

## **SUMMARY OF SPEECH FOR THE SHORTLAND CHAMBERS ANNUAL FUNCTION**

1. Shortland Chambers is hosting this annual function for the Auckland legal profession so as to provide an environment within which the profession can meet, not only to socialise, but also to discuss matters of relevance to practice in Auckland.
2. A matter Shortland Chambers considers important is the lack of awareness in other parts of New Zealand of the way in which law is practiced in Auckland. In that context, there are some interesting statistics:
  - (a) There are 9,500 lawyers in New Zealand of which nearly 4,500 practice in the Auckland region.
  - (b) There are 1,200 barristers practicing in New Zealand of which nearly 800 are practicing in Auckland.
  - (c) More than half of all the first instance Court business is heard in Auckland and of course that flows through in terms of the volume of business heard by the appellate Courts.
3. Against that background, it is difficult to reconcile the following:
  - (a) That with regard to recent appointments to the Inner Bar, for example this year there were twelve appointments, six of those were from Wellington and only three from Auckland. Shortland Chambers is concerned that this trend should not continue particularly when from next year, appointments are also to be made from firms.
  - (b) On a slightly different note, the Court of Appeal is still based in Wellington notwithstanding the volume of business generated out of Auckland. This of course entails counsel traveling, as did their colonial forbearers, to the Capital city and taking lodgings overnight in order to be ready for an appearance the following day in Court. Apart from being wasteful of time and resources, it impacts on accessibility to that Court.
  - (c) Lastly, with the coming into force of the new Law Practitioners Act scheduled for July next year and the Rules of Conduct being drafted by the New Zealand Law Society in Wellington with advice from Canterbury, there appears to be a perception that New Zealand does not have, as do some Australian States and the

United Kingdom, a “Distinct Bar”. That is simply not true of Auckland where there is a very significant Bar – nearly 800 barristers enjoying the support of the Auckland law firms. Even more significantly, the Bar practices alongside the specialist litigation practices which are also a unique feature of the Auckland legal landscape.

- (d) Shortland Chambers is concerned that in designing rules on the basis of “one size fits all”, Auckland interests will not be recognised.
4. The real issue then is not so much what lawyers in Auckland think of Wellington, or other centres, but more importantly what Wellington thinks of us or knows about Auckland. Wellington is a power base and clearly decisions are being made in Wellington which affect the professional lives of all of us in Auckland. Accordingly we have an obligation through our various associations and societies to raise the awareness in Wellington of the particular issues that affect our practices as Auckland lawyers.

The above is a summary of some of the points made by John Billington QC Chairman of Shortland Chambers at the Annual Function held on Thursday 24 May 2007.