

ADMISSIONS CEREMONY, 1 JUNE 2015

SESSION TWO

On behalf of the judges of the Supreme Court, I congratulate you on your admission and warmly welcome you to the legal profession. This achievement results from applied intellectual rigour, determination and resilience. It was probably helped by the support of family and friends, some of whom are present this morning. I particularly note Ms Francis' role in moving the admission of her brother, Mr Francis this morning. I welcome you all to this beautiful space, the Banco Court of the Supreme Court of Queensland, on this significant day in your professional and personal lives.

Whether you practice as a barrister, or as a solicitor in a legal firm; whether you become a sole practitioner, or a member of a national or international mega-firm; whether you join the corporate world, academia or a community legal service; whether you become a legal or policy advisor in the State or Commonwealth public service; or whether you do an assortment of these things throughout your legal career, you are now part of the legal profession. This profession has a fascinating tradition dating back to the 13th century. It was then that King Henry II amalgamated Norman and Anglo-Saxon laws with some Roman influences into the first recognisable body of English national law, the "common law" and established a centralised court system in which lawyers first emerged as an organised group.

There have been many changes to the legal profession since the 13th century and even since Justice Mullins, Justice Burns and I were admitted as practitioners last century in a now-demolished court building. But there are some constants. Like you, we hoped

our admission would improve our financial position as a reward for many impoverished years of study. This is a commendable goal. Our community needs clever, aspirational, entrepreneurial, hard-working young lawyers to assist in responsibly and sustainably developing the economy, locally, nationally and internationally.

But financial success must always be secondary to your considerable ethical obligations as a legal practitioner. Always remember that your duty to the court comes before your own personal interests and those of your clients.

The independent legal profession you have joined today plays a vital institutional role in our democracy. It ensures access to the rule of law for all citizens, even the most marginalised and unpopular. The independent legal profession also provides a defence against the excesses of the executive arm of government. It is sometimes called on to defend the independence of the third arm of government, the judiciary. Queensland lawyers recently rose to that challenge through their professional organisations, the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland, which corrected uninformed claims that the courts are dysfunctional. The public can be assured that, despite recent challenges, the judges of the Trial Division and the Court of Appeal have never faltered in their core work: delivering timely justice to litigants according to their judicial oaths and affirmations of office. You can rightly be proud that today you have become part of Queensland's legal profession with its important democratic role.

Yet, as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the US Supreme Court, observed in her book "The Majesty of

the Law", despite lawyers' high incomes and important institutional role, many are dissatisfied with their professional lives. In my experience, one of the most pleasurable roles for a lawyer is to use legal skills to assist impoverished clients or community groups who might not otherwise be able to access their legal rights. Many Queensland lawyers donate scores of hours doing just this. The benefits are threefold. First and most obviously, it benefits the recipient of the free legal assistance. Second, it promotes community confidence in the legal profession and reaffirms its legitimacy as a democratic institution. Third, it gives the pro bono lawyer great personal and professional satisfaction. I recommend it. So does the National Pro Bono Resource Centre, which encourages all lawyers to perform 35 hours of pro bono work per year.

May you find personal contentment in a long, successful, satisfying and prosperous legal career. With hard work your aspirations will be fulfilled, including your financial goals. But make sure you do this with the highest professional standards, by fulfilling your institutional democratic role if called upon, and with compassion for your fellow human beings. That way, many years from now, when you are even older than the judges admitting you today and retiring from your practise of the law, you can reflect on your professional life knowing that you have honourably given your best.

Our good wishes go with you on your journey.