

## Royal Federation of NZ Justices Association

President Ian Knox and Mrs Knox  
Distinguished guests  
JP Delegates and partners

On behalf of the Ashburton District let me extend to you all a very warm welcome. It is a privilege to be standing before you and to have you present in our community for this special occasion, your 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference.

While Ashburton may be one of your smaller Associations, I can assure you that the level of organisation, and hospitality extended to you by local JP's will be second to none. The Conference Committee led by Gus Johnson, ably assisted by your Vice-President Elect, Kevin Geddes, have been meticulous in their planning, which has consumed them for the past year. I was approached on the 26<sup>th</sup> March last year to make sure I was available for tonight's occasion.

JP's provide a unique role in New Zealand society and we are extremely fortunate to have a very high calibre of individual working as JP's in Ashburton. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them, and those of you who are visitors tonight, for the work you do throughout your respective communities. There is no question in my mind of the positive contribution that you make to our democratic way of life. This work, which is mostly of a voluntary nature, requires the qualities of good sense, character and integrity, that is performed with diligence and with a passion to serve your community.

Because of the dedicated network of JP's in Ashburton, my role is limited but I am well aware of the demands placed on you, as my father has just retired after 33 year's service (incidentally the last time Ashburton hosted this Conference). He performed mainly ministerial duties which often took place in the evening and, of course, many of the phone calls would come at meal time.

Communication was an issue as English was often not the preferred language – which meant more time and patience! The issuing of search warrants would, I imagine, come also at inconvenient times of the day or night, while our justice system is deeply indebted to those judicial JPs who perform the role of district court judges.

Ladies and gentlemen, the institution of the JP Association is an extremely valuable asset in all our communities and I feel extremely humble standing before you tonight.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with our district, allow me to briefly introduce you to Ashburton – a district bounded by the Rangitata and Rakaia Rivers, the ocean and the main divide –

- population 28,500 60% living in Ashburton town
- with the 3<sup>rd</sup> longest roading network in NZ (2623 km)
- amongst the faster growing rural districts in NZ (60% of growth from international migration)
- of the 500,000 ha actively farmed, over half is irrigated and we are working very hard to increase that in a sustainable and enduring manner
- historically we have been the grain bowl of NZ, but now we are also fast becoming the vegetable bowl
- small seed production flourish (more profitable than dairy)
  - 50% of world's radish seeds
  - 35% of the world's white clover seed (fix nitrogen)
  - 33% of the world's carrot seed
- Dairy accounts for 20% of our irrigated land
- Sheep and beef is still dominant – not to the same extent as before but still responsible for 30% of all exports out of the district and by industry classification is the dominant employer

This district makes a key contribution to almost all the food you and your family eat.

While food production is the district's major industry, Ashburton has given birth to a number of progressive and entrepreneurial businesses –

- Designline buses
- Medical technology – physically handicapped
- New generation diabetic and health socks
- RX Plastics
- Oil seed extract

- World's leading kite manufacturer
- Stock exchange listed CBS
- Major secondary share registry

The past six years have seen unprecedented growth throughout the district and where the future lies is a question too complex to answer just now.

We are a district of magnificent natural beauty, but we have over the years created some real gems – among them

- NZ's largest man made lake – Lake Hood
- The RDR – depression – irrigating 64,000 ha – 67 km long, average width 15m, depth 3m – Montalto and Highbank power generation
- Longbeach Estate (history and beauty)
- Latest – the Ashburton Event Centre – truly the work of a small band of volunteers and of which we are very proud

May you all enjoy your stay in Ashburton.

May the matters of business before you prove to be achievable, and, most importantly – may you continue to enjoy the good health that allows you to play such a valuable role in New Zealand's society.