

Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings between the Judiciary and profession

Wednesday 16 December 2020 – 9.15am

Banco Court, QE11 Court Complex Brisbane

May it please the Court

As we have heard this morning, 2020 has been an unusual and challenging year.

It has been a year that most will be relieved to see finished – and justifiably so, as there have been some dark and unprecedented times – however there is, I believe, an alternative way of viewing of it.

What is most important out of what we have been through as a profession and a community is that we stayed civil and we came together and displayed the best elements of any profession and community. The challenges of COVID provided an opportunity for us to unite, notwithstanding that our borders closed. It provided an opportunity for us to work together and develop a different insight into our work colleagues, not withstanding that we closed the doors to our offices as we opened windows into our homes.

A strange thing happened as a result – in a number of ways we got closer.

We all shared and worked through common problems – how to home school, how to set up video meetings, how to witness documents remotely, to identify just a few.

We all helped and supported each other and extended indulgencies that we had not previously been in the habit of extending.

In effect, although we lost our chance to socialise and shop, we found our common humanity and as silver linings go it isn't a bad one.

In those circumstances and with that outlook it is a privilege this morning on behalf of the members of the Queensland Law Society to express the society's appreciation for the way the profession and all legal stakeholders responded to the challenges faced.

The collaborative and supportive approach embraced by our Courts and tribunals, our Attorneys-General and their departments, indeed by all parties involved in the efficient and effective administration of Justice in our community, is very much appreciated. The closer working relationships developed as a result of that approach not only enabled the profession to navigate its way through those challenges but just as importantly has laid a solid foundation for a very positive future.

The solicitors of Queensland thank you Chief Justice for your leadership of our profession throughout this year. We also thank our former Attorney-General, the Honourable Yvette Dath, her successor, the Honourable Shannon Fentiman, and in

particular Senior Judge Administrator Justice Lyons, Justice Burns, retired Chief Judge O'Brien, Chief Judge Devereaux, Judge Administrator Smith, Chief Magistrate Gardiner, Deputy Magistrate's O'Shea and Brassington and the senior court administrators Ms Julie Steel and Ms Brigita Cunningham for their willingness to assist throughout the pandemic. All of your readiness to engage with and support our members is much appreciated.

We also express our thanks to the Bar Association of Queensland, in particular its former President, Ms Treston QC, and Mr Jeff Hunter QC, and to the Department of Justice, in particular Director-General David Mackie and Deputy Director-General Jenny Lang for their collaborative work and consultation with our members.

It would be remiss of me not to also acknowledge the extraordinary contribution made by the society staff and a number of members of our voluntary policy committees who repeatedly over many months provided urgent feedback and commentary to the department on proposed draft legislation.

When the COVID clouds loomed large, it became evident that many members had an expectation the Society would in some way support and assist them.

This expectation was somewhat daunting for the Society's Council and leadership team. We are, however, extremely proud of the support provided to date and which continues. It has been financial; complimentary business advice and professional outreach including both face-to-face visits and phone contact, the objective being to keep as many members doors open as possible so that legal services would continue to be provided to our communities. It is very satisfying that this has been effective.

Although initially daunting, with the benefit of hindsight our members expectation is of course reassuring. It was our Society that our members expected support from – that by any view is a vote of confidence and something on which we can build.

The Society and its Council are appreciative of the rare opportunity they now have as a result of these positive outcomes.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with all other legal stakeholders to ensure the numerous benefits that COVID has delivered are not lost when we tackle the other challenges ahead of our profession.

Finally, this morning is also an opportunity to exchange Christmas greetings, and it is fair to say – I think – that opportunity is a little more welcome this year than most.

I think, then that after the year we have had, as we enter the festive season, we should keep the good things front of mind. With our borders re-opening and lockdowns ending, we can once again be an entire community as we truly know it, and we now have the

benefit of greater insight as to just how important that is.

We know that this season isn't only about presents or religious observance, but is also about coming together and being thankful for the good things in our lives.

So at this time, on behalf of the Queensland Law Society, its members and staff, I wish all in our profession and all stakeholders associated with the delivery Justice a very happy Christmas and a joyous and prosperous new year.

The holiday period is of course a chance to catch up with family and friends and to simply appreciate the sheer pleasure in doing nothing. I certainly intend to do just that.

May it please the Court.