

A question of value

Why they'll have to kill all the lawyers

The famous Shakespearean quotation, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (*Henry VI*), is often mistakenly applied.

In context, Shakespeare is saying that it is lawyers who stand between order and chaos, and that in order for chaos to prevail, the first step is to "kill all the lawyers".

I am proud to be part of a just and equitable society and proud to be one of those standing against the forces of disorder and disharmony. A part of my commitment to this role as Queensland Law Society president is to ensure that the true value of lawyers (and judges) to our society is recognised, both within the profession and beyond in the wider community.

To do this, I believe we must celebrate the value that solicitors bring to our community, articulate this value and champion it across all levels of our society.

We must focus on the positive and celebrate the contributions of our members, and our passion for this should be reflected in the way our law society performs its functions.

At last month's QLS Legal Profession Dinner and Awards, I spoke about this 'value':

"When we are admitted, we take an oath that we will, first and foremost, discharge our duty to the court and the administration of justice. We do what is right – not what is popular. Our commitment to this duty underpins society, and does no less than make Queensland workable, and the envy of other states.

"At every turn, when rights are threatened or abused, you will find a lawyer standing between abusers and their victims. Whether it is a large movement, for human rights, or acting for a confused homeless person stuck in a watch-house, for a crime he or she barely comprehends, a lawyer will stand up and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Lawyers, and the legal profession, are at the very heart of society and are essential to its healthy function."

In line with these sentiments, this event was important because it both celebrated the role of solicitors and recognised those among us who have given much to our profession.

I again congratulate our award winners. You have all contributed greatly, and our united thanks go to you. I also take the opportunity to thank all those who attended (more than 240 guests), those who presented, including Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath and guest speaker Tara Moss, and the many QLS staff and others who made it such a wonderful and successful night.

Another major event from last month also makes a statement on the value of our members, the QLS Bundaberg Roadshow.

I believe it is important to provide our members with professional development opportunities on their home turf. At a time when we are all 'busy', the convenience and accessibility of this makes an important difference, especially for non-metropolitan practitioners.

As a membership organisation, it was significant that we were able to put key staff members on the ground at the event, ready to speak with our local members and answer their questions on ethics, advocacy and other topics related to the Society's activities.

The feedback was that this, and simply the fact we were there, was certainly appreciated. And there was an intrinsic value in members seeing their Society prepared to make an investment in their community – in terms of venue hire, catering, accommodation and so on.

Finally, it was valuable for us to be out meeting our members, getting to know their issues and interests, so that our provision of services can be further refined and targeted at meeting their needs. You can look forward to more regional roadshows later this year.

Court of Appeal 25-year celebration, Justice Brown

Supporting and being seen to support our judiciary is another important part of the 'value' equation, and this was one of the



reasons I felt privileged to be able to speak at the 25-year celebration of the Court of Appeal and at the swearing-in ceremony for Supreme Court Justice Susan Brown QC.

In respect of her Honour Justice Brown, I celebrated the Bar's loss of their fine vice president as a gain for all Queenslanders and congratulated her on her appointment, which was met with universal acclaim.

Such events also serve as a reminder of the noble nature of our calling, as no matter what our particular function, we are all united in the service of justice. To this end, the Court of Appeal's milestone is one which represents the success of the whole profession, a fact which did not escape the court's president, who commented that "the Court of Appeal has been well-served by both branches of the legal profession".

In respect of gender parity, it was heartening to hear the president comment that "the percentage of women barristers appearing in the Court of Appeal has steadily increased since 1992. During the last financial year it was 19.7% of appearances, approaching parity with the 22% of women practising at the Queensland Bar."

I congratulated the Court of Appeal on its "fine 25 years, during which it has displayed courage, grace and unshakeable commitment to justice". Elaborating on my opening Shakespearean quote, I observed:

"Lawyers, and the legal profession, are the guardians against chaos underpinning society, government, business and community. Our collective duty is to the law and the administration of justice is discharged, ultimately, for the good of society, and discharged without fear or favour."

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