

“WOMEN IN THE LAW IN QUEENSLAND”

Friday 24 November 2000

Banco Court, Supreme Court of Queensland

Welcoming Address ***by Hon Paul de Jersey, AC***

I welcome you to the Supreme Court this evening. I especially welcome our guest speaker, Mrs Bryce, later to be introduced by the Chief Judge. The other male person behind this table, Mr John Gallagher QC, will later respond, I am sure with enthusiastic thanks, to Mrs Bryce's presentation.

The exhibition, entitled "Women in the Law", has developed over the last few months as a major initiative of the Supreme Court Library Committee. I particularly acknowledge the creative direction of our Librarian, Mr Aladin Rahemtula, and the valuable assistance of all of his staff, and especially Ms Rachael Boyd, the curator of the display, and Ms Kate Dixon .

What I suggest emerges from the exhibition is the substantial and positive, and certainly developing, involvement of women in all aspects of the legal profession: a trend obviously to be welcomed and encouraged.

The approach has been historical, with the displays grouped by decade. Some attention has been given to those lawyers who have achieved a first in a particular way. Examples are Ms Una Prentice, the first Queensland law graduate; the Hon

Justice Susan Kiefel, the first female silk in Queensland; Ms Elizabeth Nosworthy, the first female President of the Queensland Law Society; and the Hon Justice

Margaret White, the first woman appointed as a Judge to this Court. But the exhibition is not confined just to women pioneers in that sense. It involves broad recognition of the evolving contribution of women to the law in this State, and in areas closely related to the law.

I especially thank all contributors, with particular mention if I may of Ms Naida Haxton, who has lent her gown, bar jacket and other items, as adopted at the time of her admission following consultation with Sir Harry Gibbs. You also may see this evening the silk gown worn by Justice Kiefel when she was sworn in as Queen's Counsel.

The exhibition is not confined to the visually diverting. It includes useful compilations of statistics on the extent to which women have assumed particular roles in the legal profession over the years, information which no doubt will be invaluable to those who watch these trends.

I thank Butterworths for their generous sponsorship of the social aspect of the occasion. Their Queensland Manager, Mr Martin Kelly, had hoped to be present, but is regrettably indisposed. I will have this expression of thanks passed on to him.

Adopting my sage wife's invariably enlightened imagery, I described the Supreme Court Library in last year's Supreme Court report as "a resource powerhouse for the courts". The exhibition illustrates the appropriate diversity of its interest and approach. I congratulate the committee on a most interesting display – the latest in its series of occasional displays and lectures, and now invite the Chief Judge to introduce our guest speaker.