

**DISTRICT COURT OF
QUEENSLAND ANNUAL REPORT
2020/2021**

28 October 2021

The Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of
Domestic and Family Violence
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD P 4000

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 2021.

Yours sincerely

Chief Judge BG Devereaux SC

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Chief Judge's overview

This is the Court's 25th annual report, dealing with the organisation, operation and performance of the court in 2020/2021. This report incorporates the annual report of the Planning and Environment Court (the P&E Court).

As the principal court in Queensland for trials of persons charged with serious criminal offences, the workload of the court is significant. The judges also exercise civil and appellate jurisdictions and sit in the P&E Court and the Childrens Court of Queensland. It is one of the largest and busiest of the higher courts in Australia.

The Court's performance and workload during the 2020/2021 year 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*.

Throughout 2020/2021, the judges maintained all the usual services of the Court, often adapted to the changed circumstances brought about by the unpredictable consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2020, Chief Judge Kerry O'Brien retired, having reached the statutory age, after almost 31 years as a judge and 6 as Chief Judge. Kerry O'Brien AM, as part of a co-ordinated response led by the Chief Justice and engaging with all aspects of the legal profession and the relevant organs of government, steered the Court through the early crucial stages of COVID-19. He left the Court in excellent shape. It has been my privilege to take up the leadership of the Court, with great assistance from the Judge Administrator, Judge Smith, and the support of all the judges.

The COVID-19 virus continued to challenge the operation of the Court during the 2020/2021 year. The co-ordinated response, referred to above, led by the Chief Justice, which ensured open communication among the courts, the profession and the relevant agencies, induced unprecedented co-operation.

To the credit of the judges of the Court, enthusiastically supported by the Executive Director of Courts, Julie Steel, and registry officers in every town where the Court sits, the business of the Court in all of its several jurisdictions continued during this difficult period. As recorded in last year's annual report, jury trials were interrupted, on 16 March 2020, when safety considerations prohibited the assembly of jury panels. However, with appropriate social distancing requirements, the Court commenced a staged process of resuming jury trials in the Brisbane District Court from 22 June 2020. Gradually, as distancing measures and safe jury arrangements were put in place, jury trials resumed at the great majority of regional and circuit centres by the end of calendar 2020. Southport and Mackay District Courts were the first, with jury trials resuming on 13 July 2020. By February 2021, the Court had resumed jury trials in all regional and circuit towns.

The Court experienced a significant increase in applications for judge alone trials. During the 2020/2021 reporting period, there were 25 judge-alone applications made. Of those 25 applications, 15 were granted. All 15 were before the District Court, with 8 judge-alone trials proceeding.

The Court continued to conduct hearings in the Planning and Environment Court, in the civil jurisdiction, in the appellate jurisdiction and in the Childrens Court of Queensland, employing available technologies for the remote appearance of legal representatives and litigants. In criminal matters, with the co-operation of Corrective Services Queensland, the appearance by video link of prisoners increased.

Chief Judge O'Brien reported last year that the COVID 19 crisis highlighted the inadequacies in the Court's IT systems and in particular, the lack of an electronic filing system such as exists in other Australian jurisdictions. This remains a matter of serious concern, although one must acknowledge that progress is being made in developing a comprehensive civil case management system for the Magistrates Court and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which will eventually reach the higher courts.

During the year under review, the Court adapted its procedures to maintain services and, pending the general resumption of jury trials, allocated time to matters that did not require a jury. The inevitable reversal of the reduction in criminal, civil and P&E lodgments experienced during the pandemic will bring an exceptional burden onto the Court – a court, as Chief Judge O'Brien described it in last year's annual report, in which judicial resources are already overstretched.

Judicial appointments

On 17 August 2020, I was appointed by the Attorney-General and sworn-in as Chief Judge of the District Court of Queensland by the Chief Justice of Queensland.

On 31 August 2020, Mr Rowan Jackson QC and Mr Jeffrey Clarke were appointed as Judges of the District Court of Queensland and sworn-in at the QEII Courts of Law, Brisbane.

On 7 September 2020, Ms Geraldine Dann was appointed a Judge of the District Court of Queensland and sworn-in at the QEII Courts of Law, Brisbane.

On 1 February, 2021 Mr Robert East QC was appointed an Acting Judge of the District Court of Queensland until 31 May, 2021.

Judicial retirements

Chief Judge Kerry O'Brien AM, who was appointed to the District Court of Queensland on 27 October, 1989, retired on 16 August, 2020.

Judge Gregory Koppenol, who was appointed to the District Court of Queensland on 21 September, 2007 retired on 16 August, 2020.

Considerations

The south-east corner is not the only growth area in the State but, nonetheless, it demands attention. There is no District Court between Brisbane and Maroochydore. And the inadequacy of the Beenleigh Courthouse is well documented. The Court is willing to serve the Queensland community where the infrastructure and judicial resources permit. Table 5 below, which shows the judge sitting weeks in regional centres, demonstrates this.

Acknowledgement

I record my thanks to the Judicial Administrator, Judge Smith, the Judges, the Executive Director, 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.

At the time of writing, the Chief Justice, the Honourable Catherine Holmes AC, has announced her intention to retire in March 2022. I take this opportunity to join the many voices that will speak in praise of the Chief Justice – for her work in court, in writing and in leadership.

Disposition of Caseload

Criminal cases

Over the reporting year, there were 6,290 lodgments, compared to 7,580 for the 2019/2020 year. At year's end the number of outstanding matters was 2,576 with 6,670 matters having been finalised. This represents a clearance rate of 106 percent.

Of the outstanding matters 21.6 percent were more than 12 months old (from date of indictment presentation) and 5.9 percent were more than 24 months old. Cases might be active for a long time where, for example, an order has been made for a retrial, or a bench warrant has issued for an absconding defendant. In some matters the parties are awaiting a determination in the Mental Health Court.

The statistics just referred to do not include pre-trial applications and the recording of evidence. These proceedings do not inform the data collated by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission's Annual Report on Government Services (RoGS). A pre-trial hearing might be short and uncomplicated – e.g. an unopposed application for a witness to give evidence by video link. Or it might be difficult and time-consuming, in court and in judgment-writing – e.g. an application to sever an indictment charging numerous counts of offences alleged to have been committed against several complainants, or an application for the permanent stay of a prosecution on the ground that it is an abuse of process.

Legislative changes, such as the introduction of the protected counselling communications provisions of the *Evidence Act 1977* continue to contribute to the increased length and complexity of pre-trial hearings. The Court issued Practice Direction No 5 of 2021 to regulate the procedure but the legal and factual issues remain challenging.

In another important change during the year under review, by the insertion of a new Division 4C in Part 2 of the *Evidence Act 1977*, the parliament created the role of intermediary. The function of an intermediary is to communicate or explain to a witness questions put, to the extent necessary to enable the witness to understand the questions and to communicate or explain to the questioner the answers given by the witness, to the extent necessary to enable the questioner to understand the answers. The court may appoint an intermediary for a witness in a criminal proceeding for a child sexual offence, who is under 16 years or has an impairment of the mind or is of a class prescribed by regulation. From a

reporting point of view, the intermediary scheme adds to the list of pre-trial hearings which occupy judges' time but are not counted in the statistics referred to.

