

Remarks of the
Chief Justice Marilyn Warren
at the opening of the
Supreme Court Judges' Conference
at Moonah Links on
Thursday 5 November 2009

This is the Supreme Court of Victoria morning news.

The headlines.

- THREE STAR RECRUITS TO SUPREME COURT
- CHIEF JUSTICE MEETS PREMIER
- SUPREME COURT JUDGES' ASSOCIATES ATTEND EXCITING CONFERENCE

Now the news.

Yesterday, the State Government announced three star recruits for the Supreme Court:

- David Harper, AM, senior, experienced judge, able to play in all positions has been put on the Court of Appeal. The President was quoted as saying '*David is a great ball getter AND giver. He is a terrific pick up.*'
- Ian Ross, AO, expert in industrial and superannuation law, former member of the Industrial Relations Commission, the

County Court and VCAT and Acting Chair of the Victorian Law Reform Commission. In a door stop Mark Weinberg said *'this man is an expert on human rights'* and as she passed by the Chief Justice said *'and an expert on the Uniform Evidence Act and Civil Procedure'*. *'A terrific mid-fielder'* the Chief Justice quipped.

- Clyde Croft, a nationally acclaimed arbitrator. Commentators said Singapore and Hong Kong were alarmed at the news and fear a challenge to their commercial and ADR dominance. London is said to be looking over its shoulder too. Meanwhile, those with milk in their veins, the equity barristers, were rumoured to rejoice at Dr Croft's appointment. His publishers immediately raised the price of Dr Croft's books. There was a run on the texts on Equity and Mortgages at the Law Institute Book Shop late Wednesday afternoon.

In further developments yesterday the Chief Justice visited the Premier.

In a joint *unpublished* communiqué they noted:

- the Department of Treasury and Finance proposal for Funds in Court should not proceed. The Supreme Court Working Group report was a better way to go.
- next, the Supreme Court should have a new building. The

Premier acknowledged:

- a building would be a great legacy for his government on a prominent Melbourne site.
- the prospect of a centre for legal excellence would place Melbourne at the front of the national stage. The Premier was excited about a proposal for a clinical education facility involving the universities in a new building.
- the Premier liked the fact that in addition to the medical research precinct at Parkville and the Arts precinct at Southbank, Melbourne has a unique legal precinct in William Street. The Chief Justice said all it needs is a new Supreme Court building – the Premier agreed. He was reported as being very interested in an international architectural competition.

- Finally, the Premier and the Chief Justice agreed that the new Supreme Court Commercial Court was a great success. The Premier said it is an important contributor to the Victorian economy. *'These big cases like AWB, Timbercorp and pharmaceutical cases bring in large investment to the State AND pushes Melbourne up against Sydney – I like it' – the Premier said.*

The Premier said he would speak to the Attorney-General.

Kerry O'Brien later in editorial remarks on the 7.30 Report said *'After recent tensions between the Attorney-General and the Chief Justice, this is BIG news'.*

In other news, tomorrow, Supreme Court Associates will meet at a conference at the Mantra Hotel Melbourne. They will hear eminent speakers including people from the Juvenile Justice Centre, the Victorian Bar, the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, a clinical

psychologist and others. There will also be a panel of distinguished, former associates on 'careers in the law'.

The associates will join up with tipstaves late Friday afternoon at the Tuscan Bar, Rooftop, for drinks.

In remaining news, the Supreme Court of Victoria reports a serious injury list.

- star, fast footed, tough and fabulous centre judge Phil Cummins looks like missing his last two games. The coach, correction, Chief Justice said, *'I spoke to Phil last night and this morning. He is well ... just fabulous. He sends all his colleagues best wishes and says he will be back soon'*.

In other injury news, full back judge Paul Coghlan is suffering a mystery illness and spent two nights in Cabrini Hospital. He is resting at home and happy to receive calls so he can talk to someone.

To recap this morning's news –

- THREE STAR RECRUITS TO THE SUPREME COURT
- CHIEF JUSTICE MET WITH THE PREMIER YESTERDAY
- SUPREME COURT JUDGES' ASSOCIATES WILL ATTEND AN EXCITING CONFERENCE THIS FRIDAY.

That was the news to this hour.

I am Marilyn Warren.

Good morning and good luck.