

Statement

It is a great honour to be asked to serve as Chief Justice. I have accepted the offer of the appointment with some trepidation because I am under no illusion as to the challenges it presents at any time, let alone when it has been the subject of considerable public attention. I do not propose today to make any sweeping statements about my ambitions for the court when I have not yet got my feet under the desk. But I do want to make this point: I have great confidence in this court and the community, too, can have confidence in it. I think it is a testament to the fundamental strength of the Supreme Court bench that despite some pretty serious distractions we have continued to hear cases and produce judgments, just as we have always done.

Obviously it will be my aim to create as calm a working environment as possible. That extends beyond the judiciary to the court staff. In recent times, I think for a variety of reasons, there has been a level of movement and attrition which is not good for any organisation. I would like to achieve some stability. My great hope, which may disappoint you, will be to make the court itself entirely un-newsworthy, as opposed to the cases which pass through it.

This is a decentralised state and I expect to be spending a lot of my time visiting different court centres. I have a good deal to learn about them. I expect an immediate period of decision making and problem solving because, although over the last couple of months the management of the court has been in very capable hands, inevitably a lot of decisions have been properly deferred for the consideration of the person who would ultimately assume this position.

I will also be sitting in court as much as I can. There are now two judges allocated to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal which is itself a very busy jurisdiction, but that means there is one fewer available to the trial and appellate divisions here.

As you can see I will be very busy. So I hope you will understand when I say that I won't, for the short term at least, be doing much at all in the way of media. I think it's in the court's interests and in the interests of the community that I devote my time to working extremely hard at the tasks I've spoken about.