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THE PRESIDENT: Chief Justice.

40 THE CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you. I acknowledge the many distinguished guests
who are present here today, or who are participating virtually, including current and
retired Judicial Officers, as well as members of the legal profession, friends, family,
ladies and gentlemen. I am so pleased to share today with you and, importantly, with
all of my colleagues on this Court being present, including Justice Mellifont, who, in
45 true COVID style, sits as part of this Bench by audiovisual link. Thank you, Justice
Sofronoff, for your very generous words today. I am overwhelmed by the support
that you have given me; less impressed by disclosing my age, but we'll discuss that
later.

I acknowledge the first and traditional owners of the land on which this Court and the Courts across Queensland stand and I pay my respects to their Elders, those who have spoken for this land in the past and who do so today. The Uluru Statement From the Heart calls for, amongst other things, truth telling about our history. This
5 acknowledgement is not a mere platitude, and its significance is not diminished by repetition. It is an important recognition of the truth of our shared history, affirmed by the High Court's decision in Mabo, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. It is a statement of reconciliation, inclusion and respect.

10 Amongst the retired or semi-retired Judges who are here, I thank the Honourable Paul de Jersey, former Chief Justice of this Court and our most recent former Governor, for coming along. I am also so pleased to have here the Honourable Doug Drummond, formerly Justice Drummond of the Federal Court, who was my Judge when I was an Associate. As surreal as this is for me, I imagine it is even more so
15 for him.

Also – you won't believe that out the back I said I'm turning it off so that it doesn't do that, and it just did. That's really quite scary.

20 Also, Justice Graham Hiley of the Northern Territory Supreme Court, from whom I learned so much from our many cases that we did together at the Bar, particularly the strength of humility. The Honourable Kerry O'Brien, former Chief Judge of the District Court, I thank for his strong leadership and his kind and patient mentoring as I made the transition from barrister to Judge. I also thank and acknowledge the
25 Honourable Ann Lyons, former Senior Judge Administrator of this Court, who is and was a role model in every sense of the words – one of the hardest working Judges on this Court, and administrator extraordinaire, and a generous, kind and caring colleague and friend.

30 And, of course, the most important of the retired Judges, who I think is hiding behind one of my daughters, and perhaps the one who is enjoying this the most because finally she does not have to give a speech, I pay tribute to our recently retired Chief Justice Catherine Holmes. She was a remarkable leader of this Court, taking on the role at a challenging time, then only to have the COVID-19 pandemic land as a
35 grenade into the midst of what should have been the calm days of her term. Chief Justice Holmes has led with quiet dignity, strength, warmth and integrity, as well as a very good measure of dry wit. As was said last Friday, she leaves very big shoes to fill, and all I can say is it's a good thing I love shoes.

40 I can still recall the absolute thrill I felt when hearing the news of her appointment as Chief Justice. It was not only, but included, that she was the first woman to be so appointed. But much more than that, it was the fact that she was an intellectual, an exceptional lawyer and Judge, as well as a down to earth and relatable person. It has been an honour to serve on this Court under her leadership, and even more so for the
45 last six months to work with her in my role as the Senior Judge Administrator. I thank Chief Justice Holmes for her wise advice, her support and encouragement. She leaves behind a very happy and collegiate Court, which is a tribute to her.

I will continue to do whatever I can to foster a strong sense of collegiality amongst the Judges, Magistrates and Tribunal members of all the Courts and Tribunals in Queensland.

5 As some of you may know, I did not have a direct path to legal studies from school. I had to apply for special consideration to get into QUT to study law because my school-leaving results were affected by earlier failed attempts at studying because of mental health struggles. I'm lucky they let me in. Chief Justice Holmes spoke last Friday of the lightbulb moment when she knew that she wanted to be an advocate.
10 For me, it was not so much a moment but a gradual awakening and realisation, from the perspective of a secretary in barristers' chambers, that this was something I wanted to do and, more importantly, was ready to work hard to achieve. But the idea that I would one day be a Judge, let alone the Chief Justice, would have been incomprehensible to me.

15 That life experience is perhaps part of the reason why I'm happy to be an advocate for, and will continue to support, efforts to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Judicial Officers, lawyers and law students.

20 And I'm also delighted that present here today are Helen Phimister, who was the senior secretary in the very – well, the second chambers I worked in, which was the chambers where Justice Mullins was and Judge Terry Gardiner. And I'm also delighted that Kathy Villari is here, who was then my partner in crime at the chambers I worked the longest in, which included Justice Freeburn, Justice Dalton,
25 Peter Hastie and Doug Savage.

Madam Attorney, thank you for the confidence you have shown in me by recommending this appointment. It is an absolute honour and a real privilege to have the opportunity to serve the people of Queensland in this important role. I am
30 excited and enthusiastic about what lies ahead, and I look forward to our developing a close and productive working relationship.

Mr Sullivan and Ms Thomson, thank you both very much for your kind and generous remarks. I will work hard to always deserve them.

35 Amongst such success as I may have had, you could not count avoiding my own swearing-in ceremonies. Clearly, I am a total failure at that, and as Julie Steele kindly reminded me on Friday, I am a lot of work.

40 The support of both the Bar Association and the Law Society, and the barristers and solicitors that you represent, for the Courts is greatly valued. In that regard, I borrow from the words of Chief Justice Wanstall, on the occasion of his Honour's swearing-in in July 1977, that "the successful functioning of a Court depends upon the cooperation of all its Judges in working with one another as a whole Bench. It
45 requires too the participation of a strong profession concerned to make the Court an efficient instrument of justice. It needs, as well, a skilled and experienced administrative staff".

Chief Justice Holmes spoke last Friday of luck. We are lucky in Queensland to have all of these elements; although it is not so much good luck as good management.

