

District Court of Queensland

Annual report 2011 - 2012



**DISTRICT COURT OF
QUEENSLAND**

CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUDGE

31 October 2012

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Dear Attorney

Pursuant to s.130A (1) of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*, I enclose my report on the operation of the District Court of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.M. Wolfe'.

Chief Judge PM Wolfe

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Chief Judge's overview

Introduction

This is the court's 16th annual report, dealing with the organization, operation and performance of the District Court of Queensland in 2011-12. Its workload means that this court is one of the largest, and busiest, of the higher courts in Australia.

Again, through the 2011-12 year the court lacked its full complement of 38 judges able to attend to the work of the court. One judge, again, was occupied with QCAT duties throughout the year. Further, the court was further hampered by the absence of two of its most senior judges. The Judge Administrator, Judge O'Brien, was absent for three months' absence when he served as an acting Justice of the Supreme Court for three months in early 2012. Judge Dick SC served as acting Justice of the Supreme Court throughout 2011, and added to the strain on the court.

Unlike the Supreme Court, to which three extra judges have been appointed since QCAT commenced in 2009, the number of judges on this court remained static until 29 October 2012 when the 39th judge to the court was appointed.

A significant impact upon the court's rates of disposition resulted from the growing complexity of criminal matters giving rise to the increase in the length and number of criminal trials. This was matched by the increasing complexity of civil matters.

Judges of the District Court also constitute the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court, and the court's resources are deployed to a considerable extent in discharging their functions.

Depending upon the lists, each year the judges might sit at up to 40 centres throughout Queensland — that is in Brisbane, the seven regional centres, 24 other centres where jury trials can be held, and the 15 remote or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including those in the Gulf, Cape and Torres Strait communities.

Judge Shanahan, the President of the Childrens Court of Queensland, and Judge Rackemann who has special responsibility on the Planning and Environment Court, have prepared their respective reports on the operations for these entities during the year under review.

Performance

The court's performance and workload are reflected in the statistics set out in this report. The court's statistical information accords with the method of reporting adopted by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission's *Annual Report on Government Services*.

With increases in the court's criminal jurisdiction from 1 September 2010 and its civil jurisdiction from 1 November 2010, came the more complex civil matters, the more complex drug cases and the migration cases for offences arising under section 232A of the *Migration Act 1958* (Commonwealth) (the people-smuggling cases).

The jurisdictional increases resulted in more, and longer, civil and criminal trials and, in some cases, an increase in the number of matters which had not been disposed of within two years. The people-smuggling matters further reduced judicial resources available for the rest of the court's workload. There was no special financial assistance for the court from the Commonwealth for these matters.

In 2011-12 the number of new civil matters lodged in the court rose by 16.3 per cent and in Brisbane by 23 per cent (having previously increased by 26 per cent during the 2010-11 year).

The court employs judicial case management as does its adjuncts, the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court of Queensland.

Disposition of Caseload

In light of the factors referred to above, the court's performance and workload in 2011-12 has been creditable, although the statistics demonstrate that the court was under some stress resulting in a reduction in circuits through an insufficiency of judicial and financial resources. The court could not afford to send enough judges to the places where assistance was needed.

Criminal

In the criminal jurisdiction, the workload is measured by the number of defendants. These statistics do not include Childrens Court matters, affected child witness hearings or pre-trial hearings.

The court has responsibility for indictable criminal offences which are normally heard by a judge and jury, but on occasions by a judge alone. It deals with most of the serious criminal cases, in practical terms with almost all serious offences except murder, manslaughter or the most serious drug offences.

The effect of the increase in jurisdiction resulted in the percentage of defendants with cases greater than 24 months old increasing from 5.1 per cent last year to 5.5 per cent in 2011-12. The court maintained a clearance rate at state level, by the end of the year under report of 104.5 per cent (104.4 per cent last year). As expected with the increase in the Magistrates Court jurisdiction, the number of active pending matters continued to decline throughout the year, with 1,757 at 30 June 2012, compared with the previous year (1,993).

However, these figures mask the complexity of the court's criminal workload. About 80 per cent of trials on indictment were held in this court.

Trials involving those charged with offences under section 232A of the *Migration Act* are long and expensive. They absorbed a significant proportion of the judicial resources available for criminal trials. The number of indictments containing people-smuggling offences increased by 65.4 per cent during the year under review and the number of such charges before the court increased by 103.8 per cent compared with the previous year.

Similarly, compared with 2010-11, the number of those charged with offences under the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986* increased by 225.3 per cent during the year under review. In 2011-2012, the number of those charged on indictment with state drug offences increased by 426.9 per cent compared with the 2009-10 year. In 2011-12, 706 defendants faced drug charges compared with 217 in 2010-11 and 134 in 2009-2010. In 2011-12, there were 1,874 drug charges brought before this court compared with 426 in 2010-11 and 275 in 2009-10.

The court also deals with many complex and lengthy fraud trials, with the more complex having been conducted as eTrials. Also, matters involving child witnesses, and most matters involving offences of a sexual nature involve child witnesses, are complex and time consuming.

The number of matters disposed of by trial and verdict, rather than by sentence on a guilty plea or by nolle prosequi, continued to increase. In 2011-12, there was a significant decline in the number of sentences on guilty pleas. During the year under review 558 matters were disposed of by trial and verdict (548 last year), 3,601 by sentence on guilty plea (4,082 last year) and 969 by nolle prosequi (946 last year). Further, owing to the increased complexity of matters now before the court, trials (and indeed sentences) are taking appreciably longer.

During the year 5,120 new cases (5,609 last year) were presented to the court and the court ended the year having disposed of 5,350 matters (5,854 last year) giving a 104.5 per cent clearance rate (104.4 per cent last year). Of the outstanding cases, 17.9 per cent were more than 12 months old from the date of presentation of the indictment (18.9 last year), and 5.5 per cent were more than 24 months old (5.1 per cent last year).

In Brisbane, 1,808 new cases were presented during the year (1,963 last year) and the court ended the year with 587 outstanding criminal cases (605 last year) having disposed of 1,838 matters (2,198 last year). The clearance rate in Brisbane dropped to 101.7 this year from 112 per cent last year. Of the outstanding cases, 15.2 per cent were more than 12 months old from the date of presentation of indictment (16.4 per cent last year), and 6.5 per cent were more than 24 months old (6.4 per cent last year).

In the major centres where judges are based – Brisbane, Beenleigh, Cairns, Ipswich, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Southport and Townsville – a total of 4,350 new cases were presented during the year and the major centres ended the year having disposed of 4,337 cases, with 1,559 outstanding and a clearance rate of 99.7 per cent, compared with last year (4,727 new cases, 4,770 disposed of, and 1,714 outstanding cases).

At the circuit centres, a total of 770 new cases were presented during the year (882 last year) and the circuit centres ended the year with the court having disposed of 1,013 criminal matters in those places, (1,084 last year), with 198 matters outstanding at the end of the year (279 last year).

Affected child witnesses

Many children are required to give evidence in matters involving charges of sexual or violence offences. During 2011-12 the judges ordered 278 pre-recordings (last year 244) involving 474 children (last year 444) for the District Court or the Childrens Court. Not all of these pre-recordings take place as, not infrequently, defendants plead guilty soon after the order is made. During 2011-12, the evidence of 350 children (last year 315) was pre-recorded before a judge for future trials in the District Court or the Childrens Court. However not all matters then go on to trial as some defendants plead guilty after the pre-recording takes place or the Crown enters a nolle prosequi.

The evidence of an affected child witness must be pre-recorded from a remote witness room soon after the indictment is presented, and care taken to ensure that all pre-trial hearings are completed before that occurs. In Brisbane the pre-recording usually took place within 6-8 weeks of the presentation of the indictment. The child's evidence is later played to the jury at the trial which usually takes place some months after the pre-recording. To preserve their integrity and security, all DVDs or videotapes, no matter where recorded in Queensland, are kept by the Principal Registry in Brisbane. The court's technological and IT administrators responded promptly in replacing or mending defective equipment. Unfortunately such dedication and expertise is not mirrored in many of the tapes of a child's earlier police interview, which are prepared outside the court, but are played to juries pursuant to s 93A of the *Evidence Act 1977*.

Civil

The statistics based on numbers of civil filings in various centres do not reveal the growth in the court's civil workload as a result of the *Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation Amendment Act 2010*. Comparisons with earlier years are misleading as those statistics included a large number of criminal compensation applications filed prior to the expiry of the court-administered criminal compensation scheme under the *Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995* and the *Criminal Code*. As a result of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009* the court no longer deals with these applications.

However, the increases in the number of actions for recovery of possession of land give a truer picture of the civil workload. In 2011-12 approximately 1,446 such recovery actions were filed in the District Court, representing approximately 65 percent of all such claims filed in the higher courts. (In 2010-11 approximately 51 per cent of these claims which were filed in the higher courts were filed in the District Court).

In 2011-12 the number of new civil matters lodged in the court rose by 16.3 per cent compared with 2010-11 when civil lodgments had risen by 1.9 per cent. In Brisbane civil lodgments increased during 2011-12 by a further 23 per cent (having previously increased by 26 per cent during the 2010-11 year).

During 2011-12 there were 6,297 new civil cases lodged in the court (5,415 last year), with 5,973 matters finalised (5,048 last year). The number of active pending matters also increased in 2011-12 with 5,125 pending active matters (4,817 last year). The civil clearance rate was 94.9 per cent compared with 93.22 per cent last year. The percentage of active cases older than 12 months was 18.1 per cent this year (20.47 per cent last year) and the number of active cases older than 24 months was 3.0 per cent (3.9 per cent last year).

In Brisbane there were 4,634 new cases, an increase of 22.9 percent on 2010-11(3,770 last year), with 4,238 cases disposed of (3,020 last year), and a clearance rate of 91.5 per cent (80.11 last year). In Brisbane, 16.8 percent of active cases were older than 12 months with 2.6 per cent of active cases older than 24 months. Most of the more complex matters were lodged in Brisbane.

