



Q150 celebration, Bowen Thursday 28 May 2009

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC Chief Justice

As this year we celebrate 150 years of good government in this State, I am pleased to have opportunities to affirm the work of the judicial branch of government. There is added point, in that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the re-established District Court, and in two years time, we will mark the 150th anniversary of the Supreme Court. It is nevertheless important in this year, 2009, that in celebrating the sesquicentenary of the State, we acknowledge the significant contribution of the third, judicial branch of government to the peace, order and good government of the people.

It is generally accepted that the Supreme Court of Queensland dates from 7 August 1861. That was the date of assent to the *Supreme Court Constitution and Amendment Act 1861*. The inauguration of the court was therefore significantly close in time to the date of establishment of Queensland itself, which occurred on 6 June 1859 with the separation of the Colony of Moreton Bay, to be named Queensland, from the Colony of New South Wales. Of course it was with federation that the Colony became a “State”, and that occurred on 19 January 1901.

Being in North Queensland, it is important that I say a little about the inauguration of court services here. The first solicitor to practise in North Queensland was Charles Beaufort Grimaldi, who arrived here in Bowen on 10 August 1864 (D Gibson-Wilde: “Charles Beaufort Grimaldi – the first solicitor in North Queensland”, *Supreme Court History Program Yearbook 2008*, ed M White and A Rahemtula).

Bowen was an important court centre from the early years of the Colony. Indeed, when the complement of Supreme Court Judges was in 1874 increased to four, the legislation stipulated that one of the Judges must reside and do duty in Bowen. That led to the appointment, as Northern Judge, of Edmund Sheppard, and he was followed in due



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course by Pope Cooper – each stationed in Bowen. In those days, the Northern District Court Judge, Judge Long Innes, who was centred in Gladstone, would conduct circuits of that court in Bowen, until his resignation in 1873.

Following the arrival of the first Northern Supreme Court Judge, Edmund Sheppard, in 1874, Bowen remained the centre for the Northern Judge for 15 years, until moved to Townsville in 1889. That move followed the vastly increased population of this part of the Colony, with the extensive gold discoveries. Ironically, the Supreme Court and the Northern Judge consequently moved from this very fine structure, which had been completed in 1881, into the comparatively unadorned original wooden Townsville Court on Cleveland Terrace, with the added irony that that wooden court had in a previous life in fact been the Bowen School of Arts.

Hence the significance of our gathering here in Bowen today. I have for the past few days been sitting in Townsville. It has been a great delight to travel from Townsville to Bowen for this ceremony today, and historically important that as Chief Justice of Queensland I should have done so, and that as 11th Northern Judge, Justice Cullinane, has done so.

I complete my brief historical excursion by noting that notwithstanding the Northern Judge's move from Bowen to Townsville in 1889, Bowen remained a circuit town until the re-establishment of the District Court in 1959. From then to the present, Bowen has remained a substantial District Court centre. Magistrates continue to sit here a number of days each month.

As I said at the ceremony in December 2006, when the Attorney-General opened this refurbished courthouse, following an upgrade worth \$4 million, that judicial officers do not have to sit in the Bowen Courthouse every day, is testimony to one thing only, and that is, the stability, social cohesion and moral fibre of the people of the region.

Major anniversaries inspire reflection on the past, and forecasts of the future. The history of the courts in North Queensland is one of stability and reliability. It is the immutability of



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our mission, the delivery of justice according to law, which has always taken the courts forward. In times of global turmoil and insecurity, people tend to find reassurance in values, beliefs and institutions of unchanging fundamentals: the courts of Queensland are such institutions, inspiring for the reliable discharge of their mission over many years past, and reassuring for the confidence that they will continue to do so indefinitely into the future.