

27 July 2011

Kerferd Oration marks the end of an era for La Trobe Beechworth

The Kerferd Oration this Sunday in the Kerferd Conference centre at La Trobe Beechworth will herald the end of an era for the University's Beechworth campus.

The campus has been closed for several months but the conference centre is being opened especially for the Kerferd Oration. La Trobe at Beechworth is a sponsor of the Kerferd Oration along with Indigo Shire Council and WAW Credit Union.

This year's Orator, Justice David Harper AM, a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria, will talk about *Sentencing: public perceptions, the reality, and their social implications*, and refer to research in Britain, Canada and the US which consistently shows that members of the public, when given details of the considerations that go into the sentencing process, are more lenient than judges.

Kerferd Oration committee member Joan Simms said that four lead-in events in recent weeks, Community Insights, looked at the issue of sentencing from different perspectives and the implications for Beechworth of being a jail town.

"We had over 180 people come to these events and listen to prisoners, police, and prison staff talk about their experiences," Ms Simms said. "It has generated an unprecedented level of discussion, leading in to the Oration this Sunday and has led to many in the community asking what they can do to help in the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners once they leave gaol."

Justice Harper was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to law reform, the judiciary, and in the area of international humanitarian law, and to the community through support services for the care and resettlement of offenders and their families.

He has been the president of the of the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders since 1995 and is Chair of the Australian Red Cross (Victorian Division) International Humanitarian Law Committee, and is the president of the Judicial Conference of Australia, which seeks to maintain an independent judiciary.

The annual Kerferd Oration is a free community event supported by WAW Credit Union, La Trobe Beechworth and Indigo Shire Council. It starts at 11am in the Kerferd Conference Centre at La Trobe Beechworth on Sunday 31 July. Tickets are not required and doors open at 10.15am

The Oration is named after one of the founding fathers of Beechworth, George Briscoe Kerferd, whose career in public office culminated in his elevation to the office of Victorian Premier in 1874.

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