

**25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES LAW SCHOOL**

**INTRODUCING THE GUEST SPEAKER,
SIR GERARD BRENNAN**

THE HON SIR ANTHONY MASON*

I have a limited function this evening - it is to introduce the Chief Justice, Sir Gerard Brennan. I intend to trespass beyond the bounds of relevance - some might say not for the first time - by paying a tribute to the Law School. I pay that tribute both as an insider and an outsider. The Law School has achieved great success in the space of its 25 years to become one of the leading Law Schools in Australia. And 25 years is but a moment in time in the life of a great Law School. For that achievement, much credit must go to the Foundation Dean, Hal Wootten QC who, I am pleased to say, is with us tonight.

There is no need of an introduction of Sir Gerard Brennan by me and, if the truth be known, the Chief Justice would probably prefer not to be introduced by me. But I can set his mind at rest by saying that I have known him as a personal friend, an admirable colleague and an outstanding lawyer, whose judgments are acclaimed throughout the length and breadth of this land.

* Chancellor, University of New South Wales. This speech was presented at the 25th Anniversary of the University of New South Wales Law Faculty, Intercontinental Hotel, 18 July 1996.

I am not in a position to disclose skeletons that lurk in his judicial cupboard. I do not assert that there are no such skeletons - after all there is the famous "skeleton of principal" in his celebrated judgment *Mabo (No 2)* - it simply is that I don't know of any.

I cannot think of anything to Sir Gerard's detriment except that he is a Queenslander. Here in New South Wales that is counted as a severe disability which Sir Gerard has borne with manly fortitude. Like myself, he has the disadvantage in this gathering that he is not a graduate of UNSW. In my case, the cross I bear as Chancellor is all the heavier in that I am a graduate of the University of Sydney, indeed of its Law School. Sir Gerard is a model of judicial civility, a quality which he exhibited in large measure when he dealt with an application brought in the High Court by Citizen Limbo, a litigant in person. Citizen Limbo is one of the new breed of litigants in person who change their name by deed poll in order to symbolise or personalise their beliefs. In his application he sought to have the judge enforce certain world environmental standards. He began by stating that his name was Citizen Limbo and placing on the Bar table what, according to my associate who was in court, appeared to be portion of the trunk of a tree. Sir Gerard was not at all fazed by this; indeed, he carried on as if the occurrence was part of the everyday routine of the Court. He courteously addressed the plaintiff throughout the proceedings as "Citizen Limbo". The application was, however, refused. It is reported in the ALJR under the name *Re Limbo* - a great name for an authority.

Contrast my treatment of the good citizen when he subsequently came before me. When I addressed him as "Mr Limbo", he protested and asked that I call him "Citizen Limbo". When I declined on the ground that it was my practice to address male plaintiffs as "Mr", it became speedily obvious that he thought he was appearing before a lesser breed of judicial officer than Justice Brennan.

With that introduction, I invite the Chief Justice to address us.