

Admissions ceremony – 1 August 2016 – 10.30am

All the judges sitting on the bench today congratulate you on your admission as legal practitioners of this State. This is the culmination for you of years of study and hard work. It's a time to share the joy of your success with your family and friends, who have no doubt given you moral and possibly financial support throughout. And of course it's an additional happiness when that support culminates with a family member moving your admission, as has happened in some instances here. It is a pleasure to welcome all your family and friends to the Banco Court today

It is an exciting day, but it's a day on which you assume serious responsibilities. This is a venerable profession and this is a time-honoured ceremony. Each of you has just taken an oath or affirmation that you will truly and honestly conduct yourself in the practice of a lawyer of this court, according to law to the best of your knowledge and ability. Sir Edward Coke sets out the oath that mediaeval lawyers took in 1275:

“That he shall well and truly serve the king's people as one of the serjeants of the law;

That he shall truly counsel them that he shall be retained with after his cunning; (which in those times meant, according to his knowledge);

That he shall not defer tract or delay their causes willingly for covetousness of money or other thing that may tend to his profit.

That he shall give due attendance accordingly.”

That is not so very different from what is contained in the words you have said 740 years later. Both oaths emphasise the importance of integrity in practice.

You have become officers of the court; your duty to the court is paramount and prevails over the obligations owed to your client or your employers. The court expects of you integrity, competence and sound judgement.

As lawyers, you'll need to keep abreast of changes in the law – which occur almost daily with case law developments and statutory amendments – and of changes in the nature of practice. The pace of professional life and the way things are done have changed enormously since we judges on the bench commenced practice - last century.

Look after your wellbeing. Members of the legal profession are at a higher risk than other professionals of stress, depression and burn-out. Try to achieve balance in your life, and maintain interests outside of the law. Remember too that you can put your legal knowledge and skills to use on behalf of less advantaged people through pro bono work or volunteering with community legal organisations. This is a profession which collectively does a lot of good for the community; take advantage of those extracurricular opportunities. It is a good way of achieving professional satisfaction, learning new skills, and making contacts in the profession.

Admission to the legal profession is a great achievement, it is testament to your intellectual tenacity and perseverance, and you deserve to feel very proud today. On behalf of the court, I welcome you to the profession and wish you a successful and satisfying career in the law.