



**MAGISTRATES
COURT OF
QUEENSLAND**

**Townsville Murri Court
Sash Presentation
Tuesday 16 February 2010**

**Judge Brendan Butler AM SC
Chief Magistrate**

At the outset, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this court stands, the Wulgurukaba (Wulguru-kaba) and Bindal people. The traditional owners have cared for and been part of this land for thousands of years. That rich cultural heritage is preserved in the wisdom of the elders past and present and informs our Murri Court process today.

The Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Murri Court Elders
Mandy Johnstone, Member for Townsville
Judge O'Brien
Judge Durward
My colleagues, the Townsville Magistrates
Phil Clarke, A/ Director-General
Michael Bice, Regional Manager
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very proud and privileged to be here with you today to celebrate this ceremony for the Elders of the Townsville Murri Court.

I especially acknowledge the elders present. This is your day. Today the Court and the Government recognise, here in your community, that you rightfully sit as respected members of this important Court in our legal system.

The number of Murri Courts throughout the state has steadily increased since the first Murri Court opened its doors in Brisbane in August 2002, there are

now 17, a reflection of the growing numbers of Elders, Magistrates and Registrars supporting this initiative.

I am proud to say the Murri Courts are an initiative commenced by the Queensland Magistrates.

It was the Magistrates who first decided they could improve justice outcomes for Indigenous people in Queensland by seeking the advice of Elders. Magistrates every day see the best and worst of what can happen in people's lives.

As magistrates we are saddened to see the over representation of indigenous people appearing before our courts. This is where the Murri court can make a difference.

The Murri Court adheres to the law of Queensland. It is the same law for everybody – but the Murri Court applies this in a culturally appropriate way. It's not about lighter sentences but about sentences that are more meaningful to the offenders. The sentence is delivered by the magistrate. What the elders bring to the court is a different but very positive contribution.

They :

1. advise the magistrate about cultural issues
2. assist the defendant understand the court process, and
3. assist the magistrate to decide on the most appropriate sentence.

The strength of the Murri Court process lies in the involvement of the Elders who sit on the court.

Mr Attorney General, I am delighted that the Queensland Government is committed to supporting the Murri Court system in Queensland. I thank you for your support.

I thank all the local Magistrates who sit in the Murri Court and the members of the Townsville Thuringowa Community Justice Group.

It is also important to acknowledge the work of the late Kevin NganWoo who made such an important contribution to the establishment of the Murri Court in Townsville. Tragically Kevin died in 2006 at the age of 36 years, but the success of this Murri Court is a lasting tribute to Kevin's dedication and commitment.

Finally, my special thanks go to the Elders who give so freely of their time to make this Court a success.

Congratulations to each of you. You rightly deserve the recognition symbolized in the sashes awarded to you today.

Thank you.