These statistics do not include appeals to the District Court or the matters dealt with by the judges sitting in the Planning and Environment Court.

District Court Commercial List

A Commercial List was established in October 2010 pursuant to Practice Direction no 3 of 2010 in view of the court's monetary jurisdiction increasing to \$750,000 from 1 November 2010. The Commercial List judges are Judge Robin QC, Judge McGill SC, Judge Andrews SC and Judge Dorney QC.

Appeals

During the year the court heard all appeals from the Magistrates Courts, as well as appeals from the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal and other tribunals and statutory bodies.

Criminal appeals

During the year, 528 criminal appeals were lodged in the court, (868 last year), 441 cases were finalised (334 last year), ending the year with 855 active cases (775 in 2010-11) and an 83.5 per cent clearance rate. The percentage of active cases older than 12 months increased from 7.3 per cent in 2010-11 to 63.3 per cent in 2011-12, with the percentage of those older than 24 months also increasing from 0.1 per cent last year to 2.1 per cent in 2011-12.

In Brisbane during the year under review there was a 7.5 percent increase in the number of criminal appeals lodged, with 157 new appeals this year (146 last year), disposing of 161 criminal appeals (145 in 2010-11), and ending the year with 84 active cases and a clearance rate of 102.5 per cent (99.32 per cent last year). The percentage of active cases older than 12 months was 8.3 per cent (10.6 per cent last year) and there were no matters older than 24 months, (1.18 per cent in 2010-11).

Civil appeals

During the year, 65 civil appeals were lodged in the court, and 71 cases finalised giving a clearance rate of 109.2 per cent and ending the year with 45 active cases. The percentage of active cases older than 12 months has decreased from 43.14 per cent in 2010-11 to 22.2 per cent in 2011-12, and those older than 24 months, from 3.9 per cent last year to 4.4 per cent in 2011-12.

In Brisbane the court disposed of 21 civil appeals and ended the year with 20 active cases, resulting in a clearance rate of 77.8 per cent (125 per cent in 2010-11), with 20 per cent older than 12 months and 5.0 per cent older than 24 months.

Planning and Environment Court

The Planning and Environment Court is structured as a de facto division of the District Court.

This court is the only Queensland court whose files are open to inspection for any litigant, lawyer or member of the public through eFiles, a new online service which makes court documents available to everyone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All active Planning and Environment Court files originating in Brisbane are accessible through the Queensland Courts website [eCourts](http://www.courts.qld.gov.au/information-for-lawyers/search-civil-files-ecourts) facility: <http://www.courts.qld.gov.au/information-for-lawyers/search-civil-files-ecourts>.

This court continues to be worthy of the high international recognition which it has received for its achievements - the efficiency of its unique structure as an adjunct of the District Court, and as a world leader in individual case management; its alternative dispute resolution process; its efficient case management and management of expert evidence; its regional service and the commitment of its judges to ongoing review and reform.

Overall, the current adverse financial climate was reflected in a further decrease in the number of lodgments this year. State-wide 564 new cases were filed this year down from 637 last year.

However the court achieved a clearance rate of 118.97 per cent ending the year with 575 outstanding cases and having disposed of 671 matters. Of the outstanding cases, 46.6 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of filing), and 23.1 per cent were more than 24 months old. Some cases may take this long due to the complexity of some matters and the number of parties involved in the hearings.

In Brisbane, where the longer cases are heard, the court ended the year with 456 outstanding cases having disposed of 528 matters, achieving a clearance rate of 118.39 per cent. Of the outstanding cases, 45.4 per cent were more than 12 months old and 22.8 per cent were more than 24 months old.

The court's free ADR service has been recognised internationally as providing visionary ADR access to justice. Approximately 95 per cent of cases are finalised without proceeding to a full hearing. In 2011-12, the court's ADR Registrar, Mr John Taylor, who convened and chaired without prejudice conferences, meetings of experts and management conferences, conducted 323 ADR conferences (246 last year). Pursuant to those conferences, 155 matters were completed, and of those 72 per cent of matters were finally resolved. He held these conferences in Brisbane, Southport, Maroochydore, Cairns, Townsville and other centres throughout the state.

Childrens Court of Queensland

The Childrens Court of Queensland is a specialist jurisdiction established under the *Childrens Court Act 1992*. A separate annual report of the Childrens Court of Queensland is prepared under the *Childrens Court Act* and further details of the Childrens Court can be found in that report.

Judge Shanahan became the president of the Childrens Court in February 2011 upon the then president, Judge Dick SC's appointment as an Acting Justice of the Supreme Court. Currently there are 25 other judges who also hold commissions under this Act.

Regional centres

The lists in the seven regional centres at Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Southport, Ipswich and Beenleigh have been well maintained by the regional judges based in those centres.

Circuits

Through its circuit load, the court is accessible to those in remote, rural and regional Queensland so that matters can be heard and decided in a timely fashion no matter in what part of the state. The efficient allocation of judicial resources through circuit allocations improves the overall functioning of the court and, by reference to the efficiency and quality of its output, produces more consistent decision-making.

Indigenous and remote circuits

The judges, as in previous years, visited the remote Aboriginal and Islander communities on circuit. Judges sat in the Gulf (Mornington Island, Doomadgee and Normanton), the Cape (Weipa/Napranum, Kowanyama, Aurukun, Pormpuraaw and Lockhart River), Thursday Island, Bamaga, Yarrabah, Cooktown, Palm Island, and Woorabinda and in Murgon to deal with Cherbourg matters.

Overall

The court's performance, in view of its workload during 2011-12, has been creditable.

The Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law

On the last day of the year under review, four District Court judges, Judge McGill SC, Judge Rylie, Judge Richard Jones and Judge Reid moved from their chambers at Tank Street into chambers at the new Brisbane courthouse at 415 George Street, Brisbane. The metropolitan Supreme and District Courthouse, as it was then known, was nearing completion, and it was fitting that they be its first occupants after many years of travelling between Tank Street and the Law Courts Complex for their criminal sittings.

At the time of writing the new courthouse had been officially opened, on 3 August 2012, by Her Excellency the Governor, Ms Penelope Wensley AC and, in the presence of the Premier, the Hon Campbell Newman, the Attorney-General, the Hon Jarrod Bleijie, the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge and the Judges of the Supreme and District Courts as well as 250 distinguished guests, and named The Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law.

By that time the judges had moved into the new chambers, although they were still sitting in the Law Courts Complex while the last of the fit out was completed. This courthouse is one of the largest court buildings in Australia, covering more than 60,000 square metres over 19 levels, with 39 courtrooms, including the Banco Court, the Court of Appeal, 23 criminal courts and 14 civil courts, the Supreme Court Library, the Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre, a basement cell block and separate internal circulation systems for judges, jurors, persons in custody, child and other vulnerable witnesses and the public.

The judges' metropolitan courthouse building committee, which included Judge Griffin SC, Judge Andrews SC and the Chief Judge, worked throughout the year facilitating appropriate accommodation in the new courthouse for all those involved in the justice system, be they litigants, supporters, staff, lawyers or judges. During the year they represented the judges of this court in the consultations with the architects, builder and departmental officers.

Practice Directions

During the year, nine District Court Practice Directions were issued, and five for the Planning and Environment Court.

The Focus Group

The Focus Group, chaired by the Senior Judge Administrator and comprising the Chief Justice, the President of the Court of Appeal, the Chief Judge, the Chief Magistrate and the Director-General, met with the Executive Director, Supreme, District and Lands Courts Service and other senior officers

throughout the year. Its purpose is to keep the courts informed about actual and proposed departmental initiatives for the three state courts, to provide an opportunity for the courts to participate in the allocation of resources, and to ensure the regular monitoring of the courts' registry and administrative operations.

Rules Committee

The Rules Committee, chaired by Mr Justice Muir, includes, from the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice and Justice Margaret Wilson, and from the District Court, Judge Robin QC and Judge McGill SC. The committee met at least weekly out of ordinary court hours.

Benchbook

The Supreme and District Courts Benchbook provides model directions for the judges conducting criminal trials, specifically designed to apply the *Criminal Code*, which in significant respects differs from the common law applied in some other states. It is a work of collegiate endeavour. During the year under report, Judge Shanahan, Judge Dick SC, Judge Rafter SC and Judge Martin SC were its District Court members. The committee works over extended periods updating and adding to this essential and important work.

Chief Judge's calendar

This year as in previous years, I sat in the various jurisdictions of the court, both in and out of Brisbane: the criminal court (22 weeks), and in civil, applications and appeals (nine weeks), including sittings in the regional centres of Cairns, Southport and Townsville.

During the year I met with the leaders and representatives of the many organisations principally involved in the justice system, such as the Queensland Bar Association, the Queensland Law Society, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid Queensland, law school academics, the Hon Philip Cummins, president of Court Network for Humanity, and the president and committee of Protect All Children Today (PACT) and representatives of the College of Law Practical Legal Training (PLT) Program to advance the implementation of a specific associates' course, designed to enable associates to undertake the PLT for admission to the legal profession.

Aside from monthly judges' meetings, meetings of the judges' committees and the Supreme Court Library Committee, conferences and public events, I met regularly with the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General, the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and senior officers of the department, directors-general and officers of other departments, the Executive Director of the Supreme District and Land Courts Service and her deputies, the Sheriff, listings managers and Courts Information Technology staff and had regular meetings with leaders of the legal profession and justice system.

I attended meetings of the Council of Chief Judges, projects and meetings involved in the organisation of the District Court and its registries, meetings of the Supreme Court Library committee, the Focus Group, the Brisbane Supreme and District Courts metropolitan courthouse committee, and other conferences, seminars and forums which I attended in Queensland and elsewhere.

