

**ADDRESS AND TOAST TO QUEENSLAND LAW SOCIETY AT THE  
INCOMING PRESIDENT'S DINNER, 6 MARCH 2009, CUSTOMS HOUSE,  
BRISBANE**

Your Honours; the Honourable the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Kerry Shine; Senator Brandis; the President of the Queensland Law Society, Mr Ian Berry; distinguished guests.

Peter Eardley, thank you for that generous introduction.

Megan Mahon, thank you for your exemplary stewardship of the Queensland Law Society as President during the second half of 2007 and during 2008. Your youthful enthusiasm and energy, sharp intellect, ready smile, Toowoomba-style charm and country common sense have been greatly appreciated by all. One of the highlights of Megan's busy term was the realisation of her vision of the QLS as an active rather than reactive organisation, manifested by last year's forum on Law and Order Issues in the 21st Century. Thank you also to Gerard, Tim and Laura for sharing Megan with the profession and the wider community during this time.

This year the QLS reaches the venerable age of 81. The Law Society's English pedigree dates back hundreds of years. But even that is but a dot in the timeline of this ancient land. For tens of thousands of years before British settlement, this land on the northern bank of the Brisbane River has been home to the Turrbal people. They frequently had ceremonies here, honouring their leaders and celebrating with a good party – in essence not so very different to our function tonight.

Ian Berry, I warmly congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the QLS during 2009. With the support of its Committee, members and, on a personal level, your wife, Karen, and from afar your three adult children, you will bring to this important role your unique stamp, conscious that you hold this office on trust for your successors. Ian's stated goal as President is to visit as many provincial centres and meet as many QLS members "as humanly possible" during his term. Just as well he's an accomplished long-distance runner! Every good wish Ian and Karen.

The global economic crisis means that 2009 will be a challenging year throughout Queensland, nationally and internationally. The legal profession and QLS will not be exempt. But as the Dalai Lama said on his last visit to Brisbane, everything has a beginning and an end. We have had the beginning of the recession. It will end. And good comes from adversity. We optimistically share in US President, Barack

Obama's "audacity of hope". The economic recession presents an opportunity for the legal profession to reflect on its core values. Each member of QLS, whether a partner in a national or international mega-firm, a struggling sole practitioner, or a community legal service provider, is united by the common bonds of legal professionalism. Each is part of the independent legal profession with its institutional significance in our democracy. Each is bound by ethical responsibilities to the client and to the court. Each is committed to maintaining the legal profession's relevance to the community. And let there be no doubt: the legal profession is relevant, indeed, fundamental to civil society. It is no coincidence that the first African-American US President is a lawyer. So, too, was President Obama's iconic role model, Abraham Lincoln, an early proponent of dispute resolution and mediation. Lincoln vehemently disliked unnecessary litigation. On one occasion, a client stormed into his office and demanded that he sue a defendant for a \$2.50 debt. Even then, that was not a lot of money. Lincoln solemnly requested a \$10 retainer fee. He then gave half his fee to the impecunious debtor, who immediately admitted his liability; paid Lincoln's client the \$2.50 debt, and pocketed the change! Everyone was happy.<sup>1</sup> As the mediators amongst you know, these days we call it a win-win! A major challenge for the QLS is to use the quieter times of recession to unite its diverse membership by focussing on its professional essence. The result will be a win-win, for the legal profession and the for community.

I look forward to working with you, Ian, as President; with your Committee and with the members of QLS in meeting this and other challenges in the service of the Queensland legal profession and community in 2009.

My friends, please stand and join me in toasting your Law Society .....  
the Queensland Law Society.

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<sup>1</sup> Gallanter M, *Lowering the Bar*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.