

# **Speech by Commissioner Hammond**

## **Opening of the Commission's New Premises**

**186 St Georges Terrace, Perth**

**Time:** 10am Wednesday 21 September 2005

**Place:** 186 St Georges Terrace, Perth

Acting Chief Justice, the Hon Justice Murray

Attorney General, the Hon Jim McGinty MLA

President of the Legislative Council, the Hon Nick Griffiths MLC

Chief Judge of the Family Court, the Hon Justice Holden

Chief Judge of the District Court, Her Honour Judge Kennedy

Chief Magistrate, His Honour Steven Heath

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption & Crime Commission

The Shadow Attorney General, Ms Sue Walker MLA

All our distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish most sincerely to welcome each and everyone of you to this occasion which is the official opening of our new premises.

The decision for this Commission to leave the premises occupied by its predecessor commission at 66 St Georges Terrace, Perth was one that was taken by others well prior to the establishment of this Commission on 1 January 2004.

The later decision to leave the former Kennedy Royal Commission premises at 141 St Georges Terrace, Perth was one that was again made by others.

All in all and without wishing to canvas the details of the various transactions the net result of this has being the locating of this Commission in these perfectly appropriate, adequate and secure premises and the whole transaction has been completed with financial prudence.

As always in a project such as this there are people to whom this Commission owes particular thanks. I wish to record the Commission's thanks to the Project Control Group, which was chaired by Mr Chris Davies from the Department of Justice. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Department of Housing and Works and Mr Michael Couche, I also wish to acknowledge the very capable professional assistance of Mr James Carslaw of Property Solve.

In a transfer such as this there are always of thousands of peripheral matters to attend to and I particularly want to thank the very pleasant and agreeable people from Oldfield Knott, namely Mr Dean Wood and Mr Ernie Krupa for their assistance to Commission staff and their devotion to detail.

There are of course numerous other people who have in many ways assisted us in this shift and translation not the least of which are the dedicated employees of the Commission who all pulled their weight in order to achieve the shift to and the establishment of these premises. Here, I wish to acknowledge the leadership of Vanessa Grant, our Director Business Services who oversaw all aspects of the fit out and the Commission move with great energy and skill.

Before however calling upon the Attorney General to complete the official part of this occasion, there are one or two things I ought to say.

It would be naïve to suggest that I could speak at an occasion like this without referring to the deeply unfortunate events of the last six weeks.

The simple fact of the matter is this. The Commission found a problem, dealt with the problem and dealt with it promptly and entirely in accordance with the law. Its processes were open and its actions will, as ever, be accountable to the people of Western Australia through the reporting mechanism to the Inspector, the Parliamentary Committee and the Parliament .

Whatever may now happen in the future is a matter for others and not for this Commission which has nothing to fear and nothing to hide in this whole sorry business.

What also is to be remembered is that this Commission was established by the Western Australian Parliament following an extensive and lengthy Parliamentary committee consideration as well as an analysis of similar Commissions throughout Australia. It is a fact of life perhaps a sad necessity that Commissions similar to this exist in most other states and provided a blue print to some extent for the Joint Parliamentary Committee that toured Australia and reported back to Parliament in late 2003.

In a few weeks time we will present to the Western Australian Parliament our report for the year ending 30 June 2005, and in that report you will find that we are not an organisation that is running around chasing rabbits into holes or concentrating on a few particular cases or events but an organisation which has a wide and effective reach.

I cannot, pending presentation to Parliament, say a great deal about the detail of the Annual Report but I can share this with you, namely that in the past year we received and assessed over 2,400 allegations and notifications of misconduct.

Some of those issues of assessment are not simply a matter of looking at a file and reaching an immediate conclusion.

I have seen written assessments leave the Commission offices which far exceed in length many of the judgements given in our civil courts. An enormous amount of work can, and is, expended sometimes into looking into the detail of the more complex assessments. Sometimes misconduct is found, sometimes it is not, sometimes recommendations are made and sometimes the Commission fills a useful function in putting to rest allegations which some may genuinely but mistakenly believe indicate misconduct or illegality or unfairness.

The number of truly vexatious or disturbed complaints received is relatively tiny but occasionally there exists a perception in the minds of some people that they have been treated unfairly when in fact they have not and many times a very just service is provided to those people by a complete examination of their problem.

Throughout the difficulties of the past six weeks I have been immensely cheered and assisted not only by the attitude of the Commission employees who hardly missed a beat in their work but also by the expressions of good will that I received from, as it were, people in the street.

The morale at the Commission is high, the dedication of its officers is high, and there is throughout this building not only a very welcome and wholesome degree of wishing to get on with the job but also a great camaraderie amongst the Commission staff.

We are a creature of the Western Australian Parliament, we report to the Parliament through the Standing Committee, we are here to do a job and we will continue to do that job and the Western Australian public can have faith in the integrity and energy of this Commission.

With apologies to Mark Twain, I can say that rumours of our demise are extremely exaggerated.