Civil cases

On the civil side there were 3,486 lodgments, compared to 4,247 in 2019/2020. There were 4,139 matters finalised, precisely, as it happens, the same number as in 2019/2020. This represents a clearance rate of 118.7 percent. There were, at the end of the reporting year, 3,763 active matters, of which 27.4 percent were more than 12 months old and 5.9 percent were more than 24 months old.

District Court Commercial List

A Commercial List was established in October 2010. The purpose of the Commercial List is to promote the prompt resolution of commercial disputes by judges with experience in commercial litigation. During the year the Commercial List judges were Judge Jones, Judge Muir, Judge Kefford, Judge Porter QC and Judge Barlow QC. Their Honours are all based in Brisbane.

In December 2020, at the instigation of the commercial list judges, the Court issued a new Practice Direction introducing changes to the conduct of commercial matters. First, it is easier and quicker for a party to apply to have a claim placed on the commercial list. Second, in accordance with the District Court's regional perspective, a party in Townsville or Toowoomba may apply to have a matter placed on the commercial list and conducted from the registries in those cities. The Practice Direction provides for the application to place a matter on the Commercial List, and for directions and any interlocutory steps in regional proceedings, to be heard by a commercial list judge by video link. If the proceeding goes to trial, the judge will travel to the regional city to hear it. The extension of Commercial List services to Townsville and Toowoomba was seen to be viable because of experiences during COVID-19, where the use of audio-visual facilities was explored and generally shown to be effective. It is designed to support commercial litigation in Townsville and Toowoomba as places which should be important regional commercial litigation centres. The commercial list judges conducted seminars for the regional professions and registries to explain the new procedures.

Appeals

In 2020/2021, 104 civil appeals and 323 criminal appeals (compared to 88 and 296 in 2019/2020) were lodged in the Court. There were 128 civil and 343 criminal appeals finalised, representing clearance rates 123.1 percent and 106.2 percent respectively.

The extraordinary clearance rate of appeals resulted from three causes: (1) an audit of old files, which revealed a number of inactive files that had not been recorded as closed; (2) the active management and listing of appeals; and (3) the change in the judges' work-mix brought about by the reduced availability of jury trials.

A significant portion of civil appeals challenge the order of a magistrate to make, or refuse a domestic violence order. These appeals can consume considerable resources for reasons which include the parties' regularly appearing without legal representation.

The simple but effective measures put in place to manage the increasing number of appeals, devised and overseen by Judge Moynihan QC, have created such efficiencies that parties may expect timely disposal of an appeal even as the numbers of indictments lodged and jury trials increase.

Planning and Environment

During the year 405 new matters were lodged in the Planning and Environment Court, compared to 483 the year before. At year's end there were 355 outstanding matters with 465 having been completed. This represents a clearance rate of 114.8 percent. Of the outstanding matters, 32.4 percent were more than 12 months old from the date of filing and 13.2 percent more than 24 months old.

In Brisbane, where most cases are heard, the Court ended the year with 263 outstanding cases having disposed of 405 matters, achieving a clearance rate of 125.4 percent. Of the outstanding cases, 31.2 percent were more than 12 months old and 12.5 percent were more than 24 months old. This represents a substantial reduction in the number of cases older than 12 and 24 months.

The Planning and Environment Court is the only Queensland court whose files are open to inspection for any litigant, lawyer or member of the public through eFiles, an online service which makes court documents available to everyone. Whether originating in Brisbane or a regional centre, all active files are accessible through the Queensland Courts website [eCourts](https://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>.

The senior P&E Court judge, Judge Rackemann, assisted the Chief Judge in the administration of the P&E Court and in ensuring the orderly and expeditious exercise of the jurisdiction and powers of the

P&E Court. During the year under review, the P&E Court, with the co-operation of Judge Porter QC, who oversees the listing of civil cases, introduced the P&E applications list in Brisbane. The list removes shorter applications into a separate list. These applications had been heard in the morning before judges sitting in the P&E Court resumed their longer matters. This change has allowed more time for parties' submissions and judicial consideration of shorter applications, while allowing judges more time to prepare and consider longer cases before them.

Affected child witnesses and special witnesses

Many children are required to give evidence in matters involving charges of sexual or violent offences. During 2020/2021 the judges ordered 450 pre-recordings involving 539 witnesses for the District Court or the Childrens Court. Should a defendant plead guilty before the pre-recording takes place, the witness' evidence need not be recorded.

The evidence of an affected child witness will be pre-recorded from a remote witness room soon after the indictment is presented, and care is taken to ensure that all pre-trial hearings – for example, challenges to parts of the evidence - are completed before the evidence of the child is recorded. In Brisbane, the pre-recording usually took place within 6-10 weeks of the presentation of the indictment. The recorded evidence is later played to the jury at the trial. To preserve their integrity and security, all video recordings, no matter where recorded in Queensland, are kept by the Principal Registry in Brisbane.

As well as affected child witnesses, the evidence of persons declared to be special witnesses is often pre-recorded. The term, 'special witness', includes a person against whom a sexual offence has been, or is alleged to have been, committed by another person; and a person against whom domestic violence has been or is alleged to have been committed by another person. In the year under review there were 198 pre-recordings for special witnesses in the Brisbane District Court, the regional centres and the Childrens Court.

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 Richards is the current President. There are 34 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. Where necessary they have received judicial support from judges from other centres, particularly from Brisbane judges.

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 visited where necessary the remote Aboriginal and Islander communities on circuit. According to the availability of work, Judges sat in Thursday Island, and Woorabinda. It was not necessary this year for the court to sit in the Gulf centres of Mornington Island, Doomadgee or Normanton as the limited number of matters from those locations were dealt with in Mount Isa.

Organisational matters

Practice Directions

During the year, 12 District Court Practice Directions were issued.

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 of the 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 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 Justice Bond of the Supreme Court, included the Chief Justice, Justice Morrison, Justice Bond and Justice Jackson and from the District Court, Judge Rackemann and Judge Porter QC. The committee met monthly 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 Rafter SC and Judge Moynihan QC contributed on behalf of the District Court. The committee works over extended periods updating and adding to this essential and important work.

Chief Judge's calendar

In the year under review, I sat in the various jurisdictions of the Court, both in and out of Brisbane: including sittings in the regional centres of Mackay, Southport, Dalby, Cairns, Rockhampton, Beenleigh, Ipswich and Townville.

During the year I met with the leaders and representatives of the many organisations 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, Court Network for Humanity.

