

Our regions



OUR REGIONS

Northern Region

The Queensland Magistrates Court's Northern Region covers an area which sweeps from Ayr on the coral coast, westward to the Northern Territory border, then north across the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York Peninsula to the many islands that dot the Torres Strait. Combine the azure and emerald of the reef and rainforests with the grey-greens of the savannah wilderness, of the western tableland and gulf shores with the rich ochre reds and browns of the far west and you have the kaleidoscope that is Northern Queensland. The region is home to two World Heritage Listed areas—the Wet Tropics Coastline from Cooktown to Townsville and the Great Barrier Reef. The communities and lifestyles within our region are as diverse as its landscape.

Throughout the region, 16 magistrates administer justice to over 33 communities from the following major court centres:

Cairns	6 magistrates
Innisfail	1 magistrate
Mareeba	1 magistrate
Mount Isa	1 magistrate
Townsville	6 magistrates
Northern Relieving Magistrate (based in Cairns)	1 magistrate

Cairns

The jurisdiction of the court based in Cairns extends from Trinity Inlet in the south and stretches along the east and western shores of Cape York to Thursday Island and Badu Island in the Torres Strait.

With a population of over 124 000 residents in Cairns, a constant and heavy stream of visitors from overseas and around Australia, and over 80 000 vehicles registered in the city, the main components of our court work here is set out in Table 11.

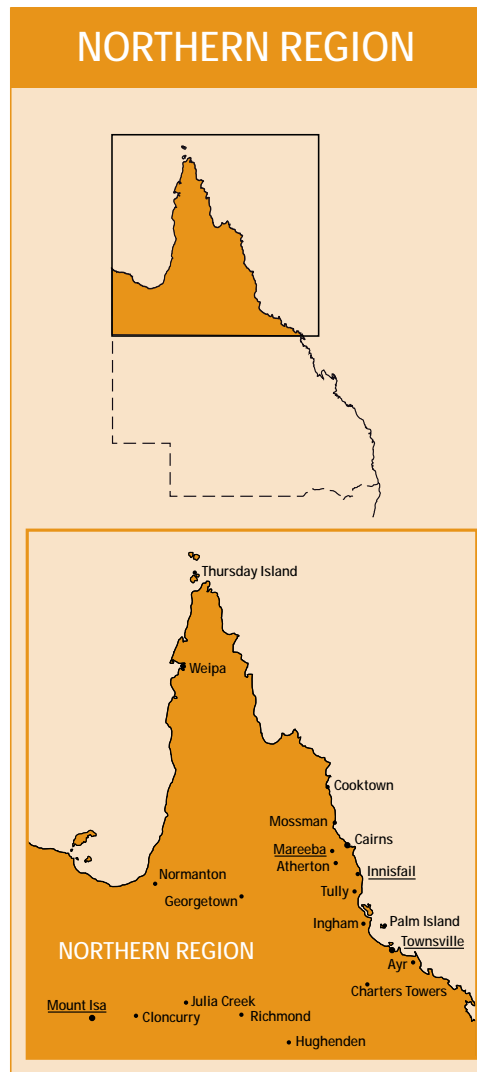


Table 11:
Cairns Magistrates Court 2005–06

Jurisdiction totals	
Criminal Defendants	10 216
Childrens Court Defendants	475
Domestic Violence Applications	967
Civil Claims	687
Minor Debt Claims	479
Small Claims	725

This year, with an increase in the number of magistrates from five to six in the previous financial year, we have been able to provide a second magistrate to help with the continued growth of the daily workload of the Arrest Court. The implementation of a summary hearing mention procedure has improved the daily listing of matters and the effective use of court time. At 30 June 2006, hearing dates could be offered within nine weeks of notification that a matter will proceed to trial.

The court in Cairns is now the main centre that handles reportable deaths for the region. There has been an increase in the volume of coronial work.

Three magistrates have been trained and appointed to convene the Drug Court which sits twice weekly. The work of this court is effective and rewarding; however, the intensive teamwork required for its successful operation takes a considerable proportion of the presiding magistrate's time each week.

The Court Alcohol Remand and Rehabilitation Program (CARRP) is used by Cairns magistrates as a sentencing option and continues to be a successful diversion program. This program has been described in detail in previous annual reports.