5 Speaking of good management, we are all so pleased to see Julie Steele returned to her role as Executive Director of the Supreme, District and Land Courts service; no one more than me, as I am only too aware of the pivotal role she plays in the efficient functioning of the Courts. One of the hallmarks of Julie Steele's leadership is the fact that she ensured there were two very able and skilled deputies to step in for her when that was needed: Darren Davies and Amanda O'Brien. We have worked
10 closely together over the last six months and I'm very grateful for their dedication and expertise.

As Justice Jackson drew to my attention, this is not the first time a Chief Justice has been sworn in shortly after a major flood. In February 1893, there was the Great
15 Flood of Brisbane. On 13 March 1893, Sir Samuel Griffith was sworn in as the third Chief justice of Queensland. Unfortunately, there is no transcript of that ceremony available within our library. But there is this from a gathering to thank fundraisers after the flood at which the Lord Mayor of South Brisbane described the calamity as having "brought people of all shades of opinion and of all nationalities together to
20 work for the common good and in the cause of suffering humanity".

That strength of community spirit is as true in 2022 as it was in 1893. The legal community represents only one part of the Queensland community, but the resilience, adaptability and shared effort that has been demonstrated amongst the
25 Judicial Officers of all the Courts and Tribunals, the Courts and Tribunal staff at all levels, and the legal profession, throughout the many challenges of the last couple of years, compounded by the recent devastation of the floods, is a credit to all concerned.

30 There are some silver linings that have emerged from the clouds of the last couple of years. One of those is the establishment of regular and direct lines of communication between the Court and the profession as well as the various agencies that we regularly deal with. I think it's fair to say that everyone involved has found those lines of communication to be productive and beneficial, even apart from COVID,
35 and they will continue.

Another silver lining is the flexibility that we now know we have in terms of how Court proceedings can be conducted. But I would echo the observation made by
40 Chief Justice Andrew Bell of the New South Wales Supreme Court on the occasion of his Honour's recent swearing-in, that whilst the remote practice of law may be possible, it is far from desirable, and the administration of justice is best served in person, in open Court.

45 Although we were able to make use of existing technology to great effect, there is still so much more required. The ability to electronically file and store Court documents is an obvious example, as is an efficient and reliable electronic case-management system. A great deal of work has been going into the development of

this for QCAT and the Magistrates Court in the first instance, and with the other Courts to follow. This is an essential development, worthy of close attention and significant resources.

5 The improvement of technology within the Courts will also contribute to the ongoing effort to improve the efficiency of all Court proceedings, but particularly civil proceedings, which is a matter that will continue to receive close attention from the Court.

10 Efficiency is not just about speed; it is also about cost, which is one of the real barriers to accessing justice which presently exists. The cost of professional legal services is approaching a level – if it has not already been reached – at which ordinary people cannot obtain them. Courts and Tribunals at all levels are seeing the consequences of that in the significant rise of self-represented litigants. This is
15 something that the whole of the profession should be concerned about and endeavour to address.

The economic or financial barrier is just one. There are other barriers – cultural, linguistic and physical – that may prevent members of the community from readily
20 having access to justice. And these things also are worthy of attention, effort and resources.

I sincerely thank Janine Mitchell for all her hard work in organising today’s ceremony, especially as she has had to do that so close on the heels of last Friday’s
25 ceremony and whilst she was grieving for the loss of a very happy working relationship with our former Chief Justice. I hope ours will be just as happy. I also thank Lyn Klein, who has worked for me for the short time I’ve been the Senior Judge Administrator, and, before that, Liz Balaam, for their hard work and good company. And I also thank my Associate, Lauren Dhu, who I hope is coping as we
30 leap from one end of level 16 to the other. As Judges regularly acknowledge, working with our young, enthusiastic and clever Associates is one of the highlights of this job, and Lauren is no exception.

I’m very lucky to have always had a close and loving family, and very good friends,
35 and I thank them for sharing today with me also. My sister could not be here in person but will be watching from her home in the UK. Our late mother is here in spirit. My father I know is proud; although he did comment of a recent picture of me in the newspaper that I didn’t look very judicial - too smiley, he said, compared to the stern image of a Judge you expect. Well, you can only be who you are.
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To my husband, Pete, and my daughters, you know you are the source of my greatest pride, love and joy. Your humour and your irreverence will ensure I am at no risk of judicial loftiness. Like many, the pandemic has seen us consume a lot more TV series than ever before. One of those was The Office. Some six or so months ago, I
45 shared the news at the dinner table of my appointment as Senior Judge Administrator. An explanation was called for as to what that involved. Once given, the sage response from one of my daughters was “Ah, so you’re like the Assistant to

the Regional Manager”. A few weeks ago, there was another dinner table conversation at which I shared the news of my new job, and you can imagine the response. I am now the Regional Manager.

5 What I actually am is one of a group of incredibly hard-working and dedicated
Judges, who have collectively committed to serve the people of this State, fearlessly
and independently, in the administration of equal justice for all, according to law. I
am so grateful to each of my colleagues for their support, encouragement, confidence
and trust, which is wholly reciprocated by me in each of them. My excitement about
10 taking on this important new role is tinged with a little anxiety. But that anxiety is
alleviated by remembering that I do not do this alone, but with the support of, and in
collaboration, with the might of the combined intellect, integrity and experience of
all the Judges of this Court.

15 I look forward to continuing to work hard alongside my colleagues in both divisions
of the Court. And we all look forward to congratulating the one of our number who
must soon be appointed the Senior Judge Administrator. I have left them a draft of
the next calendar, which gift they may not truly appreciate until after they have done
one.

20 Thank you all once again most sincerely for your participation in this ceremony
today.

25 THE PRESIDENT: Please adjourn the Court.

ADJOURNED

[10.00 am]