Aside from regular 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, the Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 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 involved in the organisation of the District Court and its registries, meetings of the Supreme Court Library Committee and two subcommittees – the Financial and Risk Management subcommittee and the QGIS redevelopment project board committee overseeing the redevelopment of the Queensland Sentencing Information Service, the Focus Group, the ISIP Judiciary Group. Among the speeches and papers delivered I mention the presentation to the Bar Association of Queensland conference on developments relevant to the Court, the honour of speaking to the newly elected members of the Legislative Assembly and the pleasure of addressing the University of Queensland Alumni Association breakfast.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in December 2020, I attended ZOOM or telephone meetings of the Council of Chief Judges from all equivalent jurisdictions within Australia and New Zealand. These meetings provide an important opportunity for the exchange of information between heads of jurisdictions.

Continuing judicial professional development

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. 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 40 judges are together, as 13 of the judges have permanent chambers in various parts of Queensland outside Brisbane. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, a one-day conference was held in Brisbane in April which among other topics addressed the increasingly pressing topic of judicial well-being.

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 Australian Judicial Officers Association (formerly 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.

Associates' appointments

Associates are appointed by the Chief Judge pursuant to s36(2) of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*. 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*).

Access to the Court

Court Network

The Court Network, a volunteer service, has operated in the District Court in Brisbane since December 2007, giving support and non-legal information and referral services to court-users attending at the court, whether as litigants or witnesses or their families and supporters. It receives referrals from various services, departments and other persons. The volunteers may be found in the courtrooms and elsewhere throughout the QE II Courthouse. Court Network also operates in Cairns and Townsville.

The volunteers support court-users in the courtroom and familiarise them with the courthouse. They also provide court-users with a safe place in the courthouse and refer them to those community services or charities which can provide assistance.

Court Network provides a second service in Brisbane with an information and Justice of the Peace service based at the Information Kiosk in the QE II Courthouse.

It is unfortunate that Court Network has suffered a significant reduction in funding. The Court appreciates the volunteers' work and hopes to watch the development, not the decline, of Court Network.

LawRight

LawRight provides the Self Representation Civil Law Service in the QE II Courthouse. 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 QE II Courthouse 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.

Profile of the District Court

Judges of the District Court

During the year under report the judges were:

Chief Judge	His Honour Judge Kerry John O'Brien (until 16 August 2020) His Honour Judge Brian Devereaux SC (from 17 August 2020)
Judge Administrator	His Honour Judge Paul Edward Smith
Judges	Her Honour Judge Deborah Richards Her Honour Judge Julie Maree Dick SC His Honour Judge Michael Edward Rackemann His Honour Judge Ian Francis Macrae Dearden His Honour Judge Anthony John Rafter SC His Honour Judge Gregory John Koppenol (until 16 August 2020) His Honour Judge David Charles Andrews SC Her Honour Judge Leanne Joy Clare SC His Honour Judge William Garth Everson Her Honour Judge Katherine Mary McGinness (Southport) His Honour Judge Richard Stephen Jones His Honour Judge David Andrew Reid His Honour Judge Gary Patrick Long SC (Maroochydore) His Honour Judge Bradley Wayne Farr SC His Honour Judge Alexander Adrian Horneman-Wren SC (Ipswich) His Honour Judge Orazio Rinaudo AM His Honour Judge Dean Patrick Morzone QC (Cairns) His Honour Judge Michael John Burnett AM (Rockhampton) Her Honour Judge Suzanne Catherine Sheridan His Honour Judge Anthony William Moynihan QC His Honour Judge David Robert Kent QC (Southport) His Honour Judge Milon Craig Chowdhury (Beenleigh) Her Honour Judge Catherine Mary Muir (Southport) Her Honour Judge Nicole Jane Kefford His Honour Judge Dennis Raymond Lynch QC (Ipswich) His Honour Judge Gregory Paul Lynham (Townsville) His Honour Judge Bernard Thomas Porter QC Her Honour Judge Jennifer Marie Rosengren Her Honour Judge Tracy Fantin (Cairns) His Honour Judge Michael Williamson QC His Honour Judge John McGilchrist Coker (Townsville) His Honour Judge Nathan Jarro His Honour Judge Glen Cash QC (Maroochydore) His Honour Judge John Joseph Allen QC (also on QCAT duties) Her Honour Judge Vicki Ann Loury QC His Honour Judge Ken Barlow QC His Honour Judge Michael Byrne QC His Honour Judge Rowan Jackson QC His Honour Judge Jeffrey Clarke Her Honour Judge Geraldine Dann His Honour Judge Robert East QC (until 31 May 2021)

Regional, planning and childrens court judges

Regional judges

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

Maroochydore	Judge Long SC Judge Cash QC
Southport	Judge McGinness Judge Kent QC Judge Muir Judge Jackson QC Judge Dann
Townsville	Judge Lynham Judge Coker
Rockhampton	Judge Burnett AM Judge Clarke
Ipswich	Judge Horneman-Wren SC Judge Lynch QC
Cairns	Judge Morzone QC Judge Fantin
Beenleigh	Judge Chowdhury

Planning and Environment Court

The Planning and Environment Court judges during 2020/2021 are listed below:

Chief Judge O'Brien	Judge Kent QC
Judge Richards	Judge Muir
Judge Rackemann	Judge Kefford
Judge Rafter SC	Judge Fantin
Judge Everson	Judge Williamson QC
Judge Jones	Judge Coker
Judge Long SC	Judge Cash QC
Judge Horneman-Wren SC	Judge Clarke
Judge Morzone QC	Judge Dann

Childrens Court of Queensland

The Childrens Court judges during 2020/2021 are listed below:

Chief Judge O'Brien	Judge Chowdhury
Chief Judge Devereaux SC	Judge Muir
Judge Smith	Judge Kefford
Judge Richards - President	Judge Lynch QC
Judge Shanahan AM	Judge Lynham
Judge Dick SC	Judge Porter QC
Judge Dearden	Judge Rosengren
Judge Rafter SC	Judge Fantin
Judge Clare SC	Judge Williamson QC
Judge Everson	Judge Coker
Judge McGinness	Judge Jarro
Judge Reid	Judge Cash QC
Judge Long SC	Judge Allen QC
Judge Farr SC	Judge Loury QC
Judge Horneman-Wren SC	Judge Byrne QC
Judge Morzone QC	Judge Jackson QC
Judge Burnett AM	Judge Clarke
Judge Moynihan QC	Judge Dann
Judge Kent QC	

The work of the District Court

The Chief Judge is responsible for the administration of the court and for ensuring the orderly and expeditious exercise of the jurisdiction and powers of the Court. The Court has wide civil, criminal and appellate jurisdiction. Judges hear and determine all appeals from decisions of magistrates, conduct criminal proceedings commenced on indictment and civil proceedings commenced by claim or originating application.

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. Many of the judges also sit as Planning and Environment Court judges and Childrens Court judges.

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.

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 Rules Committee, the ISIP Judicial Group, the ISIP Judiciary Sub-Group (Civil Case Management) 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

Information about the organisation and practices of the court, including calendar, law lists and practice directions are published on the Queensland Court's website.