This year, the Cairns courthouse acquired a videoconference link with the *Lotus Glen Correctional Centre* which is used on a weekly basis for the hearing of bail applications, hand-up committal hearings, and pleas of guilty to minor offences. This facility has been well received by all stakeholders including prisoners who are no longer transported from Mareeba to the courthouse at Cairns. Apart from improved security for the public, a substantial financial saving has resulted as fewer prisoner transfers mean fewer police escorts and watch house staff are needed.

Cairns circuit courts and Indigenous communities

Throughout the year, with the assistance of our Cairns-based Northern Relieving Magistrate, we convened circuit courts at the centres detailed in Table 12.

Table 12:
Circuit calendar Cairns 2005–06

Circuit	Frequency	Distance from Cairns
Aurukun	Monthly	796km
Badu Island	Quarterly	832km
Bamaga	Monthly	920km
Coen	Bi-monthly	550km
Cooktown	Monthly	322km
Kowanyama	Monthly	604km
Lockhart River	Monthly	755km
Pormpuraaw	Monthly	673km
Thursday Island	Monthly	782km
Weipa	Monthly	801km

The Queensland Magistrates Court endeavours to provide access to justice to people in their local community. Most of the Cairns circuit centres bring our magistrates into close contact with Indigenous Australians and the magistrates have developed an intense interest in Indigenous culture and Indigenous justice issues.

Our circuit work has become busier each year with an increase in juvenile and public nuisance type offending. Petrol sniffing, despite the best efforts of community leaders, continues to affect many young people. There has also been an increase in child protection issues. Although, because statistics are currently based on the place where the application is filed, and this is generally Cairns, it is difficult to demonstrate this in statistical terms. However, we are pleased to report that there appears to have been a reduction in serious violent offences since the introduction of the local Alcohol Management Plan.



*Gathering of Cairns Magistrates—November 2005
(back l-r) Magistrates Spencer, Previtera and Braes
(front l-r) Magistrates, Dwyer, Black and Kluck*

At the beginning of the year, the workload at Cooktown required the circuiting magistrate to preside there for up to three days, sitting regularly from 7.30am to 8pm. The workload has now settled and it seems likely that the monthly three-day sittings may be reduced to one or two days. When in Cooktown, the circuiting magistrates have often taken the opportunity to visit the communities of Hopevale and Wujul Wujul where strong Community Justice Groups have been formed. The magistrates have been working with these groups to establish protocols for preparing and presenting reports to the court on offenders from their community. Their reports are extremely helpful to magistrates convening courts in remote Indigenous communities.

During the first full year in the new courthouse on Thursday Island, the videoconferencing facilities have been used to allow magistrates to accept pleas and hear applications from defendants living on the outer islands of the Torres Straits. Despite the not unexpected teething problems in having the technology work consistently, it will be used more frequently, to reduce considerably the costs and dangers experienced by defendants from remote islands travelling either by air or in open dinghies to the courthouse on Thursday Island.

The court facilities at most other circuit centres are adequate; however, those at Lockhart River and Aurukun urgently need upgrading. In both of these centres, the Magistrates Court is required to sit within the confines of the local police station—a situation not in keeping with the perception of the independence essential for a magistrate to carry out judicial duties.

Access to our circuits is affected by weather and road conditions. This year, in March and April, the advent of cyclones Larry and Monica caused several of our circuits to be abandoned. With the cooperation of the Cairns Police Prosecution Corps, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Service and the region's court registry staff, three of our magistrates conducted longer circuits in May and June to clear the backlog of court matters caused by the cyclonic disruptions.

With the appointment of a Regional Services Manager to our court this year, transport problems have been greatly alleviated, particularly those involving air charters, and are more cost and time efficient. The Cairns magistracy particularly welcomes the opportunity to have court support service representatives included on remote circuit visits. The presence of representatives such as Youth Justice Officers from the Department of Communities, and Community Corrections Officers from the Department of Corrective Services and, on occasion, officers from the Department of Child Safety at these circuits, greatly helps the court to ensure that the court orders made can be meaningfully undertaken within each community.

It is inevitable that more time and resources will need to be devoted to Cape York in the future. The court is also looking at cost efficient strategies for diverting the court from one circuit centre to another as the workloads at the various centres dictate. To improve cost efficiency, Bamaga is being considered for inclusion in the Thursday Island circuit rather than the Cape York circuit.

Magistrates in Cairns continue to interact positively with the community. They are actively involved with the staff and students of the James Cook University School of Law, with some students assigned to magistrates this year for work experience. In the near future, we hope that a formal work experience program can be developed to enable law students to work with magistrates in a voluntary capacity for the mutual benefit of both the courts and the students.

