

14 July 2015 Opening of the Law Year Church Service

Welcome Address by Justice Henry

Welcome to our Opening of the Law Year inter-faith church service. I express the gratitude of the legal profession to the array of clergy and other representatives of faiths and other community institutions who have this morning joined us in marking this special event in the annual legal calendar.

The opening of the legal year church service dates back to the Middle Ages, when judges gathered in Westminster Abbey to pray for guidance for the year ahead. There and later in Australia the ceremony was generally held at the outset of the first superior court sittings of the calendar year. We in the law recognise that some of our traditions are seen as quaint but we think they are important. One aspect of this traditional ceremony – the wearing of wigs and robes, some fur trimmed – was compatible with the tradition that the ceremony was conducted at the start of the calendar year when it is winter in England but summer in Australia. Eventually something had to give. When the profession in Queensland finally addressed the anomaly in the 1980's it did so not by giving up its sweltering fancy dress but by moving the ceremony to the middle of the year when it is cooler – even in Cairns.

Whatever time of year it is held, this service presents an annual opportunity for spiritual reflection by members of our profession, whatever our varying spiritual beliefs may be.

I hope today's ceremony in this peaceful place allows each of us, in our way, to pause and reflect and draw inspiration for our individual commitment to that timeless goal: the just and ethical administration of the rule of law. The thinking underpinning that righteous goal is consistent with the long held tenets of religious faiths. We have been delighted to share in reflecting on it with members of various religious faiths this morning.

On our profession's behalf I convey my sincere gratitude to Reverend Garry Hardingham for hosting today's service and for the provision of his congregation's hospitality in the morning tea to follow. Good will to all.