

SUPREME COURT  
OF QUEENSLAND

## **Admissions ceremony 1 8 September 2014**

### **Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations to all the newly-admitted lawyers for this great State of ours.

Today marks a new and exciting day in your professional life. Being a lawyer, deserving of the authority and duties it entails, is no easy thing in the modern world. How you rise to meet the many professional challenges you will face will be the measure of your skill, honour and commitment to fulfilling the terms of your oath or affirmation.

Your performance to date is a promise, but not a guarantee, of future success. Use your acquired legal knowledge wisely and ethically. Remember that you are the most recent inheritors of a long and honourable tradition stretching back centuries.

The essential features of that tradition are a paramount duty to the law, the courts and the community they serve; the balanced pursuit of justice; adherence to demanding ethical standards; and loyalty to the fundamental principles, including the rule of law and requirements of fairness and equity.

Take charge of your inheritance in a way that brings credit to you and enhances respect for the legal profession and justice system.

Remember too that generosity is an essential impulse and instrument of humanity. In the legal context, helping others in need without adequate resources is as important as in any other field of human services. Pro bono work is an important aspect of life in the law. Performing it enriches us all.

Reaching this career milestone – which I hope is the first of many – is a commendable achievement worthy of public acknowledgement and cause for personal satisfaction and celebration with your family and friends. Their encouragement and support has, no doubt, contributed significantly to your success and also needs to be fully recognized and appreciated.

All the very best to you and them.

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## **Admissions ceremony 2 8 September 2014**

### **Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the legal profession.

As I am sure you can all attest eligibility for admission is not easy to attain. It requires determination and discipline to acquire the academic qualifications and practical competencies needed. But there are important personal qualities aspirants must also have.

The standards to be met are real, and demanding.

First, the profession you have joined is an old and honourable one regulated by settled rules of conduct and competence distilled through the ages. Practitioners are respected for their proven ability to protect the law and the public they have sworn or affirmed to faithfully serve to the best of their ability.

Know those rules of conduct and competence, and remain true to them every working day.

Second, you have inherited cherished traditions, values, ideals and beliefs that are to be carefully carried and passed on intact to the next generation.

Stability, consistency, predictability and uniformity are defining characteristics of our legal tradition; so too is the ability to renew and change to meet new conditions and circumstances. It is important that the law and the legal profession adapt as community values evolve, without discarding fundamental ideals and principles built up over many centuries.

Traditions give the legal order its legitimacy, authority and centrality but it is its capacity to gradually and appropriately change with the times that gives it its modern relevance. This ensures the maintenance of public confidence in its ability to administer justice in a way that reflects the contemporary character of society.

A final word of advice, if I may: do not forget why you chose to be a lawyer or those who helped you become one. They too share your success and will be among the few who really care about you in the face of failure.

But remember that, while it is important to strive to achieve success and satisfaction, do not waste too much time dwelling on goals not reached. Making mistakes, as has been pointed out by others, is no bad thing. They humble us and eventually we learn from them. The only true failure is doing nothing. If we do not learn the lessons that errors teach us, we will only keep on repeating them.

Remember to continue to develop your legal knowledge and professional skills, and to pursue a happy and balanced life outside law. Make a real difference to society and, most of all, enjoy your personal successes as well as your professional achievements. Serve first. Through service to others, especially the disadvantaged and marginalised, you will honour them and do yourself and the profession proud.

All the best as you make your way in your career – wherever it takes you.

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## **Admissions ceremony 3 8 September 2014**

### **Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations on your admission to practice. You can be justly proud of your achievement.

Qualifying for admission means that not only do you have the proven knowledge and necessary practical aptitude to be a good lawyer, but also that you have the character and other important personal attributes to be fit and proper for admission. This includes the degree of integrity that gives the court confidence in your complete honesty in discharging your professional commitments consistent with the terms of your oath or affirmation of office. This confidence extends even – or especially – to the times when the pressure to stray is strongest.

Lawyers represent and reinforce the authority of the legal system and respect for the rule of law.

The legal profession and the courts are closely linked. Their relationship is a symbiotic one. The courts are the profession's gatekeepers. Admission is by, and to, the courts as their trusted officers.

You now stand at the forefront and are an integral part of the process of transition at a time when proper responses are called for to a growing number of different challenges. These challenges include improving access to and participation in justice and its processes, diversity and inclusion issues, ensuring appropriate and meaningful community engagement, finding and keeping the proper balance between community protection needs and individual human rights, as well as the emergence of alternative legal service providers.

In its original sense the term "professional" connotes a person who professes to belong to a group of practitioners of a recognised discipline like law. It also distinguishes between those who do things for reward or for free. Obviously, the professional practice of law is a career and livelihood. Specialist knowledge, training and talent should command commensurate reward but the measure of our professionalism is much more than our level of earnings. Our motivation is – or, at least, should be – beyond mere money.

Helping the needy and less advantaged find out about or enforce the legitimate rights even when they can afford to pay the standard – or any fee for that matter is a distinguishing feature of modern legal practice. It is one I urge you to actively pursue. It will enrich you in other ways that money cannot.

All the very best. Hopefully, your career will unfold as it should and you will look back fondly on this – the first day – with great pride and satisfaction.

