Chief Magistrate, other Judges and Magistrates; and here in Cairns, the Director-General, the Crown Solicitor, local member Ms Desley Boyle, the Deputy Mayor, Deputy Chancellor of James Cook University, my personal long-standing friends and distinguished citizens of Far North Queensland and the State, Mr George Chapman and Mrs Margot Chapman, and the Editor of the Cairns Post Mr Nick Trompf. The news media play a potentially very important role in disseminating information about the work of the courts, and I gratefully acknowledge the significance of the Editor's presence today.

I mention in that regard that the Chief Justice of Canada is to present an address in the Banco Court in Brisbane tomorrow evening on the subject "The Courts and the Media", which I am sure will be most interesting, and a great honour to the court in this its sesquicentenary year.



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I spoke yesterday with Chief Justice Keane of the Federal Court, who asked me to record his apology. That His Honour has attended recent ceremonies in Townsville and Cairns bespeaks a level of respect and support for this court which is greatly appreciated, and reciprocated.

We warmly welcome Justice Henry to the Supreme Court, and congratulate him upon his appointment as the 111th Judge to be appointed to the court in its 150 year history, and the second Far Northern Judge. Falling in this significant year, and following upon the conspicuously effective 14 year term of the first Far Northern Judge, Justice Jones, whose presence today I acknowledge, the appointment is redolent of history and promise.

As to the latter characteristic, Justice Henry is undoubtedly very well qualified for this important appointment.

Educated in regional Queensland and graduating in Arts and Law from the University of Queensland, His Honour was admitted to the Bar in 1986, developing a specialist criminal practice in the Crown service, in which he continued until the year 2000, when he entered into private practice in Cairns. His practice then diversified to cover most areas of the law. My information and belief is that he is highly regarded by his professional colleagues for his legal learning and experience, balance, and capacity for hard work. In that last respect, I note this is a particularly busy Supreme Court centre.

During those years in Far North Queensland, Justice Henry has commendably been involved in community life, for example chairing the Cairns State High School Council since the year 2008.



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I expect that 11 years “on the ground” qualifies His Honour as a Far North Queenslander. He now embraces a unique opportunity to leave his beneficial mark on the region – potentially for as long as 21 years.

I have spoken on other occasions about the central importance of Supreme Court appointments to regional centres, where the Judge operates without the direct collegial support characteristic of the court in Brisbane, and where the Judge daily presents as the sole face in the region of this significant institution. That is of course not to suggest that a regional judge is divorced in some way from the rest of the court: far from it, the court exhibits strong cohesion State-wide. But those features do nevertheless combine to render regional appointments especially significant. Throughout my judicial career, the regions and the State have been very well served by the regional Judges, who have additionally assumed with great impact high leadership roles in relation to the regional professions, including the judiciary, and the regional communities. I am confident Justice Henry will do likewise.

That extends to collegial interaction with the Judges of the District Court and the Magistracy, whose dedication is greatly valued. I have always been especially gratified by the support for these occasions of the Chief Judge and Chief Magistrate, signifying a State-wide court cohesion which is not only personally pleasant, but has, as well, produced some publicly worthwhile outcomes.

That this ceremony takes place in Cairns rather than Brisbane signifies the court’s acknowledgement of the regional significance of which I have spoken this morning. That all Judges are present by one means or other, signifies the Far Northern Judge’s membership within a State-wide court of 26 members, collegially bound to the optimal delivery of justice according to law throughout the State.



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We all warmly welcome Justice Henry to the court, and we warmly welcome Mrs Kate Henry to the court community.