Continuing judicial professional development

The judges held their 17th consecutive Annual Seminar on 14-16 August 2011. The conference provides a forum for professional discussion and an enhancement of collegiality, allowing the singular opportunity for the judges, 14 of whom were based outside Brisbane, to meet as a body for professional discussion. Speakers at the 17th Annual Conference included Associate Professor Graeme Orr from the TC Beirne School of Law at the University of Queensland who spoke on compulsory voting, the law and law-making; Dr Ed Heffernan, director of the Forensic Mental Health Services who spoke on health care and the mentally ill in custody and Professor James Raymond, president of the International Institute for Legal Writing and Reasoning in New York who gave considerable insight into judgment writing.

During the year many of the judges spoke or presented papers at many important professional meetings and conferences, details of which appear in this report, as well as presiding over moots and speaking to schools and community groups. The Standard for Judicial Professional Development in Australia was adopted and confirmed by the judges of this court soon after its adoption by the Council of Chief Judges. Details of the judges' judicial professional development involving overseas studies, seminars, programmes or conferences are published annually on the court website. Also, the court calendar is structured so that 2.5 days per annum is set aside for judicial professional development in banc. This time is especially important for the court – it is the only time that the court's 38 judges are

together, as 14 of the judges have permanent chambers in various parts of Queensland outside Brisbane.

Associates' appointments

Associates are appointed by the Chief Judge pursuant to s36(2) of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*, who may remove or suspend associates by virtue of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*, s25. Associates are appointed as deputy sheriffs by the Chief Executive of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (s213 of the *Supreme Court Act 1995*). This responsibility was delegated to the Director of Courts (now Executive Director of the Supreme District and Land Courts Service) pursuant to s103 of the *Public Service Act 2008* (see also s27A of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*). Associates are appointed as deputy sheriffs for only as long as they hold the office of associate.

Office of the Executive Director of the Supreme District and Land Courts Service

The institution of this role and responsibility, which includes that formerly known as the Office of the Director of Courts, marked a great improvement this year in the coordination and oversight of registry administration and the provision of judicial support services for these courts. The creation of the Supreme, District and Land Courts Service followed the 2010 review of the governance and structure of registries across several major jurisdictions, including the District Court.

Ms Julie Steel is now the Executive Director and had acted in the position throughout 2011-12. She is also the Principal Registrar of the Supreme and District Courts and the registrar of the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court of Queensland, and is supported by executive, administrative and registry staff throughout Queensland.

Access to the Court

Court Network for Humanity

The Court Network, a volunteer service, has operated in the Law Courts Complex since December 2007, giving support and information to court-users attending at the court, whether as litigants or witnesses or their families and supporters. Court Network now operates in Cairns and Townsville. The volunteers may be found in the courtrooms and elsewhere throughout the courthouse.

The volunteers support court-users in the courtroom during the proceedings, as well as familiarising them around the courthouse. They also provide court-users with a safe place in the courthouse and refer them to those community services or charities that can provide relevant assistance. The volunteers receive extensive training and supervision but they do not give legal advice. Apart from the volunteers in Brisbane, during 2011-12, there were volunteers in Townsville and 12 in Cairns providing support to court users.

Court Network volunteers assisted 51,159 court users in Queensland during 2011-12. In the Supreme and District Courts in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville, Court Network assisted more than 17,273 persons as follows -

- 4,944 persons in the Brisbane Law Courts Complex
- 11,228 persons at the Law Courts Complex Information Kiosk (including over 2,542 Justice of the Peace provisions of assistance)
- 621 persons in the Townsville District and Supreme Courts
- 480 persons in the Cairns Supreme & District Courts.

Queensland Public Law Clearing House

The Queensland Public Law Clearing House (QPILCH) provides the Self Representation Civil Law Service in the Law Courts Complex. The service assists litigants in person prepare for a civil action in the District or the Supreme Court. Completely independent of the courts and government, the service is designed to assist litigants without legal representation take the practical steps necessary to have their case fully heard and determined.

Self Represented Litigants Service

The Self Represented Litigants Service also began in December 2007. It is to be found on the ground floor of the Law Courts Complex and is operated by staff from the court's civil registry who also provide advice of a non-legal nature. The service is designed to assist and support those litigants appearing in

person in civil matters and provides both private meeting rooms in which to prepare for court as well as computer and printing access.

International aspects

On 27 September 2011, a delegation of Judges from Hainan Province, People's Republic of China on a training program on Environmental Law, visited the courts. Judge Michael Rackemann provided the judges with an overview of the Planning and Environment Court of Queensland. The judges then observed a criminal trial.

On 8 June 2012, Mr Zhang Fa, Director of Hainan Committee for Social and Legal Affairs of CPPCC, led a delegation of officials on a tour of the District Court at Brisbane. Judge Richard Jones met with the delegation and discussed the Queensland court system and current issues concerning the courts.

Judicial appointments

On 8 August 2011 Mr Bradley Wayne Farr SC was sworn in as a Judge of the District Court of Queensland. He had served as an Acting Judge of the District Court from 18 February 2011 to 5 August 2011.

Judge Julie Dick SC served as an Acting Justice of the Supreme Court from 11 February 2011 to 5 August 2011 and from 8 August 2011 to 16 December 2011

Judge Kerry O'Brien served as an Acting Justice of the Supreme Court from 30 January 2012 to 20 April 2012.

Judicial retirements

Judge Walter Tutt, who was appointed to the District Court on 24 May 2004, retired on 10 May 2012.

Recognition

Judge Nelson Anthony Skoien, a judge of the court from 29 October 1982 to 26 September 2008 and a Senior Judge of the District Court from 3 June 1993 to 26 September 2008, died on 2 January 2012.

Judge John Patrick Kimmins, a judge of the court from 19 February 1976 to 9 September 1995, died on 20 March 2012.

Judge John Patrick Shanahan RFD, AO, a judge of the court from 14 December 1972 to 9 August 1999 and Chief Judge of the court from 18 July 1994 to 9 August 1999, died on 24 April 2012.

Judge Paul Vivian Loewenthal, a judge of the court from 14 February 1974 to 15 February 1988, died on 26 June 2012.

Acknowledgement

I thank the judges, officers of the registry, the court's administrative staff, and the Director-General and his staff, for their dedication to the effective discharge of the court's undertaking during the year under review.

Profile of the District Court

Judges of the District Court

During the year under report the judges were:

Chief Judge	Her Honour Chief Judge Patricia Mary Wolfe
Judges	His Honour Judge Kerry John O'Brien
	His Honour Judge Hugh Wilfrid Harry Botting
	His Honour Judge Michael John Noud
	His Honour Judge Philip David Robin QC
	His Honour Judge John Elwell Newton (Southport)
	His Honour Judge John Mervyn Robertson (Maroochydore)
	His Honour Judge Douglas John McGill SC
	His Honour Judge Clive Frederick Wall RFD QC (Southport)
	His Honour Judge Nicholas Samios
	His Honour Judge Grant Thomas Britton SC (Rockhampton)
	Her Honour Judge Deborah Richards (Ipswich)
	Her Honour Judge Sarah Bradley (Ipswich)
	His Honour Judge Michael John Shanahan
	Her Honour Judge Julie Maree Dick SC
	His Honour Judge Marshall Philip Irwin
	His Honour Judge Michael Edward Rackemann
	His Honour Judge Walter Henry Tutt (retired 10 May 2012)
	His Honour Judge Milton James Griffin SC
	Her Honour Judge Julie Ann Ryrie
	His Honour Judge Ian Francis Macrae Dearden (Beenleigh)
	Her Honour Judge Fleur Yvette Kingham (Southport)
	His Honour Judge Stuart Gordon Durward SC (Townsville)
	His Honour Judge Anthony John Rafter SC
	His Honour Judge Terence Douglas Martin SC
	His Honour Judge David Graham Searles
	His Honour Judge Gregory John Koppenol (Ipswich)
	His Honour Judge David Charles Andrews SC
	Her Honour Judge Leanne Joy Clare SC
	His Honour Judge William Garth Everson (Cairns)
	His Honour Judge Brian Gerard Devereaux SC
	Her Honour Judge Katherine Mary McGinness (Southport)
	His Honour Judge Kiernan Damian Dorney QC
	His Honour Judge Richard Stephen Jones
	His Honour Judge Brian Anthony Harrison (Cairns)
	His Honour Judge David Andrew Reid
	His Honour Judge John Richard Baulch SC (Townsville)
	His Honour Judge Gary Patrick Long SC (Maroochydore)
	His Honour Judge Bradley Wayne Farr SC (from 8 August 2011)

Regional, planning and children's judges

Regional judges

During the year under report the following judges were allocated to the regional centres as shown:

Maroochydore	Judge Robertson Judge Long SC
Southport	Judge Newton Judge Wall QC Judge Kingham (on QCAT duties since August 2009) Judge McGinness
Townsville	Judge Durward SC Judge Baulch SC
Rockhampton	Judge Britton SC
Ipswich	Judge Richards Judge Bradley Judge Koppenol
Cairns	Judge Everson Judge Harrison
Beenleigh	Judge Dearden

Planning and Environment Court

The Planning and Environment Court judges for 2011-12 are listed below:

Chief Judge Wolfe	Judge Rafter SC
Judge Robin QC	Judge Martin SC
Judge Newton	Judge Searles
Judge Robertson	Judge Andrews SC
Judge Wall QC	Judge Everson
Judge Britton SC	Judge Dorney QC
Judge Richards	Judge Jones
Judge Rackemann	Judge Harrison
Judge Griffin SC	Judge Reid
Judge Kingham	Judge Baulch SC
Judge Durward SC	Judge Long SC

Childrens Court of Queensland

The Childrens Court judges during 2011-12 are listed below:

Judge Shanahan – President

Judge Dick SC

Judge O'Brien

Judge Newton

Judge Robertson

Judge Wall QC

Judge Samios

Judge Britton SC

Judge Richards

Judge Bradley

Judge Irwin

Judge Tutt

Judge Griffin SC

Judge Dearden

Judge Kingham

Judge Durward SC

Judge Rafter SC

Judge Martin SC

Judge Clare SC

Judge Everson

Judge Devereaux SC

Judge McGinness

Judge Harrison

Judge Reid

Judge Baulch SC

Judge Long SC

Judge Farr SC

The court

The work of the District Court

The District Court hears and determines appeals and resolves matters commenced by indictment in criminal cases, claim or originating application in civil proceedings, by trial, hearing or consensus. The Chief Judge is responsible for the administration of the court.

