



**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, MS REBECCA TRESTON QC,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXCHANGE OF CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
AT THE SUPREME COURT OF QUEENSLAND
ON WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2019**

May it please the court.

As Christmas 2019 approaches, we mark the close of the second decade of the 21st century. How strange it seems to plod into the third decade with no fanfare, when this time 20 years ago, the Y2K Bug had us concerned that planes would crash to the ground, elevators would stop, power stations would melt down, and commerce and industry all over the world were about to be paralysed.

Twenty years later, different threats surround us, but are they equally imagined? Bush fires and drought of previously unrecorded proportions threaten our country, our wildlife and our people. Religious freedom, freedom of speech and respect for human dignity, be it for migrants, the elderly or people with disability, battle it out daily in the media and the parliament for our hearts and minds.

Amongst this uncertainty, some truths remain.

Our legal system remains the bedrock of a civil society. The rules by which we live inform our interactions with government, law enforcement, commerce, and each other. It is the system which reflects the network of our values of both pluralism and social benefit. The legal system's complexity is often over simplified by the mantra that the law, and in particular criminal law, should reflect perceived community expectations. That government, in making the law, might reflect community expectations is a rightly accepted fact. Government, by its elected nature, must appeal to community sentiment or risk not being re-elected. The courts, however, play a different role. Judges are obliged to apply the law as it exists. Courts do not, and ought not, apply the law capriciously, with an eye to ever-changing populism.

So, as we enter the third decade of this century, what do we, as a profession, look to on the horizon?

There can be little doubt that we rush towards technology that improves our case management and service delivery to clients. Presumably, we will continue to embrace mediation and arbitration as a mechanism for early dispute resolution with attendant cost savings. But it is, I think, our hopes, aspirations and conduct which truly define us and the future of our profession.

The members of the Bar Association have their hopes, aspirations and conduct on display every day in the courts across this state. The pro bono work done in domestic and family violence, in homelessness, migration and crime, shows our members' commitment to the hope of social justice. The volunteer time of our members given to community legal services, to charities and fundraisers

displays our genuine commitment to the improvement of the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves. Our members' dedication to continuing legal education, mentoring, and concern for each other's physical and mental well-being demonstrates our enthusiasm for the future of our profession. Our conduct, including the defence of the court against unfair criticism, provides confidence in the ongoing independence of the Bar.

These ideals should not just be the ideals of the new silks. The ideals should be the proper expectation that courts should hold of all members of the Bar – that we should approach our task every day with courage and with confidence in the principles and the institution we serve. Our members do not step aside in the face of unfair criticism, because we know that that is not the true voice of the Bar, and never has been. The true voice of the Bar is that which acts with integrity, commitment and compassion.

So the report card for Christmas 2019 is favourable, and one of which we are proud. As we enter the third decade of this century, our members will continue to strive for high ideals while assisting the courts to delivered efficiencies for the proper delivery of justice to all. The courts can look forward to the continuing strong support of the Bar in 2020 and beyond.

The members of the Bar Association wish this court, and all our courts, a safe and happy Christmas.

May it please the court.