



Queensland Law Society Christmas breakfast with the Chief Justice
Sofitel Brisbane Central
Friday 2 December 2011, 7:30am

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland

“A year of celebration and anticipation”

The annual Christmas breakfast has now become a relatively long-standing tradition. I relish the opportunity to declare my support publicly for the profession which I hold in such affection, and whose many endeavours I respect.

I regularly emphasize the need for practitioners to remember the curial roots of their professional lineage: we Judges must also acknowledge our dependency on the profession, in both contentious and non-contentious matters, to assure the optimal discharge of our joint mission.

You will be pleased to hear there is nothing problematic I want to address this morning, on what should as the name suggests be a celebratory occasion.

It has indeed been a celebratory year, including the swearing in of three new Judges of the Supreme Court, a new Northern Judge Justice North and a new Far Northern Judge Justice Henry and Justice Dalton here in Brisbane, the 10th anniversary of our wonderful QPILCH, and then of course, there were the grand sesquicentenary celebrations.

The ceremonial sitting in the Banco Court marked the first time, in my 26 years on the Supreme Court, when all Judges of the court had been able to be present on the bench together: the whole court sat en banc in its eponymous courtroom. It was a most significant collegial occasion. Her Excellency the Governor attended that sitting, along with the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General.



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Then the following night, 250 guests attended a memorable dinner at the Queensland Art Gallery, including again the Governor, and on this occasion the Premier and the Deputy Premier, along with as many as six other Australian Chief Justices, among them the Chief Justice of the High Court who proposed the toast to the Supreme Court.

I mention these things because of the gracious tribute thereby paid to our Supreme Court. They were truly momentous events in August.

Fittingly, the Supreme Court Library is publishing a book covering those two events, and also including the wealth of historical material assembled at that time. Justice Martin kindly edited that book. We expect it will be available by the time of the Christmas Greetings ceremony on 14 December. An interesting Christmas present for those with a sense of history?

At the ceremonial sitting I recorded the historical oddity that the court apparently completely forgot about marking its centenary in 1961, which rather surprised me, because the then Chief Justice Sir Alan Mansfield was known to be a careful man. We tried to make up for that oversight in 1986 by enthusiastically celebrating the court's 125th anniversary. Over-enthusiastic? As the only current member of the Supreme Court present on the bench at the ceremonial sitting in 1986, I vividly recall thinking it was a very unusual anniversary to be celebrating with such verve. Anyway, we did remember the 150th, and we celebrated it, I believe, with appropriate panache, signalling the enduring stability of the court as an important organ of government.

Another cause for optimism this year has been the substantial progress made in the construction of the new metropolitan Supreme and District Courthouse, now at full height with the topping out ceremony having occurred on 12 August. The internal fit-out is well under way.

It is a simply stunning building, which for its utility, will serve the people of Queensland well, and even surpassing that, it will inspire, is already inspiring. The first question people



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generally ask me these days is when will our new courthouse be opened, meaning “our” in the sense of “the people’s”. Those who speak to me are full of commendation for what they are seeing. The building is already a source of wonder and inspiration. Completed, it will present as a courthouse which will serve, interest and inspire. It will inspire in reminding the citizenry of the stipulation which lies at the base of civil society, which is the rule of law, and it will do that in a most interesting way.

We are working towards a move into the new building during the next Winter vacation in July, with the formal opening by the Governor on the morning of Friday 3 August 2012, followed by a day free of court sittings so the public may savour the treasures of his new major public building. The Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand has agreed to meet in the new courthouse the preceding day, so I am hoping that all Australian and New Zealand Chief Justices will remain for the opening on the Friday. Then a seminar open to the profession and the public will take place on Saturday 4 August, to be addressed by an array of international and Australian speakers, including the Chief Justices of New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Australia, the Master of the Rolls and Lady Justice Hallett, Vice President of the Queen’s Bench Division.

Over the last 150 years, the significance of the Supreme Court has been assured by the independent support of the practising profession. The new metropolitan courthouse will signify the vibrancy of our profession in all its branches, and our best way forward. Importantly, that courthouse has been the result of substantial consultation between the Judges and the professional associations.

Thank you for your continuing support, ladies and gentlemen. I hope you will share, are already sharing, my enthusiasm for these enlivening developments, developments which tend to focus attention on the significance of the Queensland legal profession in all its branches. And let us not forget that the significance of the practising profession is reflected even in numerical terms: the practising profession in Queensland amounts for as much as 18% of the overall national profession.



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As we move forward together, I wish all present, and all practitioners wherever, a very happy festive season, a prosperous New Year, and continuing fulfilment in your and their professional lives.