The District Court is the principal court in Queensland for trials of persons charged with serious criminal offences. Criminal trials are usually heard with a jury. Civil matters are normally heard by a single judge. The court exercises equitable and other jurisdiction within its civil monetary limit. The judges have adopted a protocol that, save in exceptional cases, judgments are to be delivered within three months of the conclusion of the hearing. The District Court hears all appeals from the Magistrates Courts. Many of the judges also sit as Planning and Environment Court judges and Childrens Court judges.

Some of the judges serve on committees with responsibility for developing and implementing policies and procedures for the continual improvement of the functioning of the courts. These include the Supreme and District Courts Benchbook Committee; the Supreme and District Courthouse Building Committee; the Learning and Development Committee; the Rules Committee and the District Court judges' committees.

Organisation of work

The work of the District Court judges was organised in terms of the following categories:

- Criminal
- Civil
- Appellate
- The Planning and Environment Court
- Childrens Court of Queensland

Criminal jurisdiction

In practice the court deals with all indictable matters other than homicides and the most serious drug offences. Almost 80 per cent of all indictments are presented in the District Court. The court regularly conducts trials involving about 24 offences attracting a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The court deals with offences under Commonwealth and state drug laws as well as offences under the *Corporations Law*, the *Commonwealth Migration Act 1958* and against federal and state revenue laws. These may involve many millions of dollars.

During the year the Chief Judge and Judge O'Brien, with assistance from other judges, mainly Judge Shanahan and Judge Martin SC, managed the criminal list in Brisbane. In the regions, the lists are managed by the resident judges.

For the larger circuit centres, Judge Robertson and Judge Long SC had special responsibility for the Bundaberg, Gympie and Kingaroy lists, Judge Botting for Maryborough and Hervey Bay, Judge Dick SC for the Mackay lists during 2012 and Judge Dearden for Mount Isa.

Many of the cases are reviewed or managed by the judge well before the trial date, to ensure that the prosecution has provided the defence with all witnesses' statements and particulars and that the defence has considered whether a s590AA hearing is required. In smaller centres the court conducts a 'running list'. In this way the court in these centres deals with its criminal workload having regard to the effect on the list of 'late' pleas and *nolle prosequi*.

Disposal of work

In the criminal jurisdiction, the workload is measured by the number of defendants. These statistics do not include Childrens Court matters, affected child witness hearings, pre-trial hearings or criminal appeals to the District Court. Some cases may take longer due to appeals and rehearings.

During the year 5,120 new cases were presented to the court (5,609 last year) and the court ended the year having disposed of 5,350 cases leaving 1,757 outstanding cases (a 104.5 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 17.9 per cent were more than 12 months old from the date of presentation of the indictment, and 5.5 per cent were more than 24 months old. Some cases take longer due to appeals and rehearings.

In Brisbane, 1,808 new cases were presented during the year and the court ended the year with 587 outstanding cases having disposed of 1,838 matters (a 101.7 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 15.2 per cent were more than 12 months old from the date of presentation of indictment, and 6.5 per cent were more than 24 months old.

In the regional centres where judges are based - Beenleigh, Cairns, Ipswich, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Southport and Townsville – a total of 2,542 new cases were presented during the year and the regional courts ended the year having disposed in all centres of 2,499, with 972 outstanding cases.

At Beenleigh, the court ended the year with 149 outstanding matters, having disposed of 353 matters (a 107.3 per cent clearance rate), with 23.5 per cent of the outstanding cases more than 12 months old and 3.4 per cent more than 24 months old.

At Cairns, the court ended the year with 145 outstanding criminal cases having disposed of 527 matters (a 119.5 per cent clearance rate) with 25.5 per cent of the outstanding cases more than 12 months old and 4.8 per cent more than 24 months old.

Ipswich had 133 outstanding cases, having disposed of 390 criminal matters (a 96.3 per cent clearance rate) leaving 9.0 per cent of the active matters more than 12 months old and 3.8 per cent more than 24 months old.

Maroochydore had 96 outstanding cases having disposed of 287 criminal matters (an 83.7 per cent clearance rate), with 10.4 per cent of the outstanding cases more than 12 months old and 1.0 per cent more than 24 months old.

Rockhampton had 119 outstanding cases having disposed of 197 criminal matters (an 83.8 per cent clearance rate), 31.1 per cent were more than 12 months old and 2.5 per cent more than 24 months old.

Southport had 192 outstanding cases having disposed of 448 criminal matters (a 101.4 per cent clearance rate) with 20.8 per cent of the outstanding cases more than 12 months old and 8.3 per cent more than 24 months old.

Townsville had 138 outstanding cases having disposed of 297 criminal matters (an 85.6 per cent clearance rate) with 17.4 per cent of the outstanding cases more than 12 months old and 5.1 per cent more than 24 months old.

At the circuit centres, a total of 770 new cases were presented during the year and the circuit centres ended the year with the court having disposed of 1,013 criminal matters in those places, with 198 matters outstanding at the end of the year.

Table 1: The activity of the District Court criminal list

	Number of Defendants			Clearance Rate	Backlog Indicator	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	1,808	1838	587	101.7%	15.2%	6.5%
Regional centres						
Beenleigh	329	353	149	107.3%	23.5%	3.4%
Cairns	441	527	145	119.5%	25.5%	4.8%
Ipswich	405	390	133	96.3%	9.0%	3.8%
Maroochydore	343	287	96	83.7%	10.4%	1.0%
Rockhampton	235	197	119	83.8%	31.1%	2.5%
Southport	442	448	192	101.4%	20.8%	8.3%
Townsville	347	297	138	85.6%	17.4%	5.1%
Total for Brisbane and regional centres	4350	4337	1559	99.7%		
Circuit centres						
Bowen	21	23	13	109.5%	7.7%	7.7%
Bundaberg	83	153	13	184.3%	15.4%	15.4%
Charleville	9	23	8	255.6%	37.5%	25.0%
Charters Towers	1	3	0	300.00%	0.0%	0.0%
Clermont	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cloncurry	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cunnamulla	0	1	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dalby	27	24	17	88.9%	17.6%	5.9%
Emerald	13	18	8	138.5%	37.5%	12.5%
Gladstone	14	36	17	257.1%	11.8%	5.9%
Goondiwindi	4	5	0	125.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Gympie	25	42	5	168.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hervey Bay	82	115	8	140.2%	12.5%	12.5%
Hughenden	0	2	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Innisfail	6	21	2	350.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kingaroy	19	23	4	121.1%	25.0%	25.0%
Longreach	1	1	0	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mackay	91	89	31	97.8%	9.7%	6.5%
Maryborough	52	55	7	105.8%	28.6%	28.6%
Mt Isa	70	129	20	184.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Roma	6	12	7	200.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Stanthorpe	1	2	1	200.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Toowoomba	216	206	33	95.4%	24.2%	0.0%
Warwick	29	30	4	103.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Total for circuit centres	770	1013	198	131.6%		
State total	5,120	5,350	1,757	104.5%	17.9%	5.5%

(1) Data extracted from QWIC for reporting purposes on 23/07/12

(2) Defendant: As defined by the RoGS rule: A 'defendant' is defined as 'one defendant; with one or more charges; and with all charges having the same date of registration'. Defendants with outstanding bench warrants and defendants with secondary charges such as breaches of court orders are excluded. Also excluded are defendants who have been committed to the District Court and are awaiting presentation of indictment.

(3) Clearance rate: finalisations/lodgments

(4) Backlog indicator - the number of active defendants with proceedings older than the specified time.

Civil jurisdiction

The ambit of the District Court's civil jurisdiction is described in s68 of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*, and many of its powers in s69. The court has an extensive general jurisdiction enabling it to deal with:

- all personal claims and any equitable claim or demand up to the monetary limit of \$750,000
- any claim (without monetary limit) referred to the court by the Supreme Court for assessment
- any claim where the parties consent to increase the monetary jurisdiction of the court
- actions to enforce by delivery of possession any mortgage
- actions to grant relief from mistake and for rectification
- actions seeking declarations and consequential orders arising from partnership disputes
- administration of estates where the estate does not exceed in value the monetary limit of the court
- family provision pursuant to the *Succession Act 1981*
- construction of deeds and other documents.

Some matters are disposed of by judges dealing with interlocutory applications in actions commenced by claims or originating applications. The more complex matters are case managed by the judges, leading to their early disposition.

The Report on Government Services (RoGS) unit of measurement for the civil jurisdiction is a case. Secondary processes, such as interlocutory applications, are excluded. RoGS files include all claims and originating applications.

A civil case is considered active if it has not been finalised by adjudication, transfer to another court, and settlement by mediation, default judgment, notification that parties have discontinued, or else is deemed to be resolved as, for example, where there has been no activity for 12 months.

Table 2: Clearance rate in civil cases

	RoGS Non Appeal Cases			Clearance Rate *	Backlog Indicator	
					From filing date	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	4,634	4,238	3,648	91.5%	16.8%	2.6%
State Total	6,297	5,973	5,125	94.9%	18.1%	3.0%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgments

Data extracted for reporting purposes on 23/07/12

These statistics do not reflect the growth in the court's civil workload which has resulted from the increase in jurisdiction brought about by the *Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation Amendment Act 2010*.

Commercial List

The District Commercial List was established, in October 2010, pursuant to Practice Direction no 3 of 2010 in view of the increase in the court's monetary jurisdiction to \$750,000 from 1 November 2010. The Commercial List judges are Judge Robin QC, Judge McGill SC, Judge Andrews SC and Judge Dorney QC.

