

REMARKS OF THE HON. MARILYN WARREN AC
CHIEF JUSTICE OF VICTORIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
A RECEPTION FOR THE LAUNCH OF
THE MELBOURNE JD HAROLD FORD SCHOLARSHIPS
GOVERNMENT HOUSE
21 FEBRUARY 2011

Governor de Kretser

Mrs de Kretser

Your Honours

The Right Honourable Sir Zelman Cowen and Lady Cowen

The Right Honourable Sir Ninian Stephen and Lady Stephen

The Honourable Sir James Gobbo and Lady Gobbo

The Honourable Alex Chernov, Chancellor and Governor

Designate

Vice Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis

The Dean Professor Carolyn Evans

and

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

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When I cast my eyes around this room you might think I would be struck by the extraordinary array of cross representation of the judiciary, the bar, the legal profession, the academe and the general community particularly those who have an interest in the law. However, that is not the striking feature.

If I was to conduct a survey this evening I believe it would become apparent, very very quickly that every lawyer in the room had in some way been influenced in their education by Emeritus Professor Harold Ford.

One way or another we have all been either taught by him or taught by somebody who was taught by Professor Ford or influenced by his scholarship.

I refer to his scholarly contribution indeed Professor Ford's unique contribution to the study of companies now corporations law. Corporations law is a pretty dry area of the law for most. But if we pause to reflect on it, corporations law affects our daily lives in the community and governs events in a consumer-oriented and globalised world that we little appreciate. It also affects the way we are governed – the corporations power being now the neat constitutional device employed by commonwealth and state governments to overcome otherwise difficult constitutional obstacles.

In this field, and others, Professor Emeritus Ford has been a unique scholar, contributor and leader. All this we know.

Indeed, some years ago on special occasions the University

of Melbourne and the law school have seized the moment and celebrated that contribution, indeed the life of Professor Ford. One need only reflect on remarks on other occasions by the Honourable Justice Hayne of the High Court of Australia and Professor Ian Ramsay.

Indeed, it is the individual, the man about whom I wish to focus for a moment this evening. I am told by those who know him well that if I talk about the personal life and scholarly achievements of Professor Ford I will make him feel uncomfortable and he would prefer I did not. That of itself is reflective of the gentleness, humility and quietness of the individual. Professor Ford's life and work are a testament to the powerful achievements that result when talent and drive meet the opportunity provided by higher education.

Professor Ford was born without the advantage of an academic background and his career is founded upon sheer ability and hard work. His legacy to the Law School of the University of Melbourne is extraordinary and knows no bounds. Inspired by Professor Ford's life and scholarship the Melbourne JD Harold Ford Scholarships have been established. They are an opportunity for all of us who have had the privilege and benefit of a legal education and a life practising the law to give back to the law, to make it better. Inspired by Professor Ford, contributors support the pursuit of excellence, but without notoriety, in supporting the scholarships. It is essential that those with the necessary intellectual acumen and dedication to hard work be given every support and opportunity to not only fulfil their personal drive and ambition to achieve academically but also to ensure, enrich and strengthen the law through supporting devoted legal scholars.

Economic disadvantage should not impact on the development of the talented law student. The JD programme is deliberately challenging. It aims to develop a special law graduate – great legal thinkers of the future. It is difficult for some students to reach their potential if they are distracted by part-time casual work, residential dislocation, technological deprivation and even the physical disadvantage of long distance travel, poor diet and inadequate medical support.

I do not suggest the days of *La Boheme*, but, for some students a clever mind is distracted by the exigencies of impecunious circumstances.

All of us here this evening, whether judges, barristers, professionals, teachers or other members of the community are confident that the innovation of the JD program, a national leader, will be augmented by the scholarship.

I take the opportunity to congratulate each of the recipients of the scholarships and extend very warm congratulations.

In celebrating the launch of the Melbourne JD Harold Ford Scholarships I am sure we all thank Professor Ford for his inspiration. We also congratulate the University for its vision. Finally, we compliment all the contributors who, through the scholarship, significantly support the ongoing development and enrichment of the law.