Criminal jurisdiction

In practice, the court deals with charges of all indictable offences other than homicides and the most serious drug offences. The great majority of all defendants charged on indictment came before the District Court in 2020/2021.

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.

The Chief Judge and the Judge Administrator, with assistance from other judges, managed the criminal list in Brisbane. In the regions, the lists are managed by the resident judges.

For the larger circuit centres, Judge Long SC had special responsibility for the Gympie and Kingaroy lists, Judge Reid for Maryborough and Hervey Bay, Judge Dick SC for the Mackay lists, Judge Richards for Toowoomba, Judge Dearden for Mount Isa and Judge Clare SC for Bundaberg.

The large criminal workload is subjected to careful case management in Brisbane and in the regional centres as well as in the larger circuit centres. With such regular reviews and case management the Office of the Director of Prosecutions, Legal Aid Queensland and the profession are well aware, as matters pass through the court, of the likely course the matter will take.

This is more difficult for the court in the rural and remote centres. The judges hold callovers and reviews by telephone before the circuit starts. However, because prosecution and defence counsel seldom visit the circuit centre to confer with litigants or witnesses before the circuit is to start, despite the judge's efforts, a plea on the morning of the trial or a late request for an adjournment is more likely in those places.

Depending upon the lists, each year the judges might sit at more than 32 centres throughout Queensland — that is in Brisbane, the seven regional centres, 24 other centres where jury trials can be held, and some of the 15 remote or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including those in the Gulf, Cape and Torres Strait.

In Brisbane, 2,003 new cases were presented during the year (compared to 2,438 in 2019/2020) and the court ended the year with 880 outstanding criminal cases (961 last year), having disposed of 2,116 matters (2,415 last year). The clearance rate in Brisbane increased to 105.6 percent this year from 99.1 percent last year. Of the outstanding cases, 17.7 percent were more than 12 months old from the date of presentation of indictment (17.5 percent last year), and 5.2 percent were more than 24 months old (4 percent last year).

In the major regional centres where judges are based – Beenleigh, Cairns, Ipswich, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Southport and Townsville – a total of 3,272 new cases were presented during the year and those major centres ended the year having disposed of 3,275 cases, with 1,278 outstanding.

Table 1: The activity of the District Court criminal list 2020/2021

	Number of Defendants ¹			Clearance Rates ⁴	Backlog Indicator ⁵	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	2,003	2,116	880	105.6%	17.7%	5.2%
Regional centres						
Beenleigh	484	463	248	95.7%	32.5%	12.0%
Cairns	554	535	238	96.6%	22.7%	6.3%
Ipswich	364	392	172	107.7%	26.7%	7.0%
Maroochydore	452	430	152	95.1%	19.1%	3.3%
Rockhampton	260	254	50	97.7%	10.0%	0.0%
Southport	618	706	302	114.2%	32.1%	8.3%
Townsville	540	495	116	91.7%	16.4%	4.3%
Total for Brisbane and regional centres	5,275	5,391	2,158	102.2%	22.5%	6.4%
Circuit centres						
Bowen	1	1	2	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bundaberg	96	104	30	108.3%	40.0%	3.3%
Charleville	16	21	7	131.3%	14.3%	0.0%
Charters Towers	2	2	4	100.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Clermont	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cloncurry	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cunnamulla	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dalby	44	64	30	145.5%	13.3%	3.3%
Emerald	16	17	20	106.3%	20.0%	0.0%
Gladstone	64	82	15	128.1%	20.0%	0.0%
Goondiwindi	18	25	4	138.9%	25.0%	0.0%
Gympie	103	134	45	130.1%	11.1%	8.9%
Hervey Bay	59	73	37	123.7%	27.0%	8.1%
Hughenden	-	-	-	-	-	-
Innisfail	8	28	11	350.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kingaroy	39	55	20	141.0%	10.0%	5.0%
Longreach	-	-	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mackay	155	201	57	129.7%	12.3%	0.0%
Maryborough	51	59	27	115.7%	14.8%	3.7%
Mt Isa	104	167	46	160.6%	15.2%	2.2%
Roma	6	12	2	200.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Stanthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-
Toowoomba	179	168	47	93.9%	12.8%	2.1%
Warwick	54	66	13	122.2%	15.4%	7.7%
Total for circuit centres	1,015	1,279	418	126.0%	16.5%	3.6%
State total	6,290	6,670	2,576	106.0%	21.6%	5.9%

- (1) 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.
- (2) The unit of measurement of workload is the number of defendants per case. Where a case has multiple defendants each defendant is counted separately. Where the same defendant has two cases lodged on the same day they are counted as two lodgments. Where the same defendant has multiple cases lodged on different days they are counted once for each case.
- (3) The above figures are not comparable to years prior to 2018-19 due to the change in counting rule as outlined in (2) applied in 2018-19. In previous years a defendant who had two cases lodged on the same day was counted once whereas it is now counted twice.
- (4) Clearance Rate: Finalisations/Lodgments
- (5) Backlog Indicator: the number active defendants with proceedings older than the specified time.

Civil jurisdiction

The District Court's civil jurisdiction mostly conferred by s68 of the *District Court of Queensland Act 1967*. Section 69 confers on the Court for the purposes of exercising that jurisdiction, all the powers of the Supreme Court. The Court has an extensive general jurisdiction enabling it to deal with, among other matters (subject to the monetary limit of \$750,000):

- all personal claims, including equitable claims, to recover money sums
- any claim (without monetary limit) referred to the court by the Supreme Court for assessment
- by the consent of the parties, any claim which could be brought in the Supreme Court
- actions for possession under any mortgage or other security
- actions to grant relief from mistake and for rectification
- actions seeking declarations and consequential orders arising from partnership disputes
- administration of estates
- family provision applications pursuant to the *Succession Act 1981*
- construction of wills, 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, with a view to their prompt 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	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		From filing date	
					% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	2,580	3,304	2,757	128.1%	27.9%	6.2%
State Total	3,486	4,139	3,763	118.7%	27.4%	5.9%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgments

Backlog Indicator: the number active defendants with proceedings older than the specified time.

Commercial List

I have written of developments in the conduct of the Commercial List earlier in this report. The Commercial List judges during the year were Judge Jones, Judge Muir, Judge Kefford, Judge Porter QC and Judge Barlow QC.

Applications court

The *Uniform Civil Procedure Rules* provide for a proceeding to be commenced in some circumstances by an application (an originating 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.

Appellate jurisdiction

During the year this court heard and determined 365 criminal appeals and 72 civil appeals from the Magistrates Court.

Case management of appeals to the District Court continued with regular reviews of outstanding appeals throughout the year.

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	
					From filing date	
Civil	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	67	83	49	123.9%	20.4%	2.0%
State Total	104	128	74	123.1%	20.3%	1.4%
Criminal						
Brisbane	164	224	113	136.6%	11.5%	1.8%
State Total	323	343	226	106.2%	10.2%	0.9%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgments

Backlog Indicator: the number active defendants with proceedings older than the specified time.