Applications court

The *Uniform Civil Procedure Rules* provide for a proceeding to be commenced in some circumstances by an application, and also provide for an application to be made to the court in the course of a proceeding that will ultimately be dealt with fully at a trial or hearing.

Interlocutory and originating applications were dealt with quickly and efficiently by the court. There was no great delay for reasons associated with the court in hearing either type of application, at any centre where there is at least one resident judge.

Last year the statistics reflected the spike in criminal compensation applications filed before the deadline imposed by the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009*, pursuant to which the court no longer deals with criminal compensation claims.

Appellate jurisdiction

During the year this court heard and determined all criminal and civil appeals from the Magistrates Court.

Case management of appeals to the District Court continued with regular reviews of outstanding appeals throughout the year. Intervention notices are generated by the registry for the parties to assist them in adhering to predetermined timeframes in accordance with Practice Direction no 5 of 2001.

This table shows the clearance rate in criminal and civil appeals.

Table 3: Clearance rate in criminal and civil appeals

	RoGS Appeal			Clearance Rate *	Backlog Indicator	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		From filing date	
					% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Criminal						
Brisbane	157	161	84	102.5%	8.3%	0.0%
State Total	528	441	855	83.5%	63.3%	2.1%
Civil						
Brisbane	27	21	20	77.8%	20.0%	5.0%
State Total	65	71	45	109.2%	22.2%	4.4%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgments

The Planning and Environment Court

The court is constituted by a District Court judge appointed to it. Many of the judges who may constitute the court are based in Brisbane. With the exception of Beenleigh, a Planning and Environment Court judge is based in each regional centre. The court may sit anywhere.

The court was first constituted in 1966 as the Local Government Court, then renamed in 1991 pursuant to the *Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990*, and then pursuant to the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* and now, pursuant to the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* (SPA). The court's rules and Practice Directions are made under the SPA.

The court exercises jurisdiction over a myriad of planning and/or environmental disputes. Matters are often complex and many have significant environmental, social and economic consequences. The court has unlimited monetary jurisdiction. It may:

- make declarations and other orders
- make interim enforcement orders and final enforcement orders
- conduct full merits reviews of decisions of local governments and government entities
- hear claims for compensation
- punish for contempt.

Judges travel throughout Queensland to hear and determine planning matters, so that matters may be heard at a place close to the site or development, and the community which it affects.

Practice and procedure in the Planning and Environment Court is characterised by active list supervision, individual case management and the comprehensive deployment of ADR mechanisms. The judges actively supervise the lists and their flexible case management achieves the just and expeditious resolution of the real issues in proceedings at a minimum of expense. The court's management of experts is recognised as one of the best in the common law world.

Almost 95 per cent of cases are finalised without proceeding to a full hearing. The court's ADR Registrar, Mr John Taylor, conducts mediations; convenes and chairs without prejudice meetings,

meetings of experts and case management conferences. The court's ADR service is free of cost to the parties and is provided throughout the State. Parties may avail themselves of the ADR service by agreement, even without an order of the court. In particular, Practice Direction 1 of 2011 encourages the parties to proceed directly to ADR where a proceeding involves a dispute only as to infrastructure charges or conditions of an approval. This expedites the timely and cost effective resolution of residual issues which relate to a development which has been approved.

In 2011-12 the ADR Registrar conducted 323 ADR sessions of which 155 matters were completed achieving a 71 per cent success rate of those completed. Mediations and other ADR processes were conducted not only in Brisbane, but in centres across the State. The court's ADR service has been recognised internationally as providing visionary ADR access to justice.

Judge Rackemann has responsibility for the management of the court's lists and for its day to day operation. In 2011-12, the court achieved a clearance rate of 118 per cent. This was the third year in a row that the Court achieved a clearance rate in excess of 100 per cent, which is an exceptional achievement. There was a consequential 14.9 per cent fall in the number of active pending matters. There was also a further fall in the number of new matters (11 per cent), which was more pronounced in the regional centres (20 per cent) than in Brisbane (9 per cent). This was not unexpected, given the prevailing economic conditions in the development industry.

Table 4: Clearance rate in planning and environment cases

Planning and Environment Court 2011-12						
				Clearance	Backlog Indicator	
				Rate *	From filing date	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	446	527	456	118.16%	45.4%	22.8%
State Total	564	670	575	118.79%	46.6%	23.1%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgements

In all, 89 per cent of all pending matters recording some activity were actively case-managed within the three months to 30 June 2012.

The court also continues to receive recognition for its innovative approach to the management of experts, through a joint meeting and joint report process conducted in the absence of the parties or their legal advisors and prior to the preparation of any individual expert reports for hearing. In October 2011 Judge Rackemann addressed the Judicial Conference of Australia Colloquium on the management of Experts. In the same month he participated in a panel discussion on the subject at the second National Forensic Accounting Teaching and Research Symposium. His articles on the subject have been published in the Journal of the Bar Association of Queensland, the National Environmental Law Review, the Journal of Judicial Administration, the Australian Environmental Review and Resource Management Theory and Practice (NZ).

The judges of the court continue to engage with those interested in the jurisdiction. Judge Rackemann addressed seminars and conferences for the Queensland Environmental Law Association. Judge Everson opened the QELA regional conference in Cairns. Both he and Judge Rackemann made presentations at that conference.

Childrens Court of Queensland

The District Court judges appointed to the Childrens Court of Queensland determine some of the serious criminal charges brought against children. They also provide speedy access for the hearing of bail applications and sentence reviews, especially for young people being held on remand. They also determine appeals pursuant to s 117 of the *Child Safety Act 1999* (Qld) and applications under the *Surrogacy Act 2010* (Qld).

The Children's Court of Queensland is a specialist jurisdiction established under the *Childrens Court Act 1992* (Qld). The President of the Court is Judge Shanahan. There are presently 26 judges of the Court holding commissions under the Act available to sit as Childrens Court judges.

A separate annual report of the Childrens Court of Queensland is prepared under the *Childrens Court Act 1992* (Qld) and further details of the Childrens Court can be found in that report.

Regional centres

The court sits in Brisbane and the seven regional centres where 14 of the judges are based:

- Cairns
- Southport
- Rockhampton
- Ipswich
- Townsville
- Beenleigh
- Maroochydore

Judges also travel on circuit to other centres throughout the state. At most circuit centres and at some regional centres the judges rely on such registry support as is available from staff of the Magistrates Courts' service.

Cairns

Judiciary

Judge Everson

Judge Harrison

Judge Everson and Judge Harrison are the resident judges in Cairns and manage the court's lists there. This centre is also served by the Supreme Court's Far Northern Judge. The region includes Innisfail and Cape York. Both judges hold commissions in the Childrens Court and in the Planning and Environment Court. The judges undertook circuits in the Cairns region and elsewhere in the state. Some assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres.

In Cairns, with 441 new matters, the court ended the year with 145 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 527 matters (a 119.5 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 25.5 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 4.8 per cent were more than 24 months old. In its appellate criminal jurisdiction, the court at Cairns disposed of 30 criminal appeals, ending the year with 17 outstanding, an 83.3 per cent clearance rate.

On the civil side, 182 new cases were lodged at the court at Cairns. The court ended the year with 159 outstanding cases, disposing of 186 matters, reflecting a 102.2 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 20.8 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 4.4 per cent were older than 24 months.

On the planning jurisdiction side, 22 new cases began in the court at Cairns. It ended the year with 23 outstanding cases, disposing of 21 matters, reflecting a 95.5 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 65.2 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 34.8 per cent were older than 24 months.

Rockhampton

Judiciary Judge Britton SC

The resident judge in Rockhampton, Judge Britton, who also holds commissions in the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court of Queensland, manages the court's Rockhampton lists. Rockhampton is also served by the Supreme Court's Central Judge. Judge Britton undertakes circuits in the region and elsewhere in the state.

In Rockhampton, with 235 new criminal matters the court ended the year with 119 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 197 matters (an 83.8 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 31.1 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 2.5 per cent were more than 24 months old. The court disposed of 13 criminal appeals during the year.

On the civil side, 48 new cases were lodged, ending the year with 39 outstanding cases, disposing of 55 matters, reflecting a 114.6 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 15.4 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 5.1 per cent were older than 24 months.

On the planning side, five new cases began in the court in Rockhampton. It ended the year with two outstanding cases, disposing of three matters, reflecting a 60.0 per cent clearance rate.

Some assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres.

Townsville

Judiciary Judge Durward SC Judge Baulch SC

Judge Durward and Judge Baulch were the resident judges during the year. Townsville is also served by the Supreme Court's Northern Judge. Judge Durward and Judge Baulch hold commissions in the Childrens Court and the Planning and Environment Court and they also undertake circuits in their region, which includes Palm Island. Some assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres, although the reduction in the number of circuit judges available to assist Townsville had an impact on the Townsville criminal and planning lists.

In Townsville, with 347 new criminal matters, the court ended the year with 138 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 297 matters (an 85.6 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 17.4 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 5.1 per cent were more than 24 months old.

In its appellate criminal jurisdiction, the court at Townsville with 142 appeals lodged, ended the year with 607 outstanding criminal appeals, disposing of 54 appeals, reflecting a 38.0 per cent clearance rate.

On the civil side, 156 new cases were lodged. The court ended the year with 142 outstanding cases, disposing of 192 matters, reflecting a 123.1 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 31.7 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 5.6 per cent were older than 24 months.

On the planning side, 21 new cases began in the court at Townsville. The court ended the year with 15 outstanding cases, disposing of 28 matters, reflecting a 133.3 per cent clearance rate.

Maroochydore

Judiciary

Judge Robertson

Judge Long SC

Judge Robertson is the senior judge. He and Judge Long hold commissions in the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court.

Most of the work of the court at Maroochydore is undertaken by the resident judges, with some assistance from other judges who visit on circuit. In addition to the usual work within the jurisdiction of the District Court, each of the resident judges sits as a Childrens Court judge and also deals with proceedings in the Planning and Environment Court.

