

**Valedictory Ceremony Marking the Retirement of  
Vincent James Vandeleur**

Innisfail Courthouse 19 June 2015

Justice Henry

Mr Vincent James Vandeleur, welcome to this ceremonial sitting of the Supreme Court of Queensland, convened today at the Innisfail Courthouse, to honour your service to the legal profession and the community it serves.

I welcome to the bench her Honour Judge Willis of the Federal Circuit Court, their Honours Judge Harrison and Judge Morzone QC of the District Court and, our gracious host in this historic courthouse, her Honour Magistrate Brassington.

Mayor of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Bill Shannon and Mrs Shannon, the Honourable Kerry Cullinane, Member of the Order of Australia, retired Northern Judge, the Honourable Stanley Jones, Officer of the Order of Australia, retired Far Northern Judge and Mrs Jones, Mr Peter White, retired District Court Judge and Mrs White, Mr Michael Fitzgerald, President of the Queensland Law Society, Commissioner David Glasgow, Family Responsibilities Commission and Mrs Glasgow, Mr Spencer Browne, President of the FNQLA and representative of the NQLA, Mrs Betty Vandeleur, special guests, legal practitioners, ladies and gentlemen, welcome.

There have been many apologies from persons unable to attend this ceremony. There are too many to recite in full but they include his Excellency the Governor, whose message has been published with the order of ceremony sheet before you, Justice Daryl Rangiah of the Federal Court, Judge Ray Rinaudo Chief Magistrate, Mr Andrew Philp QC leader of the Cairns bar, Mr Nigel Rees Principal Crown Prosecutor of the Cairns DPP, Mr Peter Feeney of Counsel, Dr Helen Sungaila of James Cook University and Mr Rob White, Director North Queensland Court Services.

Vincent James Vandeleur was admitted as a solicitor of this court on 16 December 1959, three years before I was born. His longevity of service as a practicing lawyer is of itself remarkable. However it is the accompanying quality of his service to his clients and his service of his profession and community which has spurned this historic gathering.

It is a common trait of the great professions that learning does not end on the transition from student to practicing professional. To the contrary their hallmark is perpetual learning through practice and the collegiate guidance and shared knowledge of fellow professionals. Lawyers who truly embrace the values and worth of their profession in one sense remain law students throughout their careers, always willing to learn. Yet they also become teachers, mentors, guiding by example and sharing the benefit of their learning and experience with other practitioners in the best interests of their profession. Vince Vandeleur is the embodiment of those qualities.

Vince did not stop learning the law in 1959. He has remained engaged and interested in legal learning throughout his career.

It is occasionally suggested the law is now such a broad field of learning that one cannot be a generalist like the GPs of the medical profession and instead must specialize in order to practice law effectively. I disagree, as do many regional lawyers. There is an ever constant discipline of approach that underpins most legal problem solving. Vince's example shows, so long as that discipline is combined with a preparedness to keep learning, that it is possible to maintain a solicitor's practice which provides quality legal services across the board. In Vince and his firm the people of the district of Innisfail have long been blessed with a practice they can with confidence consult about any legal problem.

Beyond excellence in client service it is Vince's service to the profession and broader community which has so distinguished him. Today's speakers will doubtless speak of that special combination. It is a combination which His Excellency the Governor, our former Chief Justice, especially acknowledged in his message. In particular His Excellency noted:

“There are few contemporaries who can claim such professional longevity as Vince Vandeleur, or indeed a career and personal life as richly underscored by firm commitment to the ideals of our noble profession, and to enriching and serving the wider community.

It is this combination which makes Vince's retirement so noteworthy – both for contemporary professional life, the developing history of the legal profession, and for the community in which he lives and to which he has rendered such conspicuous service over so many years. His appointment to the Order of Australia in 2005 appropriately acknowledged these things.”

This morning in Cairns I presided over a ceremony admitting new legal practitioners to our profession. I spoke to them of giving back their time and skill to their profession and the broader community from which they will benefit, explaining that if they approach their calling in that way they will bring honour upon themselves and their profession. In that regard I cited to them the example set by a leader of their profession, Vincent James Vandeleur, who as our speakers will now demonstrate, has brought honour upon himself and the legal profession.

In now hearing of Vince's service to the profession and the community let us not be sad at the loss to the profession which Vince's departure represents. Rather let us rejoice in the enduring example he has set that others may follow.

[.....speakers per list....]

Before closing I acknowledge the work of Mr Chris Kayla and Mr Gavin Fox in assisting to organize this historic sitting of the court.

Mr Vandeleur, I finish as I began, directly addressing you. On behalf of the Supreme Court of Queensland, thank you for your service as an officer of the court.

I invite all present to now join Vince and his family at the Innisfail RSL.

Let these proceedings be transcribed. Adjourn the court.