The Planning and Environment Court

The court is constituted by a District Court judge appointed to it (a P&E Court judge). There is a concentration of P&E Court judges in Brisbane but, with the exceptions of Beenleigh and Rockhampton, a P&E Court judge is based in each regional centre. The court may sit anywhere.

The P&E 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 continued pursuant to the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* and now, pursuant to the *Planning and Environment Court Act 2016* (the PEC Act). The Court's rules and Practice Directions are made under the PEC Act.

The P&E Court exercises jurisdiction over a wide variety 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 and 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 P&E Court is characterised by active list supervision, individual case management and the comprehensive deployment of Alternative Dispute Resolution (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 P&E Court's management of expert evidence is recognised as one of the best in the common law world.

A large number of cases are finalised without proceeding to a full hearing. 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 or pursuant to an order of the court. The ADR Registrar conducts mediations; convenes and chairs 'without prejudice' meetings, meetings of experts and case management conferences, not only in Brisbane, but in centres across the State. The P&E Court's ADR service has been recognised internationally as providing visionary ADR access to justice.

The P&E Court has maintained 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 management of expert evidence; its regional service and the commitment of its judges to ongoing review and reform.

Table 4: Clearance rate in planning and environment cases

Planning and Environment Court 2020/2021						
				Clearance	Backlog Indicator	
				Rate *	From filing date	
	Lodged	Finalised	Active		% > 12 mths	% > 24 mths
Brisbane	323	405	263	125.4%	31.2%	12.5%
State Total	405	465	355	114.8%	32.4%	13.2%

*Clearance rate - finalisations/lodgments

Backlog Indicator: the number active defendants with proceedings older than the specified time.

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 section 117 of the *Child Safety Act 1999* and applications under the *Surrogacy Act 2010*.

The Children's Court of Queensland is a specialist jurisdiction established under the *Childrens Court Act 1992*. The President of the Childrens Court of Queensland is Judge Richards. There are presently 33 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* 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 13 of the judges are based:

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

Judges also travel on circuit to other centres throughout the State and regional judges sit in Brisbane periodically during the year. 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.

Table 5: Judge sitting weeks at regional centres, including resident Judges and visiting Judges

Regional Centre	Sitting Weeks
Beenleigh	56
Cairns	81
Ipswich	66
Maroochydore	73
Rockhampton	42
Southport	123
Townsville	80

Cairns

Judge Morzone QC

Judge Fantin

Judge Morzone QC and Judge Fantin were the resident judges in Cairns managing 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.

Rockhampton

Judge Burnett AM (until 25 September 2020)

Judge Clarke (from 28 September 2020)

The resident judge in Rockhampton, Judge Burnett AM until 25 September 2020 and Judge Clarke from 28 September 202 both hold commissions in the Childrens Court of Queensland, managed the court's Rockhampton lists. Rockhampton is also served by the Supreme Court's Central Judge. Judge Burnett AM and Judge Clarke undertook circuits in the region and elsewhere in the state. Some assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres.

Townsville

Judge Lynham

Judge Coker

Judge Lynham and Judge Coker were the resident judges during the year. Townsville is also served by the Supreme Court's Northern Judge. Judge Coker holds a commission in the Planning and Environment Court. Judge Lynham and Judge Coker hold commissions in the Childrens Court. They also undertake circuits in their region, principally to Bowen, Charters Towers and Hughenden. Some assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres.

Maroochydore

Judge Long SC

Judge Cash QC

Judge Long SC and Judge Cash QC 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 a little 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.

The Maroochydore-based judges undertake much of the circuit work at Gympie, Kingaroy as well as assisting with Hervey Bay. The Kingaroy district includes the largely indigenous community of Cherbourg. Both judges undertake some circuit work elsewhere in the state.

Southport

Judge McGinness (until 18 January 2021)

Judge Kent QC

Judge Muir (until 5 October 2020)

Judge Jackson QC (from 21 September 2020)

Judge Dann (from 18 January 2020)

All of the judges located at Southport hold commissions as Childrens Court judges and Judge Kent QC, Judge Muir and Judge Dann hold Planning and Environment Court commissions. The judges from time to time perform circuit work at centres elsewhere in the State. Southport also receives judicial support from Brisbane as required. Judge Jackson QC and Judge Dann replaced Judge McGinness and Judge Muir when they transferred to Brisbane.

Ipswich

Judge Horneman-Wren SC

Judge Lynch QC

Judge Horneman-Wren SC and Judge Lynch QC dealt with the Ipswich caseload. Judge Horneman-Wren and Judge Lynch hold commissions in the Childrens Court of Queensland, and Judge Horneman-Wren is also a Planning and Environment Court Judge. The judges undertook circuits to other centres as required.

Beenleigh

Judge Chowdhury

Judge Chowdhury is the resident judge in Beenleigh. The judge also conducted circuits in other centres. Considerable assistance was provided by judges on circuit from other centres. Judge Chowdhury also holds a commission in the Childrens Court of Queensland.

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 may 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 39 centres (excluding those with a resident judge) where judges may 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.

Judges' committees

The Judges' committees assist and advise the Chief Judge in respect of the conduct of litigation by the Court and in responding to numerous law reform issues proposed by the Commonwealth or the State.

The membership of the judges' committees as at 30 June 2021, with the Chief Judge an ex officio member of each committee, was as follows:

Civil Procedure and Rules

Convenor: Judge Porter QC
Members: Judge Kent QC

Court Excellence

Convenor: Judge Horneman-Wren SC
Members: Judge Smith
Judge Rackemann
Judge Rafter SC
Judge Jones
Judge Reid
Judge Farr SC
Judge Morzone QC
Judge Sheridan
Judge Moynihan QC
Judge Kent QC

Criminal Law

Convenor: Judge Rafter SC
Members: Judge Clare SC
Judge Dick SC
Judge Farr SC
Judge Moynihan QC
Judge Kent QC
Judge Lynch QC
Judge Lorry QC

Cultural Awareness

Convenor: Judge Muir
Members: Judge Everson
Judge McGinness
Judge Reid
Judge Kent QC

Professional Development and Judicial Well-being

Convenor: Judge Sheridan
Members: Judge Richards
Judge Rackemann
Judge Dearden
Judge Reid
Judge Moynihan QC
Judge Williamson QC

Salaries and Entitlements

Convenor: Judge Rackemann
Members: Judge Chowdhury
Judge Barlow QC

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Convenor: Judge Richards
Members: Judge Everson
Judge McGinness
Judge Reid
Judge Morzone QC
Judge Fantin

Judges' contributions to the legal professional community

Many judges whether resident in Brisbane or a regional centre, contribute to local and national seminars, conferences, moots or academic institutions. The following is a sample of the contributions made during the year under review:-