In Maroochydore, with 343 new criminal matters the court ended the year with 96 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 287 matters (an 83.7 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 10.4 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 1.0 per cent were more than 24 months old.

On the civil side, 179 new cases were lodged in the court at Maroochydore. The court ended the year with 160 outstanding cases, disposing of 213 matters, reflecting a 119 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 23.1 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 5.0 per cent were older than 24 months.

In the planning jurisdiction, 40 new cases began in the court at Maroochydore. The court ended the year there with 44 outstanding cases, disposing of 66 matters, reflecting a 165.0 per cent clearance rate.

In its appellate civil jurisdiction, the court at Maroochydore ended the year with two outstanding civil appeals, disposing of six appeals, reflecting a 150.0 per cent clearance rate.

The Maroochydore-based judges undertake much of the circuit work at Gympie and Kingaroy. The Kingaroy district includes the largely indigenous community of Cherbourg and the judges visit the nearby town of Murgon on circuit. Judge Robertson also has responsibility for the Bundaberg circuit lists. Both judges undertake circuit work elsewhere in the state.

Southport

Judiciary

Judge Newton

Judge Wall QC

Judge McGinness

Judge Newton, Judge Wall and Judge McGinness received considerable assistance during the year from the circuit judges.

In addition to the usual District Court work of the resident judges, Childrens Court and Planning and Environment Court cases were disposed of in Southport and each of the judges performed circuit work at centres elsewhere in the state.

In Southport, the court ended the year with 192 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 448 matters (a 101.4 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 20.8 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 8.3 per cent were more than 24 months old.

On the civil side, 572 new cases were lodged at Southport. The court ended the year with 525 outstanding cases, disposing of 491 matters, reflecting an 85.8 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 20.8 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 5.0 per cent were older than 24 months.

In its appellate criminal jurisdiction, the court at Southport with 48 criminal appeals lodged, disposed of 56 appeals, reflecting a 116.7 per cent clearance rate.

In its appellate civil jurisdiction, the court at Southport ended the year with six outstanding civil appeals, disposing of eight appeals, reflecting an 88.9 per cent clearance rate.

On the planning side, 17 new cases began in the court at Southport. It ended the year with 30 outstanding cases, disposing of 17 matters, reflecting a 100.0 per cent clearance rate. Of the active cases at the end of the year, 63.3 per cent were older than 12 months (from filing date) and 20.0 per cent were older than 24 months.

Other judges on circuit provide considerable assistance to the court at Southport.

Ipswich

Judiciary

Judge Richards

Judge Bradley

Judge Koppenol

Judge Richards, Judge Bradley and Judge Koppenol dealt with the Ipswich caseload. Judge Richards and Judge Bradley hold a commission in the Childrens Court of Queensland, and Judge Richards manages the Ipswich lists. All three judges undertook circuits in centres throughout the state.

In Ipswich, the court ended the year with 133 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 390 matters (a 96.3 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, only 9.0 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 3.8 per cent were more than 24 months old.

In its appellate criminal jurisdiction, the court at Ipswich ended the year having disposed of 27 criminal appeals, achieving a 128.6 per cent clearance rate.

Beenleigh

Judiciary

Judge Dearden

Judge Dearden, the resident judge, also holds a commission in the Childrens Court of Queensland and manages the Beenleigh and Mount Isa lists. The judge also conducted circuits in Mount Isa and other centres. Considerable assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres.

In Beenleigh with 329 new criminal matters, the court ended the year with 149 outstanding criminal cases and disposed of 353 matters (a 107.3 per cent clearance rate). Of the outstanding cases, 23.5 per cent were more than 12 months old (from date of presentation of indictment), and 3.4 per cent were more than 24 months old.

In its appellate criminal jurisdiction, the court at Beenleigh disposed of 14 appeals, reflecting a 233.3 per cent clearance rate.

Circuit centres

Depending upon caseload, District Court jury trials may be held in 24 circuit centres (excluding those with a resident judge), and the judges also travel to the 15 remote or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout the state, for sentencing and some civil matters.

Judges sit in the court's appellate, criminal, civil and applications jurisdictions, as well as in the Planning and Environment Court and the Childrens Court of Queensland while on circuit.

The 37 centres (excluding those with a resident judge) where judges sit on circuit during the year are: Aurukun; Bamaga; Bowen; Bundaberg; Charleville; Charters Towers; Cloncurry; Cooktown; Cunnamulla; Dalby; Doomadgee; Emerald; Gladstone; Goondiwindi; Gympie; Hervey Bay; Innisfail; Kingaroy; Kowanyama; Lockhart River; Longreach; Mackay; Maryborough; Mornington Island; Mount Isa; Murgon; Normanton; Palm Island; Pormpuraaw; Roma; Stanthorpe; Toowoomba; Thursday Island; Warwick; Weipa/ Napranum; Woorabinda; Yarrabah.

Committees

The membership of the judges' committees as at 30 June 2012, with the Chief Judge an ex officio member of each committee, was as follows:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Convenor: Judge Bradley

Members: Judge Shanahan

Judge Irwin

Judge Dearden

Judge Everson

Judge McGinness

Judge Harrison

Judge Reid

Civil Procedure

Convenor: Judge Robin QC

Members: Judge McGill SC

Judge Rackemann

Judge Andrews SC

Judge Dorney QC

Cultural Awareness

Convenor: Judge Martin SC

Members: Judge Richards

Judge Bradley

Judge Shanahan

Judge Reid

Judicial Professional Development

Convenor: Judge Griffin SC

Members: Judge Griffin SC

Judge Dearden

Judge Martin SC

Criminal Law

Convenor: Judge Shanahan

Members: Judge Robertson

Judge Richards

Judge Bradley

Judge Dearden

Judge Rafter SC

Judge Martin SC

Judge Clare SC

Judge McGinness

Judge Long SC

Court Planning

Convenor: Judge Searles

Members: Judge Griffin SC

Judge Dearden

Judge Durward SC

Judge Andrews SC

Judge Long SC

Judge Farr SC

Salaries and Entitlements

Convenor: Judge Rackemann

Members: Judge Martin

Judge Andrews SC

Judge Devereaux SC

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committee

Last year the Indigenous Student Mentoring Scheme was established by the Bar Association of Queensland. Judge Shanahan, Judge Kingham, Judge Martin SC, Judge Searles and Judge Jones were mentors, in conjunction with the barristers, to Indigenous law students or high school students in order to encourage them to complete tertiary studies and to consider a career in the law.

The committee's goals are to deal with matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders referred to the Committee; to liaise with representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about matters affecting the court and members of those communities; to recommend appropriate speakers on these topics at judges' conferences; to develop and improve the relationship and understanding between the court and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to keep judges and the community informed of improvements and developments.

During circuits to Indigenous communities on Cape York, in the Torres Strait and in the Gulf of Carpentaria, as well as at other centres around the state, judges met with members of the community justice groups.

During the year Judge Bradley served as a member of the National Judicial College of Australia's Indigenous Justice Committee. Judge Shanahan is a member of the NJCA Queensland subcommittee and the AIJA Indigenous Justice Committee.

Civil procedure committee

The Civil Procedure Committee is available to give advice and assistance in respect of the civil jurisdiction exercised by the court to the Chief Judge and the judges generally. It functions informally, typically "meeting" and communicating by email.

Advice is often provided in connection with the Chief Judge's formulating and presenting the views of the court about changes in legislation and regulations that are proposed by state or Commonwealth authorities or seem desirable.

In the last year many of the issues considered have been related to the work of the Chief Justice's Rules Committee in its aspect of reviewing the *Supreme Court Act* of 1995 which has reached an advanced stage, with the draft of the *Civil Proceedings Act 2011* receiving assent on 6 December 2011, with many changes to modernise provisions of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*. Judge Robin QC and Judge McGill SC who are members of the Civil Procedure Committee sit on the Rules Committee and are able to provide appropriate liaison to ensure that the views of the court are ascertained and given proper consideration.

Court planning committee

Judge Searles is the convenor of the committee. Judges Griffin QC, Durward SC, and Andrews SC were its members.

The committee assists the Chief Judge with advice on a range of administrative matters.

During the year, the committee acted, primarily to assist the Chief Judge (who attended its meetings) in addressing planning and strategic matters arising in the course of her administration of the court. As in past years those matters often required prompt attention from available committee members who, for that reason, met informally rather than by pre-arrangement.

Criminal law committee

The Criminal Law Committee advised the Chief Judge with respect to numerous law reform initiatives. These included discussion papers and reports by the Sentencing Advisory Council with respect to minimum standard non-parole periods and the sentencing of child sexual offences; proposed amendments to ss 304 and 669A of the *Criminal Code*; the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2011; the Criminal Justice Procedure Bill 2011; the proposed amendment to the *Attorney-General Act 1999*; proposed amendments to the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* and the *Criminal Code* in relation to a dangerous dog offence. The Committee also gave advice to the Chief Judge in relation to other issues, including the jurisdiction of the District Court in relation to drug offences where there is an allegation that the accused is not drug dependant and the release by the Registry of subpoenaed material in compliance with the *Criminal Practice Rules*.

Judge Shanahan continued to serve on the NJCA Planning Committee on Jury Management, chaired by the Honourable Justice Byrne SJA.

On 28 March 2012, the Chief Judge and Judge Shanahan met with representatives of Protect All Children Today (PACT) with respect to the support role played by PACT volunteers in the pre-recording of affected child witnesses' evidence under Division 4A of the *Evidence Act 1977*.

Professional development committee

The continuing professional development of the judges was actively pursued during this year. The Standard for Judicial Professional Development in Australia (especially its principal aspect that all judges undertake at least five days of professional development each year) was adopted and confirmed by the judges of this court soon after its adoption by the Council of Chief Judges in 2007. The Standard has provided a sound basis for an important aspect of this court's administration – that each of our judges has sufficient periods when the judge is not listed in court so that, inter alia, the judge has sufficient time for ongoing judicial professional development. The judges are reminded frequently of the importance of undertaking continuing judicial professional development and of the Standard. There is a high standard of compliance with the Standard by the judges of the District Court.

