



QPILCH 'thank you' function for pro bono supporters
Tuesday 15 September 2009, 5.45pm
Law Society House

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

The purpose of our gathering this evening is the expression of gratitude. Your support of QPILCH has greatly facilitated the fulfilment of its important mission. That mission is as fundamental as this: enhancing the accessibility of justice. I respectfully commend you all for your most valuable contribution.

I have been privileged to be patron of QPILCH since its inception, in the year 2001. The subsequent eight years have witnessed great progress.

In 2001 QPILCH was simply a public interest law referral centre, and it ran with but one part-time staff member.

Today, the organization's commitment is much broader, and if size is an indicator, I mention that the service now depends on 16 staff members. The variety of work accomplished by the service is now quite marked.

There are three referral services, the public interest, QLS and Bar schemes; there are three direct services, the Homeless Person's Legal Clinic, the Refugee Civil Law Clinic and the Self-representation Service operating from the courthouse; there are five student clinics – Griffith's Public Interest Lawyering Clinic, Bond's Administrative Law Clinic and UQ's Homeless Person's Legal Clinic Student Clinic, Public Interest Research Clinic and newly established Mental Health Legal Clinic; there are support service including a training, a volunteer and a knowledge programme; and there is a Rural Regional and Remote Project.



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Some statistics: by June 2008, approximately 400 applicants for assistance had been referred to QPILCH members, with an estimated minimum value of legal work undertaken exceeding \$1 million with fewer than 50% of referrals costed. As to the Homeless Person's Legal Clinic, almost 1,500 clients have been assisted, with the value of legal work exceeding \$4.6 million. I have a particular interest in the self-represented service operating from the Supreme and District Courthouse in Brisbane. Satisfaction rests in the recognition that justice is served if anyone with a justiciable claim enjoys access to the courts. In the year 2008-09, that service assisted 213 clients at trial level in the Supreme and District Courts, and 17 in the Court of Appeal. They attended at 477 appointments. Of those, 70 were plaintiffs, 72 defendants and nine were appellants. In addition, there were 86 potential plaintiffs and seven potential appellants.

A wider service is in prospect. QPILCH has recently been granted funds to provide a new self-representation service in the newly-established Queensland Consumer and Administrative Tribunal on a trial basis. Also, I should say, I have a hope that the effective self-representation service at the metropolitan courthouse will in due course generate sibling services in regional centres.

There are with us tonight representatives of the universities. The students who participate in these facilities, with the blessing of the law schools, not only gain excellent experience, but also develop a sense of giving and professional responsibility. That is heartening in relation to cultural aspects within the future profession. Apart from anything else, over 20 students volunteer each week to help with the assessment of applications.

I invite you to mention to former colleagues, colleagues who may have retired, or are enjoying a break in their careers, that QPILCH is anxious to utilize their expertise and skill in helping people in need. Since moving to West End, the service has enjoyed dedicated space for qualified volunteers, and of course there are opportunities for them to mentor the 50 students a week who are accommodated in 10 places each day.



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It is also important that you have in place systems for the full costing of your pro bono work, because that helps proper recognition of this important aspect of the profession's public contribution.

Again I warmly thank you for your contribution. It is a wonderful demonstration of the true professionalism of the profession in this State, a profession of which I am genuinely proud.