- Presentations on advocacy and dealing with expert reports to the ODPP conference
- Legal Wise criminal Law conference Keynote address
- QUT International law moot
- Queensland Law Society seminars
-
- Planning and Environment session of the 2021 Queensland Environmental Law Association conference in Brisbane.
-
- Ethics session at the Bar Association Conference
-
- Bar Association of Queensland's CPD Event "*Future Proofing your Practice in the Planning & Environment Court*".
-
- Presenting and participating in Queensland Environmental Law Association seminars and functions
-
- Final moot for the Bar Practice Course
-
- Presentation at a breakfast seminar for the Queensland Environmental Law Association for International Women's Day
-
- Presentation to the Townsville profession on some aspects of the new District Court Practice Direction 11 of 2020
-
- Presentation to the Gympie District Law
-
- BAQ CPD on managing stress at the Bar
-
- Representing the Court on the Australian Judicial Officers Association, Governing Council
- Chair of the USQ Law School Advisory Committee; Adjunct Professor of Law at USQ and an Academic Fellow at Kings College.
- Representing the Court on the National Judicial Council for Cultural Diversity. This important committee is concerned with the many aspects of cultural diversity which confronts judges in the modern Australian court.

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

The Office of the Executive Director and Principal Registrar, Supreme District and Land Courts Service is responsible for the management and coordination of registry administration, as well as the provision of judicial support services for the District Court of Queensland.

Ms Julie Steel is the Executive Director and Principal Registrar, and is supported by executive, administrative and registry staff throughout Queensland.

Additionally, Ms Steel is an ex-officio member of the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting, and of the Legal Practitioners Admissions Board. She is also the chair of the Public Records Review Committee at Queensland State Archives, a member of the Supreme Court Library Committee, and regularly attends meetings of the Rules Committee.

Registry Services

Court registries are responsible for:

- receiving and sealing documents for filing and service;
- providing procedural information about court processes and the progress of particular matters;
- maintaining court records and ensuring that documents such as Verdict and Judgment Records 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, and
- performing all necessary administrative work associated with the criminal and civil jurisdictions of the court.

There are permanent District Court registries at Brisbane, Cairns, Rockhampton and Townsville. Registrars at those centres have the responsibility of determining certain applications without the necessity for judicial involvement, such as default judgments and warrants to enforce the court's civil orders.

Further registries with resident judges are located at Beenleigh, Ipswich, Maroochydore and Southport, and many other regional centres throughout Queensland are visited on circuit. local Magistrates Courts registry staff perform the registry duties at those times.

Registry workloads

Across the state, there were 6,290 criminal lodgements during 2020/2021, a decrease of 17% compared to 2019/2020, when 7,580 were received.

Jury trials before the District Court increased from 461 during 2019/2020 to 594 in 2020/2021. The average length of those trials decreased from 3.4 days to 3.2 days.

Report on Government Services (RoGS) civil lodgements decreased by 17.9%, from 4,247 in 2019/2020 to 3,486 during 2020/2021.

Technology updates

The registry is looking forward to a new jury management system that is being developed and on track to begin during 2021/2022. The new system is broken into two distinct components – a 'QJuror' portal for prospective and empanelled jurors, and a 'Jury Management System' (JMS) that will be used by registry staff to manage interactions with jurors.

The QJuror portal will provide a vastly improved service for prospective and empanelled jurors. Some of the features and benefits of QJuror include:

- an online portal to answer the juror questionnaire, apply for excusal, and update details such as address;
- the ability to receive communications by SMS and email;
- receiving electronic reminders to complete forms and, if summoned, about their attendance;
- attendance records, and travel claims all processed via the portal; and
- being paid electronically by providing bank account details.

The benefits for registry staff using JMS include:

- enabling the electronic processing of online questionnaire responses;
- automating the jury sittings schedules and the confirmation of the sittings to registries for all jurisdictions and court locations;
- providing electronic integration with third parties, including Queensland Police Service, Electoral Commission of Queensland, and external printing services; and
- producing archiving reminders allowing staff to know when to archive physical and electronic data.

Queensland Intermediary Scheme Pilot Program

The Queensland Intermediary Scheme (QIS) referred to in last year's annual report was enabled when the *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offence Reforms) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020* was passed during September 2020. The insertion of a new Division 4C into Part 2 of the *Evidence Act 1977* will provide the framework in which the scheme will operate. The QIS will formally commence in Brisbane and Cairns on 5 July 2021.

While a key focus will be to assist witnesses with communication difficulties to give their best evidence to the court, intermediaries can also be engaged during a police investigation. Any interactions between an intermediary and witness will be electronically recorded and disclosable. At a directions hearing, the intermediary will be able to explain to the court their assessment of the witness's communication issues and their recommendation about how to communicate with the witness. The intermediary will attend at the pre-recording of evidence hearing in accordance with the directions of the court.

Registry staff, including a program manager, intake matching officer, administration officer and two in-house intermediaries, commenced in June 2021 to manage the QIS and coordinate training for a panel of intermediaries in readiness for the commencement of the legislation. There are currently 10 fully trained intermediaries on the panel.

A consortium led by the Australian Catholic University will undertake a process and outcome evaluation of the QIS pilot program and assess the effectiveness of the intermediaries in Brisbane and Cairns. An interim evaluation report analysing the first 12 months of operation is due to be delivered in October 2022, followed by the final report due at the conclusion of the two year pilot program in October 2023.

Further information about the QIS is available on the Queensland Court's website at: <https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/services/queensland-intermediary-scheme>.

Court Network volunteers

Court Network's volunteers continue to provide a range of support services to court users across jurisdictions in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville, and Domestic and Family Violence reception desks in Beenleigh, Brisbane, Ipswich and Southport.

The volunteers provide court users with non-legal information, practical and emotional support, advocacy and referrals to enable them to access justice and navigate the court system. They also play a role in ensuring their contribution with clients adds to the function of the courts and assists court staff where possible.

During 2020/2021 Court Network Volunteers assisted 3,824 court users through the Brisbane Supreme and District Information Kiosk, 1,552 support services were provided to court users at the Brisbane Supreme and District Court, 249 in Cairns and a further 257 in Townsville Supreme and District Courts.

The Victim Support Unit (VSU) provides coordinated cross-jurisdictional support for adult victims in the criminal justice system. This includes pre and post court support and support to clients during their matter. VSU services are trauma informed and include assisting clients with financial applications, the preparation of Victim Impact Statements, support during the provision of evidence, information, referral and the identification of other needs through ongoing assessments and case management.

During the year, more than 1,017 VSU clients were assisted with approximately 3,367 hours of service provided.

Court Network has made changes in its service delivery due to environmental changes, community risks and as a result of funding reductions. The Court Network volunteer population is one that has been impacted by the fragility of the community. Unfortunately, this has led to many of the workforce making difficult decisions around their roles and this has led to a reduction in numbers. Court Network is

continuing to rebuild by recruiting an increasingly diverse group of Networkers to serve the needs of court users.

