



North Queensland Law Association Conference  
Friday 25 May 2012, 9.25am  
Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre

---

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

Kaye and I are very pleased again to have the opportunity to join you at this important annual conference. The last time we were here, the last time in fact the conference was held in Mackay, I was memorably presented with the white gloves by John Aberdeen, signifying a criminal sittings devoid of work. That has not recurred, rather fortunately you might say because we all like to be kept busy, although I was personally disappointed not to be spending the last four days here because all of the civil cases settled.

I am as ever grateful to the Northern Judges for their commitment: the 12<sup>th</sup> Northern Judge Justice North and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Far Northern Judge Justice Henry, the Judges of the District Court, and the Magistrates Court, and for welcoming me into this jurisdiction, and likewise to you ladies and gentlemen of the practising profession for your welcome.

In these brief remarks this morning, I wish to speak for a little while about the most substantial current initiative in our material legal landscape, the new metropolitan Supreme and District Courthouse. Its command will not be limited to the capital. It will not be Brisbane's courthouse, but the metropolitan courthouse of all Queenslanders. Many of you will practise in it. The regional Judges will regularly sit in it. Its establishment will give impetus to necessary expansion of the Edmund Sheppard Courthouse in Townsville and the refurbishment of the exterior of the Cairns Courthouse, matters to which I regularly draw attention. And the new courthouse sets what is presently a gold standard for future court development.

When I assumed office as Chief Justice, I was imbued through experience with the shortcomings of the Supreme and District Courthouses in Brisbane, especially their inability to accommodate technical innovation. I am pleased that successive State



North Queensland Law Association Conference  
Friday 25 May 2012, 9.25am  
Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre

---

governments heeded my pleas, with the result that we now look forward to occupying the new courthouse from mid-July, with the formal opening by the Governor on 3 August. The new courthouse is a simply stunning building, which for its utility, will serve the people of Queensland well, and even surpassing that, it will inspire, is already inspiring. The first question people generally ask me these days is when will our new courthouse be opened, meaning “our” in the sense of “the people’s”.

Those who speak to me are full of commendation for what they are seeing. The building is already a source of wonder and inspiration. Completed, it will present as a courthouse which will serve, interest and inspire. It will inspire in reminding the citizenry of the stipulation which lies at the base of civil society, which is the rule of law, and it will do that in a most interesting way.

This courthouse covers 60,000 square metres of floor space, spread over 19 levels, including 39 established courtrooms. Fourteen of those will be capable of eTrials, 7 civil and 7 criminal. All of the courtrooms will accommodate the electronic display of evidence, and 17 will allow fully for the reception of evidence by video link – presently we have only 9 courtrooms with that capacity. Twenty-two courtrooms will have full teleconferencing capacity : presently only 7. There will be video link courtrooms to the cells, and interview rooms will have videoconferencing facilities – allowing for conferences with prisoners at correctional centres, for example. Jury rooms, all 24 of them, will at last have DVD/VCR installations. The building will include 4 remote evidence and vulnerable witness suites, and an entire floor for the Library. There will be capacity for translation of evidence by an interpreter remotely located : useful to meet a current phenomenon where we may have difficulty finding, locally, someone fluent in both English and some exotic dialects spoken, for example, by allegedly illegal entrants. The ground floor will include the Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre showcasing, with the aid of state-of-the-art technology, the history of the profession and the courts.

Litigants and practitioners will I am confident find this courthouse a most pleasant and convenient place in which to work. From the inception of the project, the maximum



North Queensland Law Association Conference  
Friday 25 May 2012, 9.25am  
Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre

---

infusion of natural light has been a firm stipulation, and that has been achieved. There is even some influx of natural light into the cells, implementing a recommendation of the “Deaths in Custody” report. Needless to say, it is an environmentally friendly building, with so-called water harvesting and recycling, an innovative air-conditioning system and solar cells for energy needs. The people will acquire a new, large, ambient grassed plaza, comparable in area to Post Office Square and Queens Park, featuring poiciana trees. The development establishes a new city precinct along George Street between Tank and Herschel Streets: a legal precinct including all State and Commonwealth courts, barristers’ chambers and a welter of support services.