Remember always why you chose to be lawyers. Never forget the great sacrifices your parents have lovingly made or the encouragement and support they and your friends have given to help you get to where you are today. Repay them by making a real and meaningful contribution to the law, the profession and society.

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## **Admissions ceremony 4 8 September 2014**

**Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations, ladies and gentlemen, on achieving this pivotal career milestone. This is one of those hinge points in life that sparks off a ripple of professional growth and achievement.

This day belongs to you. Embrace it. Celebrate your achievements to date as well as your future plans. Celebrate them with the family that loves and supports you in everything you do and your friends who encourage you to aspire to, pursue and reach your goals.

Remember that as lawyers you are in a privileged position – you are highly educated and trained. Use these talents to speak on behalf of the powerless and the voiceless who do not have access to resources that would allow them to speak for themselves. In giving your time and talent to not for profit legal aid work, you will do a great deal of good.

Share your success and your gifts. Continue to develop them. Make a real difference to society. Serve first. Pursue a contented and balanced life outside as well as within the law.

Work out what it is that you really want to achieve and why. Trust your instincts. The rest will be straightforward. Just keep on doing it. That is what success really is. Anything else is a bonus.

You are the new generation of legal practitioners. You have inherited cherished traditions, values, ideals and beliefs that are to be passed on to your successors. Remain true to them. They are guiding lights in the foginess that sometimes characterises legal practice.

Change is a gift.<sup>1</sup> Be open to it, but not just for the sake of it. The reasons and timing must both be right. Traditions give the legal order its legitimacy and authority. They also maintain public confidence in its institutional permanence and security. But measured and appropriate change can bring added relevance and meaning in a rapidly evolving world.

As someone else once said:

“The world is moving so fast these days the [person] who says it can’t be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it.”<sup>2</sup>

Remember the contribution of your family and friends to your past and future achievements. They are your best moral support. They will always be there when needed

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<sup>1</sup> Nikki Gemmell, *Weekend Australian Magazine*, July 12-13, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Elbert Hubbard, quoted in *The Treasury of Humorous Quotations* (1951) by Evan Esar, p. 103

most. Acknowledge the debt you owe them, and repay it by making a positive difference to your profession and the community. Do not confine your ambitions to outward measures of success. Be motivated by other things beyond mere money. Strive for balance in what you do outside as well as within the law.

Congratulations again. All the best.

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## **Admissions ceremony 5 8 September 2014**

### **Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations on your admission. It is no mean feat. It is a credit to you. You share this very significant achievement with the members of your family who have lovingly supported you throughout and with your friends without whose encouragement you may not have stayed the course.

Repay the confidence they have shown in you by making a real difference. Do not confine your ambitions to outward measures of success. Be driven by things beyond mere money. Help the needy and disadvantaged.

In giving your time and talents you will enrich yourself as well as others and carry on a long tradition of both branches of the profession.

Continue to develop your professional knowledge and skills. Keep up with change. Fill the gaps. Meet the challenges. Have a plan – it is the difference between a goal and practical achievement.

Stay true to your oaths and affirmations. Act with complete honesty in discharging your professional commitments. Resist the temptation to take the line of least resistance. Do the hard thing. It is usually the right and best course.

Take time to enjoy your personal successes as well as your professional achievements. The law and life need to be kept in proper balance. There is mutual benefit in that.

Most of all, aim to make a positive difference and to leave a legacy. Work out what it is that you truly want to give to and get from the practise of law.

I am sure you already know all these things but they bear repeating and public acknowledgement.

So does this important event and the contribution that you as well as your family and friends have made to making it a reality.

Congratulations again. All the best in the future whatever it holds for you.

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## **Admissions ceremony 6 8 September 2014**

### **Chief Justice's observations**

Congratulations on your entry to the legal profession.

Today is the first day of the rest of your professional life. It may very well be the best day, too.

Qualifying for admission to practice law in Queensland is a demanding task and significant achievement worthy of public acknowledgement and celebration.

You are rightly proud of what you have done. It will have been harder and less straightforward for some of you than others. Know that you have overcome whatever barriers were pitted against you and that you are the better and stronger for it.

The legal profession upholds real and challenging ethical standards that you must meet. What you have learned about professional conduct requirements and your character will be put to the test in the coming years. How well you respond under pressure of expectation exerted by clients and others will be measured by the width of the gap between what you actually do, and what you have promised to do.

Stay true to fundamental professional values and maintain the highest standards of honesty.

The law and society relies on you to react absolutely appropriately in all situations. The court must have continuing confidence in your ability to discharge your professional functions and obligations consistent with the privilege and power of an officer of the court.

This requires that you do the right thing in the right way regardless of the cost. There is no other acceptable option. Failure to strictly adhere to standards of conduct expected of a good and honourable lawyer demeans us all and weakens community confidence in the legal system.

Your paramount duty is to the law and the courts. Everything else – including self-interest – must give way to the extent of conflict.

It is important therefore that we learn the lessons from our smaller mistakes so that we avoid making bigger ones next time.

Finally, the joy of this day is for sharing with those who have supported and encouraged you to this point.

All the very best for your future.

Adjourn the court.