Court Network continues to encourage and provide ongoing learning opportunities for its Volunteers and to look for new options to serve the court users and courts in which Volunteers operate.

Protect all Children Today (PACT) Inc.

PACT educates, empowers and supports victims, helping them understand the legal system and being by their side as they give their best evidence. As a not-for-profit agency with more than 35 years' experience, PACT is committed to impartially supporting victims and witnesses who have to give evidence in court. Our services are available state-wide through a range of medias, from in person support to remote support via phone or video conferencing.

During 2020/2021, PACT supported 1,755 children and adults. Approximately 66% of clients are female, while approximately 60% of all cases were of a sexual nature, followed by robbery/burglary (12%), and assault (11%). In 49% of cases the defendant was not known to the victim, whereas in the remaining 51% of cases the defendant was a parent, step-parent, other relative or family friend.

PACT's goal is to ensure every victim is supported and empowered throughout their justice journey. Here's how PACT helps:

1. Education and Information

With age-appropriate educational resources for both children and adults, PACT demystifies the complex court process in easy-to-understand ways, reducing the fear of giving evidence by helping victims and their families understand the key stages and what to expect when giving evidence.

2. Emotional Support

PACT supports children as they prepare to give evidence and are by their side when they view their initial police statement - and later when they give evidence - to help them stay calm, attentive and focussed. PACT sits next to the child when they give evidence from the pre-recording room, reducing their anxiety and stopping them feeling isolated or alone.

3. Empowering Victims

PACT helps victims find their courage, strength and resilience, giving them the confidence to find their voice and supporting their right to be heard without fear in court. The total number of people now supported by PACT has reached almost 28,000.

Acknowledgements

While the impacts of COVID-19 became more manageable during 2020/2021, restrictions continued to occur from time to time. On those occasions, the ongoing commitment and professionalism of registry staff was essential in ensuring workloads were managed efficiently, and that disruptions to courts and other services were kept to a minimum. I have no doubt that some of the most significant assets of the court are the registry staff.

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

Supreme Court Library Queensland

Supreme Court Library Queensland (SCLQ) was established under statute to serve the administration of justice in Queensland through provision of legal information services to the Queensland judiciary, legal profession and public. As the primary legal information provider for the state's judiciary and legal profession, *your law library* provides a comprehensive suite of services including reference, research and document delivery, training and support, and publication of the official unreported decisions of Queensland courts and tribunals, together with a variety of current awareness services reporting the latest developments in Queensland law. All of these services are freely available to Queensland's judges and their associates across the state.

The library maintains print collections in several provincial courthouses in addition to the main library collection in Brisbane at the QEII Courts of Law. It also continues to service the judges' library collection on level 15 of the QEII Courts of Law building by maintaining print subscription services and processing new acquisitions. In 2020/2021 the library's combined print collection comprised over 175,000 items, with the library purchasing 194 new monographs during the year and maintaining over 200 print subscriptions.

For members of the judiciary, their statewide access to a comprehensive collection of over 1000 online resources available via the library's Judicial Virtual Library (JVL) is their most current and reliable source of legal information. In 2020/2021 the library catalogue enabled access to more than 65,000 online full text titles, including 566 key digital texts via our eBook collections.

As the publishing arm of the Queensland courts, the library has maintained its commitment to timely publication of the official version of full text unreported judgments from Queensland courts and tribunals. Most decisions are published online within an hour of being handed down, making the SCLQ website the primary and most current and authoritative access point for Queensland case law.

In 2020/2021 the library published over 2300 new decisions from Queensland courts and tribunals. Of the new decisions published, 305 of them were from the District Court and 67 were from the Planning and Environment Court. In addition, 76 District Court pre-trial rulings were published in various places. By the end of June 2021 the total number of full text Queensland decisions available from the library website was over 75,000.

The library is also responsible for provision and maintenance of the Queensland Sentencing Information Service (QGIS), which is relied upon by the prosecution, defence and judiciary to promote consistency and fairness in sentencing criminal offenders, and is available to all judges. Use of the service continues to be high, with over 674,000 page views in 2020/2021. During the year more than 5400 new sentencing remarks transcripts were added to the database, increasing the number of available transcripts in QGIS to over 93,000. By year's end there were 884 subscriptions to QGIS by sole practitioners, law firms and small public sector agencies or business units. (This is in addition to the 'corporate' subscriptions of major criminal justice sector agencies such as the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid Queensland and Queensland Police Service, which provide access to many individuals employed by them.)

The library's websites are the primary means of accessing its information resources and services for most of its customers. In 2020/2021 almost 7 million page views were recorded for the SCLQ public websites and JVL. Almost 70% of total page views (over 4.8 million) were recorded for CaseLaw alone (including the official unreported judgments collection). The library catalogue recorded over 4.4 million collection uses, and VLL had over 1060 active subscribers. Specialist legal research tools developed by the library, including the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules Bulletin, comprise part of the wide range of legal content available to the judiciary via the library's websites.

The library provides a range of current awareness services to judges, including the *Judicial Daily Update* service, a daily news and current awareness newsletter tailored specifically for the Queensland judiciary. It also publishes and distributes the *Queensland Legal Updater* (QLU), a weekly email bulletin designed to update legal professionals on changes to legislation and developments in case law relevant to legal practice in Queensland. Together, the judicial current awareness services and QLU recorded over 144,000 views during the year (up 14% on 2019/2020).

As the official member library of the Bar Association of Queensland and the Queensland Law Society, the library services the information needs of legal practitioners across the state. The library's unique and popular Virtual Legal Library (VLL) service for the legal profession was accessible to 1064 eligible Queensland legal practitioners at the end of June 2021. Throughout the year the library's skilled and experienced research librarians continued to assist the judiciary and legal profession with navigating the legal research tools within the library's print and online collections. The team responded to over 7500 information enquiries (6% higher than the previous year), and almost 19,000 documents were supplied in response to these queries. During 2020/2021 the library also provided the judiciary with legal research training on request.

