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# Federal Magistrates Court 10th Anniversary

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**Speech given by Glenn Ferguson, President,  
Law Council of Australia**

**at the Federal Magistrates Court, Sydney**

**9 July 2010**

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Thank you Chief Federal Magistrate Pascoe.

Attorney General, Chief Justice of the Family Court, Chief Magistrate of the New South Wales Local Court, Your Honours, Federal Magistrates, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Law Council, I am privileged to be here today to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Federal Magistrates Court.

Just over a decade ago, on 3 July 2000, the first sittings of the Court were held in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle, Parramatta and Townsville.

The Law Council has enjoyed a close working relationship with the Federal Magistrates Court since its inception.

The Law Council was involved in the interview process, along with the then Commonwealth Attorney-General, to identify and appoint the inaugural Chief Federal Magistrate of Australia.

Chief Federal Magistrate Diana Bryant, of course, proved to be an outstanding leader of the Court, and has gone on to become an equally admired and respected Chief Justice of the Family Court.

The Law Council also established a Federal Magistrates Court Liaison Committee, which has worked with the Court and Government in a very constructive manner as the Court's jurisdiction and workload increased.

The Federal Magistrates Court has gone on to grow and thrive under the astute leadership of the current Chief Federal Magistrate John Pascoe and others associated with the Court.

Today, the Federal Magistrates Court is the largest Federal Court, with 63 Magistrates based in Sydney, Parramatta, Newcastle, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Townsville, Darwin and Launceston.

As we all know, the Court was established to provide a simple and accessible alternative to litigation in the Federal Court and the Family Court, and to relieve the workload of those courts – and it has been very successful in doing so.

The Law Council commends the Court's hard work and commitment to providing access to justice to the people of Australia, regardless of where they reside.

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Everyone is aware of the tremendous work the Federal Magistrates Court does in conducting regular regional circuits – no court does it better.

This commitment is further illustrated by the Court's ability to conduct special sittings in most regions of Australia on request – something it does extremely well.

The Law Council also congratulates the Court on its excellent reputation for finalising matters promptly and efficiently.

For instance, during 2007–08, 86 per cent of matters were finalised within six months; and 96 per cent of family law matters filed in the Court were finalised within 12 months.

They are outstanding figures and a tribute to the first-rate management of the Court since 2000.

The Law Council of Australia looks forward to working with the Court in the interests of the community for many years to come.

Once again, it is a privilege to be here today and I congratulate everyone associated with the Federal Magistrates Court on reaching this significant milestone.

Thank you.

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