



**Launch of Queensland Law Society "Higher Education On-line Legal Service"**

**Law Society House  
Monday 31 March 2003, 4:00pm**

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**Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC**

I applaud this initiative of the Queensland Law Society. It is very encouraging that the solicitors of Queensland, through their Society, are sharing legal information and wisdom in this way – and, it may be observed, for no financial return! I'm sure the free availability of wine and cheese would not be incentive enough!

The Law Society has for some years run an effective, professionally based program of assisting schools, both teachers and students, in relation to our legal system. This new on-line service transports the existing program to new levels appropriate to our technological age.

The new service is centred about the quarterly magazine "The Verdict", a production intended, it is said, exclusively for legal studies and SOSE teachers and students, with a special teachers' supplement. I must say, however, that I read the term "exclusively" with some hesitation. I would not be the least bit surprised to find many law students foregoing the ever-reliable Butterworths tutorial guides, in favour of articles from The Verdict, as authority in their end of semester exams this year. How much more diverting my legal studies would have been had we in the 60's enjoyed access to this sort of riveting presentation!



As well, the service will include "legal updates" signalling changes in the law and what they are about: and "resource packs" providing comprehensive introductions to significant topics.

Now allied with the information, is a service, and that is, the prospect of school visits by practising lawyers to address topics identified by the school, when convenient to the school and the students. I am told that there are presently more than 140 solicitors who have registered as willing to provide this service. And who was it who claimed solicitors were merely rapacious and self-interested?

And then we have a truly interactive facility, the legal "chat room". I suspect students will already be much more adept at using this sort of forum than the practitioners. In fact, as a *quid pro quo* for the school visits, it may be necessary for the Law Society to arrange instruction sessions for the practitioners by the students! Either way, I will myself be tempted to visit the forum from time to time: we Judges maintain, as you know, vital interest in continuing judicial education and determination to keep in touch with contemporary expectations!

The flavour of the new service is both progressive and refreshing. The Queensland Law Society has also for many years run a particularly effective continuing legal education program. It has been reassuring, over the last few years, to watch the translation of that thrust, with appropriate modification, to those of our youth who have shown an interest in understanding what their pervasive legal system is all about. If our young people reach some reasonable, basic understanding of the pillars of their democracy, then obviously the prospect of its maintenance and development is all the more secure.

We are at the courts committed to doing all we can to render the judicial process better understood. Last year, an estimated 25,000 members of the community,



including 15-20,000 school students, attended lectures, special events, exhibitions and court proceedings. The interest is referable not only to intrigue about the process, but to accessibility, and interesting presentation: including our 'Lucinda' smoking room replication for example. Likewise, this Law Society material is not only interesting; it is interestingly presented – in a way which will capture the attention of discerning youth.

Again, my commendation of the Society, my thanks to the altruistic lawyers who are participating in the program, my expression of support for the teachers and academics who guide their students with interest through these important subjects, and my recognition to the students themselves and their parents – for acknowledging this area of study for its pivotal importance.