

Nicholas Hasluck's remarks at launching of *Legal Limits* Tues 17 December 2013

I will say a few words only, and they are mostly by way of thanks. First, my thanks to all of you for attending this book launch at a busy time. Books need people to take an interest in them and thus, by coming along, you have helped to get the book off to a good start.

Next, a particular word of thanks to the Chief Justice of the High Court, Bob French, for agreeing to launch the book and for his generous remarks about it. Our guest of honour is known to everyone in this room, and well-known for his friendly and informal manner. Nonetheless, it is worth reminding ourselves that he holds the highest judicial office in the land, and that we in the local profession feel a sense of continuing pride in that fact. So I thank him and I speak for all in voicing our appreciation of his presence.

I wish to thank also the Chief Judge of the District Court, Peter Martino, for his cooperation in making this venue available, and the Dean of the UWA Law School, Erika Techera, for organising and hosting the function. The Law School is moving in new directions, as indicated by the notion that would-be law students will complete an undergraduate degree before embarking upon their legal studies. Today's function, and others like it, evidence the Dean's wish to keep in touch with the profession as the changes proceed. I am pleased to be part of the larger plan.

My remarks would be incomplete without thanking my publisher - all those at The Federation Press, who brought the book into existence. The book is on display at the sales desk and for those of you who still think of yourselves as

‘readers’ I am sure the feel of the book and its handsome design will be to your liking.

For those of you who have left the world of ‘readership’ for cyberspace, let me quickly draw attention to some features that may be of interest to you. The device we are speaking of is in the tablet form, but with a hyper-modernistic ‘retro’ look. Even better, it isn’t burdened by batteries, keyboards, or old-fashioned back-lit screens. It doesn’t have to be recharged. For those who know how to use the device, thoughts and images will be conjured up within their minds by simply looking at the printed page. You can ‘save’ what you have read by simply closing the book, and re-opening it at the same place later on

But these are mere details. I feel sure that even the gadget-minded amongst you will be principally interested in the contents of the book. And this brings me to my final word of thanks – to my friend and former law school classmate Peter Johnston who has added a fascinating ‘Afterword’ to the book. He shows the way in which lessons learnt at law school can affect one’s outlook in later life.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that upon leaving law school I should turn to writing pieces about the relationship between law and literature, for both of my parents were writers – my father a journalist; my mother a social historian. The longer I practised law the more I became conscious of a link between the stories told in books and the stories told by clients - to their legal advisers or to the courts. So to some extent the pieces brought together in this book are a distillation of my experience, some of which is reflected also in the novels I have written.

In his ‘Afterword’ my former classmate, Peter Johnston – known to most of you as a leading academic at the UWA Law School – takes a close look at certain jurisprudential themes explored in my novel *The Bellarmine Jug* and traces them back to what we learnt at law school in the 1960s about social upheaval and dissent. This was done without any encouragement from me and I was impressed by the skill with which he defined the connections. It is a fine piece of writing, it adds another layer to the discussion, and I am very grateful to him for joining with me in this venture. In the human rights era, law schools, and lawyers generally, are increasingly taking an interest in issues lying beyond ‘black letter’ law, and I therefore like to think that a book about such matters could be of use.

Some of you may by now be wondering: does this man have some answers to the problems of post-modern life? The answers are in the book! Copies for signing by the authors are on sale right here, at a special discounted price, and as to sons and daughters in the law, nephews and nieces, keep in mind that Christmas is coming up.

Let me close by thanking my wife and other family members for their support over many years, and all of those who have helped to make this evening’s function possible.

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