



Valedictory ceremony for the late
the Hon Peter David Connolly CBE, CSI
Banco Court
Monday, 20 July 2009, 9:15am

**The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland**

We gather to acknowledge, with profound gratitude, the judicial contribution of our former colleague, the Hon Peter David Connolly CBE, CSI, who died on 2 May 2009.

In acknowledging his singular judicial achievement, we express gratitude now, on behalf of the State and the people of Queensland, to the members of his family, his children Claudia-Jane, David, John and Zoe; and to his long-term companion Mrs Paula Chandler.

I welcome heads and members of other courts and tribunals, retired Judges, and confirm that all judges of this court, though some cannot be here today, would wish to join me in these following observations. Four former judges have particularly requested to do so, the Hon Alan Demack and the Hon Geoff Davies; together with the Hon Bruce McPherson and the Hon Glen Williams, both of whom are presently sitting in the Solomon Islands Court of Appeal.

Peter Connolly was appointed to the Supreme Court on 31 October 1977, and remained a Judge until his retirement on 12 September 1990, 17 days short of his 70th birthday. Mr Justice Connolly came to the court from a most distinguished prior career.

He matriculated from St Joseph's College in 1936, with the singular achievement of being both dux and head boy. In 1948, he graduated from the University of Queensland, as Bachelor of Laws with first class honours, and was awarded a University Medal in an era when they were but sparingly accorded. His brilliant career at the Bar spanned 28 years, from 1949, and was characterized by intellectual and lawyerly eminence. Apart from a host of extrinsic commitments – the parliament, the military, the arts – he served as



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President of the Bar Association of Queensland, of the Australian Bar Association and of the Law Council of Australia. The year before his appointment as a judge, he was created Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his distinguished service to the legal profession.

As well as serving as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland, Peter Connolly served from 1982 to 1994 as a Justice of Appeal in the Solomon Islands, and as President for the last seven of those years; and from 1991 to 1998 he served as a Justice of Appeal in the Republic of Kiribati. His post nominals, CSI, refer to the Cross of the Solomon Islands. Extra judicially, he served in 1996 to 1997 as Chair of the Connolly-Ryan Commission of Inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission.

As a judge, Peter Connolly applied his high intellect, daunting command of legal principle, and acute understanding of court craft to the great benefit of litigants and the institution of the court. He produced a raft of polished judgments, not infrequently still quoted today. He abhorred laxity in legal and judicial reasoning, and deplored any unnecessary descent into subjectivity or so-called judicial activism or creativity. He was interested in the efficiency of litigation, decrying – sometimes volubly – any wastage of time or other resources, and producing reserved judgments without delay. He was an unswerving supporter of the institution of the court, and of the legal profession, and indeed the federal system of government, of which he had an acute understanding.

I have briefly focused, as first speaker, on Peter Connolly's judicial contribution. That was however but one facet of a human being of extraordinarily diverse talents and achievements. His passing marks the departure of the last of the judges of the Supreme Court who served in the Second World War, which Peter Connolly accomplished with conspicuous gallantry. His was a lifetime of unremitting public service. And lest it be pointed out he was a greatly successful Queen's Counsel, maybe it should be recorded his interest in commensurately high fees was minimal.



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As with his military career in particular, Peter Connolly's legacy, for the judicial government of Queensland, was and is, of heroic proportion.

In noting his passing, with great regret, we extend our sympathy to his children and Mrs Chandler, and we are grateful for their presence here today.