Judge Griffin SC represents the Australian District and County Court judges on the Council of the National Judicial College of Australia, thus advancing professional judicial education for the judges in many significant ways.

Judge Shanahan represents the court on the Judicial Conference of Australia Governing Council and serves on the National Judicial College of Australia Planning Committee on Jury Management.

During the year under review and Judge Dearden was a member of the USQ Law School Advisory Committee.

Judges attended workshops or conferences throughout the year. Details of the judges' judicial professional development involving overseas studies, seminars, programmes or conferences are published annually on the court website. Also, the court calendar is structured so that 2.5 days per annum is set aside for judicial professional development in banc. This time is especially important for the court – it is the only time that the court's 38 judges are together, as 14 of the judges have permanent chambers in various parts of Queensland outside Brisbane.

There is no discrete college or commission providing judicial professional development in Queensland. Accordingly the judges value the important support offered by the National Judicial College of Australia, as well as the assistance of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration, the Judicial Conference of Australia and the Judicial Commission of NSW in furthering judicial professional development. All newly appointed judges benefit from the National Judicial Orientation program. Judge Long SC and Judge Farr SC attended the NJCA's Judicial Orientation Programme, which was held in November 2011..

The judges' 17th consecutive Annual Seminar was held at Marcoola on 14-16 August 2011. The conference provides a forum for professional discussion and an enhancement of collegiality, allowing the singular opportunity for the judges, 14 of whom were based outside Brisbane, to meet as a body for professional discussion. Speakers at the 17th Annual Conference included Associate Professor Graeme Orr from the TC Beirne School of Law at the University of Queensland on Compulsory Voting, the law and law-making; Dr Ed Heffernan, director of Forensic Mental Health Services who spoke on health care and the mentally ill in custody and Professor James Raymond, president of the International Institute for Legal Writing and Reasoning in New York on Judgment Writing.

The judges also presented papers or participated in seminars or conferences during the year.

Office of the Executive Director of the Supreme District and Land Courts Service

The role of the Office of the Executive Director of the Supreme District and Land Courts Service includes the coordination and oversight of registry administration and the provision of judicial support services for the District Court throughout the State.

After acting in the role since October 2010, Ms Julie Steel was formally appointed as Executive Director in August 2011. She is supported by executive, administrative and registry staff throughout Queensland.

Ms Steel is an elected member of the Court Network which provides support to people at courts throughout Queensland and she attends meetings of the Rules Committee.

Registry Services

Court registries are responsible for:

- receiving and sealing documents for filing and service
- providing information about the general court process and the progress of particular matters
- maintaining court records and ensuring that documents are created and distributed to give effect to orders of the court
- organising resources to enable matters to progress through the system and hearings to proceed
- performing all necessary administrative work associated with the criminal and civil jurisdictions of the court.

Permanent District Court registries are located at Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, and Cairns. There are further registries located at Beenleigh, Ipswich, Maroochydore and Southport, and the local Magistrates Court staff manage these offices. Other centres are visited on circuit, and Magistrates Courts staff perform the registry duties at those times as well.

During the year, civil files were transitioned to a new civil database, known as QCIVIL. This change was predominantly to reduce the administrative workload for registry staff.

Use of the online *eSearch* facility was again significant during 2011-12, with more than 928,000 online searches conducted during that period.

Registry workloads

Civil lodgments increased by 16.3 per cent during 2011-12 from the previous reporting period. Significantly for the Brisbane registry, lodgments increased by 22.9 per cent during the same period.

In the criminal jurisdiction, lodgments decreased by 8.7 per cent during the year. Despite the decreasing lodgments, closer analysis around the length of criminal trials commenced during 2011-12. That analysis shows that the average number of weekdays per trial in the District Court increased to 3.3 from 3.1 during 2010-11.

The respective increases and decreases in the civil and criminal jurisdictions were anticipated as a result of the *Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Reform and Modernisation (Amendment) Act 2010*.

eTrials

In the Law Courts Complex, the conduct of eTrials was limited to three courtrooms, plus the Court of Appeal. At the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law, there are 14 eTrial capable courtrooms. As the Supreme and District Courts moved towards relocation to the new complex, the eTrials Registry and Courts Service Centre worked together to ensure the eTrials model could be successfully implemented on a larger scale. The conduct of eTrials will generate even greater efficiencies in the new complex, as all cabling and technology will be permanently in place, with little if any preparation required prior to an eTrial.

Court Network volunteers

The volunteers of the Court Network are to be commended for the invaluable and significant service they provide to the courts. They are well trained and passionate and facilitate access to justice through

practical information and guidance as well as personal assistance to those involved in court proceedings.

During 2011-12, the volunteers assisted more than 50,000 court users throughout Queensland. Over 11,000 of those were in Brisbane.

Acknowledgements

The ongoing enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism of registry staff in discharging their duties are some of the most significant assets of the Court. Workloads are managed as efficiently as possible and the many challenges and changes that arise are embraced.

The continuing support and assistance of legal practitioners and judges, particularly in the face of the difficulties which sometimes arise in providing registry services, is greatly appreciated. Their willingness to engage with the registry to improve services is equally appreciated.

State Reporting Bureau

The State Reporting Bureau provides a recording and/or transcription service to the Supreme, District, Land and Magistrates Courts, Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Industrial Court, and the Industrial Relations Commission. These services are provided at Brisbane and 35 regional and circuit centres throughout Queensland.

Reporting services are also provided for the Medical Assessment Tribunal, Mental Health Court, and the Land Appeal Court.

During 2011-12 the Bureau recorded approximately 32,300 hours of proceedings. Of this 84 per cent was by remote digital recording and 16 per cent by Computer Assisted Transcription (CAT) reporters.

In 2011-12 the Bureau produced approximately 192,210 pages of transcript for matters in the District Court. This represented 40 per cent of the total pages produced by the Bureau in the same period.

The digital recording system utilised by the Bureau continues to allow for the more efficient use of staff resources across the State. The placing of cameras in courtrooms combined with the digital recording system allows staff to monitor and record courts across the State without having to travel to a particular centre. For example centres such as Mount Isa, Hervey Bay and Beenleigh can be recorded remotely and transcribed by any of the 10 Bureau offices. The use of this technology also allows workloads to be accommodated based on the capacity of individual centres.

Changes in technology also means that it is now easier for the Bureau to offer audio CDs as an option to transcripts. This format provides a cheaper, faster and more efficient method of delivery and reduces the costs of production.

The Bureau utilises three processes to produce a transcript, Audio/Keyboard Transcribers, Voice Assisted Transcribing (VAT Reporters) and Computer Assisted Transcriber (CAT) Reporters.

VAT Reporters are a new and developing occupation which has evolved as a result of the Bureau's use of voice recognition software to assist injured staff to return to work, whilst utilising a method of transcription, which was not contraindicative to their recovery, and one, which would enable them to remain focussed and productive to their role description.

The voice/keyboard combination utilised with voice recognition software has proved useful not only for rehabilitation but also for transcript production generally.

Courts information services

Information and Court Technology Branch

The Information and Courts Technology Branch (I&CT) supports, manages and enhances technologies used within Queensland Courts:

- Integrated Criminal Justice – Acted as lead agency, and supported the technology hub, for participating Integrated Criminal Justice agencies

- Applications – managed, supported and enhanced applications used by Court registries, including the criminal and civil case management systems, as well as the application used by the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER)
- Audio Visual – managed, supported and extended the audio and visual systems installed throughout the state
- Judicial IT Support – maintained and supported the desktop ICT environment used by judicial officers and their direct support staff, throughout the state

Key achievements

During 2011-12 the I&CT Branch replaced the legacy civil case management system used in the Supreme and District Courts and prepared to extend that system into the Magistrates Court so that another legacy case management system could be replaced. The Branch also adopted the Queensland Police Single Person Identifier within the criminal case management system to improve information management. The Branch also made enhancements to the SPER system to allow a large increase in the user base of that system.

Numerous enhancements to audio visual systems were carried out over the course of 2011-12, including:

- Major upgrades to 5 courtrooms in regional centres, including full evidence display and video conference facilities
- The upgrade of digital recording equipment in 77 courtrooms
- The upgrade of Vulnerable Witness facilities in 5 regional centres

The Branch allocated significant amounts of resource to participate in the design, configuration, testing and acceptance of the extensive audio visual facilities included in the new Brisbane Supreme and District Court Building.

Related organisations

Supreme Court of Queensland Library

The Supreme Court of Queensland Library (SCQL) is the principal law library in Queensland, serving the judiciary and legal profession. Since the District Court was established in 1865, SCQL has been providing support through essential and innovative legal information services.

Across its own 150 year history, SCQL has developed a significant collection of print and online resources across local and international jurisdictions. The Library is also committed to the collection and preservation of Queensland's legal history, which is achieved through education, publication and digitisation programs, conducted under the auspices of the Supreme Court History Program.

SCQL is governed by a Committee comprising members of the judiciary as well as nominees of the Queensland Law Society, Bar Association of Queensland and the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Each of the Library's key client groups is represented, ensuring that information services and collections are continually adapted in response to evolving user needs.

In 2011-12, the Committee was chaired by the Honourable Justice Hugh Fraser.

Highlights

2011-12 marked a period of transition and reinvention for SCQL; as it celebrated its sesquicentenary as Queensland's principal law library, it also prepared to relocate to the new Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law.

Significant achievements include:

- Consolidating and streamlining the Library's collection in anticipation of relocation to the new building in August 2012;
- Finalising the design and construction of the Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre and its inaugural exhibition;
- Completing a major IT network review and restructure, providing enhanced data security and access for the library;
- An excess of 5.3 million page hits registered on the SCQL website and intranets, and an additional 1.1 million hits on Queensland judgments and judicial papers via the AustLII platform;
- Continuous commitment to niche legal publishing with the release of the annual *Supreme Court History Program Yearbook* and *An Almost Forgotten World: Jim Thomas's Memoirs*.