This will be the most significant new public building in the CBD since the construction of the Executive Building, which was opened four decades ago. The building has risen with considerable speed, bearing in mind its complexity, especially with the need for separation of jurors, prisoners, the public and the judges. The “turning of the sod” ceremony took place on 6 October 2008, less than four years ago: the construction has been accomplished rapidly, and without major safety incident, which is reassuring.

We are working towards a move into this new building during the Winter vacation in July, with the formal opening by the Governor on the morning of Friday 3 August, followed by a day free of court sittings so that the public may savour the treasures of their new major public building.

Probably soon after that, we will be releasing a high-quality publication on the history of the Supreme Court authored by Mr John McKenna SC. It will feature photographically many of the atmospheric courthouses of the State, with a focus on the Supreme Court. That publication will be available for purchase. The Supreme Court Library has commissioned a comprehensive photographic record of the existing courthouse, in light of its likely demolition, and that will feature in future heritage displays.

The Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand has agreed to meet in the new courthouse on the day before the opening, so I am hoping that all Australian and New



North Queensland Law Association Conference  
Friday 25 May 2012, 9.25am  
Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre

---

Zealand Chief Justices will remain for the opening on the Friday, which will involve a great tribute to these courts of our senior State within the Federation, as will the presence of senior representatives of the judiciaries of the United Kingdom and Hong Kong.

Then a seminar open to the profession and the public will take place on Saturday 4 August, to be addressed by a stellar array of international and Australian speakers, including the Chief Justices of New Zealand, Hong Kong and Australia, Justice Kiefel, the Master of the Rolls and Lady Justice Hallett from the UK, the Chief Justices of the Federal Court, Victoria and Western Australia, and the new Dean of the UQ Law School Professor Carney. Topics will include, from Lord Neuberger, the future of the common law; from Chief Justice French, the courts and parliament; from Chief Justice Elias, the courts and the executive; from Chief Justice Ma, the practitioner's duty to the court; and from Lady Justice Hallett, judicial education. I encourage you to attend this seminar, to be held in the Banco Court of the new courthouse.

Before that, on 30 May in our present Banco Court, former Chief Justice Murray Gleeson will deliver the second Supreme Court Oration on aspects of *Donoghue v Stevenson*, this year celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

As mentioned before, over the last 150 years, the significance of the Supreme Court has been assured by the independent support of the practising profession. The new metropolitan courthouse will signify the vibrancy of our profession in all its branches. Importantly, that courthouse has been the result of substantial consultation between the Judges and the professional associations. I have wanted to remind you today of the high significance of the Queensland profession of which you are members, a limb of this State where democracy is both stable and progressive.

Now I realistically appreciate that not many of you will have the opportunity, or perhaps the inclination, to participate in those opening events, and that is understandable. But as members of a State-wide profession, we should all be aware generally of what is happening at what might be styled the headquarters of the judicial branch of government



North Queensland Law Association Conference  
Friday 25 May 2012, 9.25am  
Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre

---

in this State, and there is no doubt that all of you, including of course the non-litigators, will wish to visit this new courthouse at some time and, I trust, find yourself in agreement with my perception of its significance in the discharge of our joint mission.

A cardinal stipulation which I have always endeavoured to respect when in the regions, is that one talks about the regions, and that is as it should be. I hope you will pardon my having dwelt today on something situated in Brisbane. But the significance of that courthouse surpasses the South-East:: it concerns all Queenslanders, and signifies the vibrancy of our profession State-wide, brilliantly illustrated, ladies and gentlemen, in this region, by each and every one of you.

I take the opportunity to wish you all well in your continuing professional careers. I hope you are finding them fulfilling and, indeed, even enjoyable. Thank you.