

Court Network Speech December 2006

CJ Introduced by Nic Bolto

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, volunteers, mentors, graduands and family members.

Thank you Nic for your warm welcome - I am pleased to be here today to say welcome and congratulations to the new volunteers who are graduating today and to extend my thanks to the staff and volunteers of the Court Network who have worked hard throughout another busy year. The past year has posed new challenges for the Court and I wish to thank the volunteers of the Court Network who have had a key role to play in helping us meet some of the unique challenges that we face today.

When the Network was established in 1981 their role was to provide information and support to visitors of the court. Over time the role has developed to include policy advice and

guidance to the community and justice groups on the different issues facing individuals and their families who attend our court.

Today in 2006, the Court is challenged by the need to introduce greater security measures to protect our visitors - balanced by our commitment to keep our Court open and accessible to the public. I notice that the Network volunteers have done much to assist the Court through this transition. I would like to say thank you to all volunteers over the past year for your hard work and personal commitment.

To the new graduates I welcome you to the Supreme Court. As you can appreciate, the Supreme Court is often the site of many historic moments that have a lasting impact on the personal lives of people – often for many years.

It needs to be said that your role is one that is significant and substantial. Firstly, you have been chosen in this role for your knowledge, for your life experience, for your innate ability to relate to people and make them feel at ease, for your skills in

being able to communicate empathy and understanding and for your willingness to help everyday people face momentous events in their lives with support and understanding.

You will find your work can be challenging, interesting and varied...but above all I hope you find your work giving you a level of satisfaction that comes from helping people and being part of a wider team who is committed to justice and giving people a fair go.

Recently I had the pleasure of showing an local architect around our Court. When I walked with him along the worn and well trodden steps of this court, I made the comment that a great many people had visited this place and had their lives deeply affected by the experience of their visit. I showed my guest the corridors of the courts on the western side of the building and it was clear that in these narrow spaces, all parties to litigation congregate: the family and friends, their legal advocates and supporters as well as their critics – were all placed in close proximity to one another. It was apparent how stressful visiting

the court can be - but it can be made easier and more bearable by the work of the Court Network.

The information and support you provide will be long remembered by ordinary people as they face moments of great stress and crisis. Your knowledge, kindness, attention, understanding and your strength will be remembered and appreciated by those you assist and you will be appreciated by your colleagues as a member of a team, willing to give of your time to make the business of the Court efficient and effective.

Congratulations to the new graduands and thank you for your personal commitment to the year ahead.