The library's legal heritage and education programs, undertaken in collaboration with the courts, are designed to foster broad appreciation of Queensland's legal heritage and to promote an understanding of the Queensland justice system and its role in society. Highlights during 2020/2021 included:

- Over 3700 visitors participated in the popular schools education program, with over 1100 students participating in judges' or magistrates' information sessions and over 2500 students witnessing the law in action by observing court proceedings. This was a 17% decrease on 2019/2020 due to the program operating at a reduced capacity after it recommenced in August 2020, to cater for appropriate physical distancing in response to the coronavirus pandemic. However, online research training sessions conducted remotely by library staff continued to increase in popularity with over 1200 participants, up 30% on 2019/2020.
- The *Graphic justice: pictures worth 1000 words* exhibition, which was installed in the Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Heritage Centre in May 2020, was opened to the public in July 2020. The exhibition content was refreshed in May 2021 by including two further examples of employing visual content to make the law more accessible.
- The library's major exhibition *The many hats of Sir Samuel Griffith* was installed in the main library space in November 2020. The exhibition includes original items on loan from the Queensland State Archives, the High Court of Australia and the Queensland Museum. In May 2021 a special evening event was hosted by the library with opening remarks by the Hon Justice Thomas Bradley of the Supreme Court of Queensland and an engaging talk on Sir Samuel Griffith by the Hon Justice Andrew Greenwood of the Federal Court of Australia. Since November 2020 the library has run a series of public programs in conjunction with this exhibition including exhibitions tours, curator talks and a professional development webinar series for legal studies educators.
- The 2020 Selden Society lecture program continued to be suspended during the second half of 2020 due to the pandemic restrictions on large gatherings. In August 2020 the library jointly hosted a webinar with the Australian Academy of Law on Sir Samuel Griffith (*Celebrating Samuel Griffith*) featuring the Chief Justice as one of the esteemed panel members. In March 2021 the Selden Society lecture program returned to the Banco Court with a lecture by Supreme Court judge the Hon Justice David Jackson on *The audacity of Griffith as a law reformer*. This lecture was also livestreamed to a remote audience. The annual Supreme Court of Queensland Oration for 2020 was also suspended in response to the pandemic.
- There were a number of legal heritage displays within the main library public space over the course of the year: *Out of the centre—Ipswich, Toowoomba and Warwick* (June to September 2020), *Out of the centre—Rockhampton* (September to December 2020), *Out of the centre—Cairns* (January to May 2021) and *Constructing the Courts—Queensland legal architecture* (installed 2021). A version of the *Out of the centre—Cairns* display was installed as an ongoing exhibition in the library premises in Cairns.
- The *Queensland Legal Yearbook 2019* reviewed the year's legal events and statistics, and contained speeches by members of the judiciary in 2019.

Looking ahead to 2021/2022, there will be a continued focus by the library on providing a high level of support to Queensland's busy judges, with a 'digital first' emphasis. We will continue to support adoption by judges of the 'go anywhere' electronic versions of popular legal commentaries and textbooks designed to be downloaded to tablets and other mobile devices, as well as providing training and support in identifying, locating and making more effective and efficient use of the range of print, electronic and online resources available to the judiciary via JVL. We look forward to increased use of the VLL service by eligible Queensland legal practitioners, and to redeveloped SCLQ CaseLaw services and websites and the redevelopment of QGIS. Together these initiatives will contribute to improved legal information services for the Queensland judiciary, legal profession and public.

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 of Queensland

Table 5: District Court practice directions

Number	Description	Date issued
No. 5 of 2020	Change of Name – Travis Schultz Law to Travis Schultz and Partners	15 July 2020
No. 6 of 2020	Disposal of Charges of Summary Offences	13 August 2020
No. 7 of 2020	Appeals	13 August 2020
No. 8 of 2020	Designation of Court Holidays – Registry – 21 December 2020 to 1 January 2021	7 September 2020
No. 9 of 2020	Change of Name – SJ Gurnsey and Company to Rostron Carlyle Rojas Lawyers	7 September 2020
No. 10 of 2020	Change of Name – Shaw McDonald Lawyers to SMD Lawyers	10 September 2020
No. 11 of 2020	Commercial List: District Court	16 December 2020
No. 1 of 2021	Change of Name: Quinn & Scattini Lawyers to Ryan Murdoch O'Regan Lawyers	2 March 2021
No. 2 of 2021	Change of Name: Moloney MacCallum Abdelshahied Lawyers to Moloney MacCallum Lawyers	12 March 2021
No. 3 of 2021	Change of Name: Bradshaw Pattison Lawyers to Bradshaw Lawyers	15 April 2021
No. 4 of 2021	Change of Name: Brisbane Criminal Lawyers to Brisbane Criminal Lawyers Pty Ltd	26 May 2021
No. 5 of 2021	Protected Counselling Communications	11 June 2021

Appendix 2: District Court associates as at 30 June 2021

Bonnie Kubler-Shaw	Associate to His Honour Chief Judge BG Devereaux SC
Joseph Bullock	Associate to His Honour Judge PE Smith
Georgia Kelly	Associate to Her Honour Judge D Richards
Kate Archibald	Associate to Her Honour Judge JM Dick SC
Kate Dowse	Associate to His Honour Judge ME Rackemann
Kate Jamieson	Associate to His Honour Judge IFM Dearden
Sophia Leembruggen	Associate to His Honour Judge AJ Rafter SC
Jessica Rosengren	Associate to Her Honour Judge LJ Clare SC
Alice Tanzer-Wilde	Associate to His Honour Judge WG Everson
Tomea Ryan	Associate to Her Honour Judge KM McGinness
Orchi Saker	Associate to His Honour Judge RS Jones
Kira Larwill	Associate to His Honour Judge DA Reid
Sarah Aljassim	Associate to His Honour Judge GP Long SC (Maroochydore)
Greta Sweeney	Associate to His Honour Judge BW Farr SC
Madeleine McEniery	Associate to His Honour Judge AA Horneman-Wren SC (Ipswich)
Sasha Gubbins	Associate to His Honour Judge O Rinaudo AM
Polly McKinnon	Associate to His Honour Judge DP Morzone QC (Cairns)
Alice O'Connor	Associate to His Honour Judge MJ Burnett AM
Grace McCabe	Associate to Her Honour Judge SC Sheridan
Campbell Windsor	Associate to His Honour Judge A Moynihan QC
Alison Waller	Associate to His Honour Judge DR Kent QC (Southport)
Henry Coventry	Associate to His Honour Judge MC Chowdhury (Beenleigh)
Helen Booth	Associate to Her Honour Judge CM Muir (Southport)
Ulani Powell	Associate to Her Honour Judge NJ Kefford
Sarah Sheppard	Associate to His Honour Judge DR Lynch QC (Ipswich)
Georgia Kioh	Associate to His Honour Judge GP Lynham (Townsville)
Emily Rudz	Associate to His Honour Judge BT Porter QC
Kate Watson-Brown	Associate to Her Honour Judge JM Rosengren
Nathanael Honnef	Associate to Her Honour Judge T Fantin (Cairns)
Tessa Webster	Associate to His Honour Judge M Williamson QC
Rachel McCulloch	Associate to His Honour Judge J McG Coker (Townsville)
Remy Crozier	Associate to His Honour Judge N Jarro
Jordan Lee	Associate to His Honour Judge G Cash QC (Maroochydore)
Rachel Tomassen	Associate to His Honour Judge J Allen QC (QCAT)
Charlotte Whan	Associate to Her Honour Judge V Loury QC
Martin Doyle	Associate to His Honour Judge K Barlow QC
Thomas Lyons	Associate to His Honour Judge M Byrne QC
Jasmin Percy	Associate to His Honour Judge R Jackson QC (Southport)
Millie Vock	Associate to His Honour Judge J Clarke (Rockhampton)
Ellie Neuendorf	Associate to Her Honour Judge G Dann (Southport)

