

Admissions Ceremony - 1 18 December 2003

Chief Justice's observations

On behalf of all the Judges of the Supreme Court, I congratulate you, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome you to the ranks of the legal profession.

Your personal achievement is substantial. Mr Justice Chesterman, Justice McMurdo and I were admitted as barristers many years ago, but the demanding course of meticulous study prerequisite to admission as a legal practitioner never departs one's recollection; and in addition, you have completed the required practical training, which we hope you found both interesting and helpful. Your present achievement is however but the herald for a lifetime of professional development. The most effective lawyers – those who best serve their clients - are those who continue, throughout their professional lives, to broaden their professional knowledge, to hone their professional expertise.

They are also persons who maintain a broad involvement in life, rather than a narrow absorption with the law. I can do no better than quote in this regard from Sir Walter Scott's "Guy Mannering", where the Scots lawyer Counsellor Pleydell, taking Guy Mannering into his library, offered this advice: "A lawyer without history or literature is a mechanic, a mere working mason; if he possesses some knowledge of these, he may venture to call himself an architect."

Today you join a noble profession with a substantial commitment to public service including, with increasing reach, the provision of services pro bono to those of limited financial means.

The ethical standards which characterize the profession in Queensland are conspicuously high, and I say that while nevertheless acknowledging the blight on the profession, wrought by a few only, brought out into the open in recent times. You may be sure the court is vigilant to ensure the profession continues to acknowledge and fulfil its high ethical obligation, and the discharge of its duty to clients with competence and expertise.

As you would probably already appreciate only too well, you join a competitive profession. There are currently in Queensland 636 members of the Bar Association and 5,474 solicitors with practising certificates. This year, up until today, the court had admitted 88 new barristers and 501 new solicitors (apart from those admitted under Mutual Recognition legislation). That extent of infusion of talent into an already substantial profession means there can be no doubt, for success, that you must meet reasonably high expectations.

Some of you may not enter into legal practice as such. I am sure you will in that event nevertheless continue to appreciate the mental acuity and moral commitment which underpin your new qualifications.

We hope, ladies and gentlemen, that you rise to these substantial challenges. Your prospects will be enhanced if you continue to draw support from those who have, more than likely, assisted you greatly to this present pinnacle: your families and friends, so many of whom we welcome here this morning to share your sense of fulfilment.

We again wish you well in your careers, and the compliments of the festive season.

Before I conclude these remarks, it is important that I acknowledge the voluntary contribution made over the year by the members of the Barristers' Board and the Solicitors' Board. The members of the Boards give substantially of their time in examining applications for admission, and their work – very much in the public interest – is of great assistance to the court.

I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of Mr Cedric Hampson QC, who completes 32 years as a member of the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for the State of Queensland, the body responsible for the publication of the authorised Queensland Reports. Mr Hampson has spent 24 of those 32 years as Chairman of the Council, and now completes his work in that role. He has made a massive contribution for which, on behalf of the community, I express sincere thanks.

Admissions Ceremony - 2 18 December 2003

Chief Justice's observations

On behalf of the Judges, ladies and gentlemen, I congratulate you upon your admission to the legal profession. Your admission is confirmation of substantial intellectual achievement and a good deal of persistence and application. You are to be commended for reaching this important milestone, and no doubt you will gratefully acknowledge the support of your parents, families and friends.

You join a large profession. As some indication there are currently some 636 members of the Bar Association of Queensland, and the Queensland Law Society currently registers 5,474 solicitors as holding practising certificates. The Queensland profession is in fact even larger, allowing, for example, for corporate lawyers and the world of academia. With a finite amount of legal work, albeit in an economically bustling State,

conditions within the profession are therefore quite competitive. Last year, we admitted as many as 78 barristers and 525 solicitors. This year, up to today, we had admitted 88 barristers and 501 solicitors (other than under Mutual Recognition legislation). I mention these figures not to daunt you, but to suggest that to succeed, and shine, in this new competitive milieu, you should regard your present qualifications as but a start, as the foundation for a body of legal knowledge and wisdom to be developed throughout your professional lives.

Much has been said and written in an attempt to express the essence of practice as a barrister/solicitor. We are told that the legal profession is not necessarily universally respected and valued. While that may be so, much of the criticism of the profession is captious and demonstrably unfair to its conscientious members. My own early ethical training, like that of many of my colleagues, was based on Professor Harrison's work, "Law and Conduct of the Legal Profession in Queensland", which includes this passage I offer by way of serious encouragement:

"Civilisation rests on social order, and social order rests on the maintenance of the law. Hence throughout the ages the law has ranked as a high calling because it serves the most fundamental needs of the community, order and justice, and because at its best it calls for the highest qualities of character and intellect."

Your being admitted formally today by the Supreme Court reflects this Court's role as the ultimate determinant and custodian of legal professional standards. Just as it has fallen to the Judges to authorise courses of legal study and determine admission standards, so we pass from time to time upon issues of fitness to practise. We expect much of you: integrity, legal understanding, sound judgment, practical wisdom, and not the least, moral courage –all dedicated to your efficient service of the people who will depend upon your expert capacities for the resolution of their difficulties. But in the end, while the interests of the clients are extremely important, it is of course your duty to the Court and the administration of the law which must predominate: it is that predominance which distinguishes the legal profession from others.

If you do not enter into legal practice as such, I hope you will nevertheless continue to draw inspiration from the jurisprudential training which has led you to this point: it should have induced a dimension of mental acuity and moral perception of enduring value.

As you rightly bask today in the lustre of your achievements, I know you will remember not only those you are destined to serve, but also those who have helped you to the position you now enjoy, especially as I have said, your parents, families and friends. I

do hope they will remain, for you, important sources of encouragement and wise counsel.

You go forward now with our congratulations and best wishes.

Before I conclude these remarks, it is important that I acknowledge the voluntary contribution made over the year by the members of the Barristers' Board and the Solicitors' Board. The members of the Boards give substantially of their time in examining applications for admission, and their work – very much in the public interest – is of great assistance to the court.

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Admissions Ceremony - 3 18 December 2003

Chief Justice's observations

The admission of barristers and solicitors at the beginning and end of the calendar year is an encouraging signal of the continuity of the legal profession which serves the people of Queensland generally so well . We welcome you to the ranks of that profession, and wish you well as you exercise new privileges and embrace new responsibilities.

You will be challenged to develop and demonstrate considerable talent as you enter what is a substantial and competitive profession.

Today is not the occasion for a lecture on professional ethics, but I hope you will always recognize that you owe your professional legitimacy to the court, and your overriding duty borne to the court notwithstanding the interests of the client. I hope that you will also acknowledge the goal of public service which underpins your new professionalism, and be astute to the plight of the under privileged within our community: the professional associations, and many of the firms, run active and well-developed pro bono schemes which should be of interest to you.

If you choose not to pursue a practising career, you will nevertheless I am confident always value your qualification: it signifies substantial personal achievement, and bespeaks mental acuity and ethical commitment.

I know you would wish us to acknowledge the contribution made to your present achievement by your families and friends. We welcome them to the Banco Court today. They must remain sources of encouragement, inspiration and wise advice as you move forward.

On behalf of all of the Judges, I again congratulate you and wish you well as you exercise these qualifications, and extend the compliments of the festive season.

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