**INTERPRETERS' SYMPOSIUM, 23 AUGUST 2018**

**SUPREME COURT OF TASMANIA**

**SPEECH OF WELCOME BY THE HON CHIEF JUSTICE A M BLOW AO**

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you all to this symposium on Implementing the National Standards on Working with Interpreters. Welcome to the Supreme Court of Tasmania.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land, the Mouheneener people. I pay my respects to those who have passed before us, and I acknowledge today's Tasmanian aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I particularly welcome this evening's speakers, particularly those who have travelled from other States.

The Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals have been published by the Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity.

That council was set up in 2014 on the initiative of the then Chief Justice of Australia, the Honourable Bob French AC, and under the auspices of the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand. The council consists of judges and magistrates, practising and academic lawyers, administrators, and experts in areas relevant to cultural diversity. Tasmania's representative is my colleague, Justice Helen Wood. She has been responsible for organising this symposium. I thank her for her hard work, both in organising this symposium and in contributing to the work of the council over the last four years.

The aim of the JCCD is to develop a framework to support procedural fairness and equality of treatment for all court users – regardless of their race, colour, religion or national or ethnic origin – and to promote public trust and confidence in Australian courts and the judiciary..

One of that council's greatest achievements to date, perhaps **the** greatest, is its publication of these National Standards. They were approved by the Council of Chief Justices last year and were launched in Canberra last October. Australia is one of the world's most culturally diverse nations. We all know that individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can experience significant barriers in obtaining access to justice. The JCCD has recognised that there is a need for the judiciary to receive independent advice on protocols and best practice guidelines in relation to cultural diversity issues, with a view to ensuring that everyone in Australia is treated equally before the law and has access to justice. It recognised a need for research, the identification of the barriers, and consultation with key participants in the justice system and the public generally.

These Standards are intended to provide guidance to courts, tribunals, interpreters and lawyers, with a view to removing the language barrier to such an extent that a person who needs and interpreter in court proceedings can be placed in as good a position as an English-speaking person. They are accompanied by Model Rules and a Model Practice Note. It is intended that they should be implemented progressively, depending on what resources are available in each jurisdiction.

For many years the Tasmania courts appear to have had less need of interpreters than the courts in the other Australian jurisdictions. I can think of only a handful of cases in which an interpreter has been needed when I have been presiding. However the need for court interpreters in Tasmania is growing. Interpreters are needed far more frequently than they were 10 or 20 years ago. One of the consequences of Tasmanian courts needing interpreters so infrequently is that our lack of experience in working with interpreters results in judicial officers needing assistance and training with a view to avoiding blunders and eliminating, as far as possible, language-related impediments to justice.

These National Standards are an excellent publication. They will be of great assistance in removing language barriers in court proceedings. It is therefore very pleasing to see so many people here this evening to learn about them.