In 2012, Dr Michael White QC retired from his role as convenor of the Supreme Court History Program. The SCQL acknowledges his generous contribution in this position, and welcomes Mr John McKenna SC as the new convenor.

Relocation to the New Courthouse

2011-12 signalled the end of an era for the Supreme Court Library – the last of 31 years residing in the courthouse at 304 George Street, Brisbane. The year was dominated by exhaustive preparations and planning for the relocation of the Library's 28 staff-member office and 155,389 volume collection.

Relocating the Library to the new courthouse, both virtually and physically posed quite a logistical feat; a significant rationalisation of the collection was conducted, 23,247 pages of administrative records and biographical material were digitised, and 3 million pages of redundant administrative documents were disposed of. Helen Jeffcoat, Sean Pybus, and the entire staff worked tirelessly to achieve a smooth transition to the new Library and ensure that the relocation remained well within staffing budgets.

Thanks to the generous support of the Bar Association of Queensland, the Library was able to record the daily workings of the old courthouse in a collection of photographs. It is anticipated that this collection will become a much-consulted historic record.

Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre

The Supreme Court Library boasts an impressive Queensland legal heritage collection, administered in association with the Supreme Court History Program.

In August 2012, the collection will form the foundation of the new Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre – a \$1.35M purpose-built museum space on the ground floor of the new courthouse. The Centre will provide an exciting new platform to showcase SCQL's legal heritage collection, with the inaugural exhibition tracing 150 years of the state's legal history.

The Centre represents the culmination of the work of the Supreme Court History Program over the past ten years. SCQL is grateful to the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for the State of Queensland for providing a generous grant to bring this project to fruition.

Information Services

As the primary legal information service provider for the Queensland judiciary, legal profession and broader community, SCQL is committed to continuously improving user access to its information services. In the digital era, this means providing a holistic service with innovative and convenient means of delivering information to users.

Reference, research and document delivery remain an important service element for judges and practitioners across Queensland. In 2011-12, the Library responded to a total of 10,953 information enquiries and supplied 11,912 documents for its users.

The Library's alert and update services also served as a well-utilised means of delivering current and tailored legal information to users. The Judicial Current Awareness Service, which distributes news and current affairs material to the Queensland judiciary through customisable email alerts, grew in response to user demand; it published a total of 7,217 articles and speeches, representing a 15.5 per cent increase on last year. Furthermore, subscription to the Queensland Legal Updater, a free weekly email bulletin outlining Queensland's judicial and legislative developments, increased by 145 per cent.

The Library has offered 24/7 public access to its online catalogue and web-based database since 2007; however, relocation to the new building in 2012 provided the opportunity to review its IT network, enhancing access to its most demanded services. In collaboration with the Courts, the Library was able to optimise remote access to the *Judicial Virtual Library* intranet (*JVL*) for iPads and other mobile devices; over the past year, usage of *JVL* has increased by 45 per cent.

Overall, use of the Library's online platforms has increased by 17 per cent this year, with more than 5.3 million hits registered through SCQL's public website, online catalogue and *JVL*.

Legal Collections

SCQL continued to enrich its collection in 2011-12 with a number of significant donations, and thousands of new legal titles and online resources, including:

- The purchase of 1,258 new print items
- An additional 5,000 online titles
- Access to 2,526 new full-text judgments, including 22 per cent from the District and Planning & Environment Courts

The Library also continues to maintain print collections in courthouses across the State. These core collections are supplemented by an ever-expanding platform of online content that is available to District Court judges via the *JVL* and to members of the legal profession throughout Queensland via the Library's main website at www.sclqld.org.au.

The Library's consolidated purchasing arrangement with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has continued to assist with this growth, by generating savings and facilitating client access to a wider range of online content from legal publishers. As the current three-year contracts expire in mid-2012, SCQL will again lead negotiations for subscription renewals on behalf of the Courts, securing further concessions and savings on online content for the benefits of its users.

Supreme Court History Program

Beyond traditional information services, the Library also supports new initiatives, research and publications – particularly those that enrich Queensland's legal tradition.

In 2011, SCQL released the seventh annual *Supreme Court History Program Yearbook*; this edition pays tribute to the legal profession in regional Queensland. The Library also published *An Almost Forgotten World: Jim Thomas's Memoirs*, a vivid account of the life of retired Supreme Court judge the Hon James Burrows Thomas AM QC.

In late 2012, SCQL will publish *Supreme Court of Queensland: A Concise History*, a commemorative volume of the Court's sesquicentenary, to be printed by University of Queensland Press. The library initiated the project in mid-2008 and has since committed substantial resources to its development. After a lengthy process, including several iterations, SCQL is pleased that Mr John McKenna SC has brought this project to successful completion.

In 2008, SCQL began plans for the Supreme Court of Queensland Seminar, an event to complement the opening of the new courthouse in August 2012. The Seminar would feature several distinguished international speakers and a number of delegates, to coincide with the courthouse's opening celebrations.

Future Directions

In the coming year and beyond, SCQL will concentrate on redefining its services so that it continues to meet the expectations and demands of its users. With technology growing more sophisticated and the demise of print seemingly imminent, the Library must reposition itself as an information centre, developing new ways to seamlessly curate and connect diverse information sources.

Moving forward, this will entail a restructure of the Library's governance and business models so that it may harness its existing infrastructure and expertise in innovative ways. Specifically, the Library will focus on consolidating its information sources, streamlining its services and freeing resources to invest in specialised staffing. Such investment will enable the Library to expand upon the 'expert' information services that its users are coming to expect.

The future at the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law promises to be just as vibrant as the past for the Supreme Court Library. The Library is looking forward to 2012-13 with a new residence and an empowered commitment towards serving the information needs of the Queensland legal community.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Practice Directions

The following Practice Directions were issued by the Chief Judge during the year and are available on the Queensland Courts website, www.courts.qld.gov.au.

District Court

Table 5: District Court practice directions

Number	Description	Date issued
2011/01	Notice of change of name Notice of address for service	5 July 2011
2011/02	Use of technology of the efficient management of documents in litigation	29 November 2011
2011/03	Designation of Court Holidays Registry 26 December 2011 to 2 January 2012	5 December 2011
2012/01	Notice of change of name	28 February 2012
2012/02	Notice of change of name Notice of address for service	28 February 2012
2012/03	Notice of change of name	8 March 2012
2012/04	Repeal of practice direction no 4 of 1999 (Approval of registrar to assess costs)	2 April 2012
2012/05	Notice of change of name	24 April 2012
2012/06	Notice of change of name	26 April 2012

Planning and Environment Court

Table 6: Planning and Environment Court

Number	Description	Date issued
2011/03	Notice of change of name Notice of address for service	12 July 2011
2012/01	Notice of change of name	28 February 2012
2012/02	Notice of change of name Notice of address for service	28 February 2012
2012/03	Notice of change of name	24 April 2012
2012/04	Notice of change of name	26 April 2012

Appendix 2: District Court associates as at 30 June 2012

Stephanie Mansell	Associate to Her Honour Chief Judge PM Wolfe
Christina Venardos	Associate to His Honour Judge KJ O'Brien
Jodi Lewry	Associate to His Honour Judge HWH Botting
Lewis Napa	Associate to His Honour Judge MJ Noud
Erin Kay	Associate to His Honour Judge PD Robin QC
Robyn Blewer	Associate to His Honour Judge JE Newton (Southport)
Victoria Fleetwood	Associate to His Honour Judge JM Robertson (Maroochydore)
Denika Whitehouse	Associate to His Honour Judge DJ McGill SC
Charlotte Yellowlees	Associate to His Honour Judge CF Wall QC (Southport)
Isaac Buckley	Associate to His Honour Judge N Samios
Gordon Roberts	Associate to His Honour Judge GT Britton SC (Rockhampton)
Mike McLaws	Associate to Her Honour Judge D Richards (Ipswich)
Lara Soldi	Associate to Her Honour Judge S Bradley (Ipswich)
Matt Garozzo	Associate to His Honour Judge MJ Shanahan
Rachel Youngman	Associate to Her Honour Judge JM Dick SC
Zoe Cochrane	Associate to His Honour Judge MP Irwin
Keith Wylie	Associate to His Honour Judge ME Rackemann
Patrick Ritchie	Associate to His Honour Judge WH Tutt (until 10 May 2012)
Eric Halden	Associate to His Honour Judge MJ Griffin SC
Brandon Hoffler	Associate to Her Honour Judge JA Rylie
Venetia Brown	Associate to His Honour Judge IFM Dearden (Beenleigh)
Kasey McAuliffe	Associate to Her Honour Judge FY Kingham (Southport)
Lauren Webster	Associate to His Honour Judge SG Durward SC (Townsville)
Charles Nugent-Young	Associate to His Honour Judge AJ Rafter SC
Timothy McCarthy	Associate to His Honour Judge TD Martin SC
Michael Elliott	Associate to His Honour Judge DG Searles
Catherine Elliott	Associate to His Honour Judge GJ Koppenol (Ipswich)
Ella Gunn	Associate to His Honour Judge DC Andrews SC
Elizabeth Logan	Associate to Her Honour Judge LJ Clare SC
Jayde Geia	Associate to His Honour Judge WG Everson (Cairns)
Jennifer Roan	Associate to His Honour Judge BG Devereaux SC
Elizabeth Harvey	Associate to Her Honour Judge KM McGinness (Southport)
Kimberley Mullens	Associate to His Honour Judge KD Dorney QC
Joseph Douglas	Associate to His Honour Judge RS Jones
Fabia Parker	Associate to His Honour Judge BA Harrison (Cairns)
Marcel Schlamowitz	Associate to His Honour Judge DA Reid
Lisa Hussey	Associate to His Honour Judge JR Baulch SC (Townsville)
Portia Costello	Associate to His Honour Judge GP Long SC (Maroochydore)
Lisa Saunders	Associate to His Honour Judge BW Farr SC