



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 5 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Court of Appeal Appointments

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: I wish to take this opportunity to correct a misconception that appears to be gaining ground in the media about the recent appointments of Justice Margaret McMurdo and Justice James Thomas to the Queensland Court of Appeal. Firstly, I wish to make it clear that I consulted closely with the Bar Association of Queensland about those appointments. I table a memo circulated this morning by its president confirming that fact. Secondly, the appointments were welcomed by the Bar Association and the Queensland Law Society. In fact, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court welcomed the appointments, and I table his public statement doing so.

There has been and will continue to be close association with the Bar Association about judicial appointments. The Opposition spokesperson for Justice is reported as being concerned about consultation over these appointments. This issue is not about consultation; it is about the appointment of a woman judge. It is Labor Governments that have led the way in appointing women to the District and Supreme Courts and the Court of Appeal. What the member for Warwick is doing is agitating the cause of those arch conservatives in the legal profession who believe judicial appointments must always go to the good old boys from the big end of town who have been to the right schools and are members of the right clubs. We are a multicultural society. Women make up a little more than half of our community, yet they are few and far between on the court benches. It is high time the membership of the courts reflected more accurately the make-up of society.

Having said that, I wish to make perfectly clear here today that the appointments of Justice McMurdo and Justice Thomas were based on merit. Merit is not the same as seniority. I give my assurance that merit will continue to be the basis for appointments to the judiciary by this Government.
