

SPEECH AT AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF CHIEF JUDGE WOLFE AO, WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2014

Chief Judge Wolfe AO, the Hon Quentin Bryce, AD, CVO, the Hon Margaret White AO, the Chief Judge's sisters, Anne-Marie Malouf, Mary Broderick and Genevieve Clarke, and fellow judicial officers.

Welcome to this special occasion in this stunning space, full of light and, today, feminine wisdom.

The following judicial officers would like to be with us but send their apologies:

Justice Susan Kiefel;
Chief Justices Diana Bryant and Helen Murrell;
Justices Susan Kenny, Anne Rees, Jenny Hogan, Marcia Neave, Monika Schmidt, and Jean Dalton;
The Hon Margaret Wilson;
Deputy President Ingrid Asbury;
Magistrates Bernadette Callaghan, Stephanie Tonkin, Tina Previterra and Kay Ryan;
Registrar Grace Kahlert;
Ms Peta Stilgoe and Ms Patricia Hanly.

Patsy, the last time I said nice things about you was at the Queensland Women Judicial Officers and Barristers function in March. My report card on gender equality at the Queensland Bar and Bench became notorious. I noted then – "Women presently comprise just under 30 per cent of Queensland Supreme Court judges; 20.5 per cent of District Court judges and 34 per cent of magistrates. The current Queensland government, since coming to office about two years ago, has appointed 17 judicial officers: four Supreme Court judges (including two to the Court of Appeal); three District Court judges, including the Chief Magistrate; and 10 magistrates. All but one (Magistrate Hay) are men. This means that only six per cent of these appointments are women."

I did anticipate a reaction to the speech, but not quite the one I got. I hoped that it would result in more women appointments to the Bench. Well, how are things six months on? They have worsened. Justice Margaret Wilson has retired so that women presently comprise just under 26 per cent of Queensland Supreme Court judges. They comprise 20.5 per cent of District Court judges and 34 per cent of magistrates. The current Queensland government since coming to office about two and a half years ago has appointed 20 judicial officers, six Supreme Court judges (including two to the Court of Appeal and the Chief Justice); four District Court judges (if you include the present and former Chief Magistrate); and 10 magistrates. As in March, all but one (Magistrate Penny Hay) are men, although I am pleased to note that Magistrate Leanne O'Shea, who is present today, was recently appointed Deputy Chief Magistrate. This now means that only 5 per cent of these appointments are women.

As I did in March, I question whether it is time to take up the issue, raised most recently by Geoffrey Robertson QC on Monday night in his 2014 Griffith Lecture, should Queensland or other Australian jurisdictions have independent judicial appointment processes? This is something the AAWJ may wish to explore.

But now to our guest of honour. Patricia Mary Wolfe grew up in the large and loving Josephson family with six sisters and a brother. It is wonderful that three of her sisters have joined us today.

Law was not Patsy Josephson's first career choice. She began studying medicine but, luckily for the legal profession, she was put off by the Anatomy School's grim dissection room. And we will forgive her for her three years as a journalist with The Courier-Mail. She escaped into the arms of handsome Wallaby, John Wolfe. As she bore and reared four children, she studied law at the University of Queensland. In her later student years, she became a tutor in law, taking on Margaret White's classes

whilst Margaret was on maternity leave. Patsy graduated with Honours in Law in 1978 and in 1979 joined her close friends, Margaret White and Quentin Bryce, on the UQ Law School staff. This glamorous, smart-as-paint triumvirate tutored and lectured a generation of UQ law students, including many in this room.

Following a brief stint at Feez Ruthning (now Allens) in corporate and tax law and after completing her Master of Laws, Patsy came to the Bar. In 1998 she was appointed First Deputy Commissioner of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. On her return to the Bar, she was a part-time hearing commissioner of the Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, chaired a review into Queensland land tenure policy and administration and chaired the Queensland Women's Consultative Committee.

In 1995 she was commissioned a judge of the District Court of Queensland and in 1999 was appointed its Chief Judge, a position she continues to fill with distinction. During her tenure, she has been a passionate and successful champion for her judges and for her Court. On a personal level, she ensures her judges have the necessary pastoral care and support to enable them to optimally carry out their onerous duties. Chief Judge Wolfe has encouraged more frequent circuits to remote Indigenous communities and ensured District Courts have designated rooms children can use while their parents attend court. She has played an active role in the design of this beautiful building, its court rooms, judges' chambers and jury and special witness facilities.

Patsy Wolfe's extra-judicial community contribution has also been significant. She was for 14 years a member of Griffith University Council and has served on many other GU committees as well as on the Council of her alma mater, Stuartholme.¹

¹ This biographical information has been sourced from "A Woman's Place: 100 Years of Queensland Women Lawyers", ed Purdon and Rahemtula, Supreme Court of Queensland Library, 2005, 621-629.

No wonder this extraordinary woman received the Centenary Medal in 2003 and this year was made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

Patsy, on behalf of the AAWJ and all present, thank you for your outstanding contribution to the Queensland judiciary and the broader community. We know that your involvement in public life, as with Quentin and Margaret, will continue long after your retirement from the Bench next month. We hope, however, that you will find some leisure hours to enjoy this token of our admiration.

Please stand and join me in toasting this exceptional woman judge: Chief Judge Wolfe!

I now invite Chief Judge Wolfe AO, to have the last word – as usual!