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## Retiring judge Margaret McMurdo takes parting shot at Campbell Newman

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Retiring Queensland Court of Appeal President Margaret McMurdo has described her role in opposing the Newman government's "attack" on the state's court system as the pinnacle of her career.

Justice McMurdo clashed with the Newman government multiple times during its three-year reign, most prominently over the controversial - and ultimately short-lived - appointment of Tim Carmody as chief justice.



Outgoing judge Margaret McMurdo has warned "there may be future attacks" on the judiciary. Photo: Dave Hunt

At a packed valedictory ceremony at Brisbane's Banco Court on Friday, she recalled being asked to nominate her career highlight by high school students last year, and finding the answer "easy".

"It was standing with my sister and brother judges of appeal, senior judge administrator and the judges of the trial division between 2013 and 2015 in successfully resisting a calculated and sustained attack on the independence of the Supreme Court of Queensland by some members of the legislature and the print media," she said.



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Former Queensland premier Campbell Newman. Photo: Robert Shakespeare

She described the period as "dark days for the judges" and other judicial staff but concluded on a brighter tone, noting the "thoughtful and steady" leadership of Chief Justice Catherine Holmes.

Nevertheless, Justice McMurdo urged her soon-to-be former colleagues to not become complacent about defending the integrity of the judiciary.



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"There may be future attacks," she warned.

"If so, I urge my judicial colleagues, professional associations and individual lawyers to again be courageous."

Justice McMurdo called on both the federal and state governments to do whatever they could to properly fund Community Legal Centres, ahead of a 30 per cent Commonwealth cut from June.

"I think every sensible member of the community would be concerned about that," she said.

"The community legal centres do a terrific job in providing access to justice to those who would not have it otherwise and their early intervention saves thousands of dollars down the track.

"So it's well established that they really do represent very good value for money and if they are cut short of funding it's going to mean that further along in the justice system there's going to be more time and money spent."

She also took aim at "irksome" urban myths about the judiciary being out of touch with the community or inclined to hand out sentences that were too lenient.

Earlier in the day, she told ABC Radio the people of Queensland treasured an independent judiciary, adding: "They will not tolerate any interference with it".

Speaking at the ceremony, Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath said Queenslanders had been the "fortunate beneficiaries" of Justice McMurdo's talent and moral fortitude.

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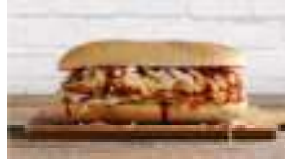
Ms D'Ath praised her role as a trailblazer for women within the legal profession but noted they both understood there was "still a way to go".

Chief Justice Holmes also spoke warmly of Justice McMurdo, who has also devoted her energies to indigenous issues, and said she would be remembered as one of the "giants" of the court.

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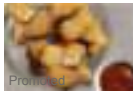
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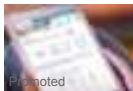
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