Throughout the year, the Cairns' magistrates have regularly been involved, as adjudicators, in moot competitions conducted by schools and colleges. One magistrate sits as a member of judiciary tribunals for Rugby League and Touch Football Associations. Magistrates have also given presentations at local and interstate conferences and provided in-service training on justice issues to government agencies.

Mareeba

During the year, Cairns Magistrate Braes, replaced Magistrate Lock as resident magistrate at Mareeba. No one was more delighted with this than Magistrate Braes, who, prior to his appointment had been a long term resident of Mareeba. This is part of a policy of appointing magistrates to regional areas in which they live or have lived as a strategy to reduce the challenges associated with the transfer system.

The magistrate at Mareeba divides his weekly court time between the jurisdictions at Mareeba, Atherton and Mossman. A weekly callover of matters at each of these courts ascertains the times and dates required to hear matters at each centre and results in a timely processing of court matters. This is an example of the flexibility of the Queensland Magistrates Court to ensure we service its communities. The court diary of the Mareeba-based magistrate also includes circuits to Georgetown and Mt Garnett, three times each year. Access to Georgetown usually involves a day trip by air and the Mt Garnett circuit entails a one day round trip of 316 kilometres by road.



Magistrate Braes holding court at the Mt Garnett Community Hall.

The Court is convened in dedicated courthouses at Mareeba, Atherton and Mossman, and uses the Queensland Government Agency Office at Georgetown and the Community Hall at Mt Garnett for court. During the year, the Attorney-General announced that a new courthouse will be built at Mareeba.

Innisfail

Situated 88 kilometres south of Cairns, Innisfail is positioned on the banks of the Johnstone River at the junction of the Bruce Highway (Highway One) and the Palmerston Highway which connects the coast with the Atherton Tablelands. Until Cyclone Larry, the population of the shire was approximately 18 000 people with about 8000 people living in the town.

The resident magistrate at Innisfail also convenes court each fortnight at the Indigenous community at Yarrabah, home to just over 3000 people and situated 102 kilometres north of Innisfail. He also conducts weekly court sessions at the busy sugar town of Tully, located 52 kilometres south of Innisfail.

The landscape, as well as the economy of the Innisfail area, received a severe blow on 20 March 2006 when Cyclone Larry scored a direct hit on the town. In addition to the massive destruction of property and natural flora and fauna, the resulting dislocation of facilities and services has been, and will remain for some time, quite profound.

Even while the courthouses in Innisfail and Tully were being used as emergency relief distribution centres, the Magistrates Court continued to function, apart from the week immediately following the cyclone while the area was without any power. The actual buildings suffered little direct damage and, once emergency power had been connected the most significant immediate problems were to avoid flooded roads when travelling to conduct court and to determine the whereabouts of people who were due to attend court but had been evacuated to other areas.

Of the Yarrabah, Tully and Innisfail courts administered in the area, only the workload of Innisfail itself has had any discernible change that might be attributed to the effects of the cyclone.

Prior to the cyclone, there had been a general increase in the number of matters reaching the court. That increase, over 2004–2005 figures appeared significant and amounted to about 13%. Since 20 March, there has been a noticeable slowing in the numbers. If the same growth rate to March is projected to the end of this reporting year, what has occurred since the cyclone is an actual reduction in numbers of matters before the court of slightly more than 30%. Even if the earlier growth rate is not projected, the reduction in numbers since the cyclone still seems statistically significant.

One can only speculate at this stage as to the causes and possible duration of the change. It will be interesting to monitor, and perhaps try to interpret, the trends in future months and years.

One other issue that will affect the court in the immediate future is the availability of suitable housing as a base for the local magistrate because of the housing property destruction.

Mount Isa

Mount Isa continues to be a very busy centre served by its resident magistrate. Apart from convening a court in Mount Isa throughout the year, Magistrate Manthey covers a great deal of territory to convene courts in communities in the far-west and Gulf region of Queensland. Although aircraft or 4WD vehicles are used to get these communities, cyclones can disrupt circuit plans when roads and airstrips are flooded in the wet season.

Except on Sundays, the court in Mount Isa sits daily, with judicial duties performed by Justices of the Peace when the magistrate is away. Once a month, for a full week, the Magistrate does the Gulf court circuit with a court support team. This involves flying into the Gulf area for court sittings at Normanton, Mornington Island and Doomadgee. Every fourth month, the township of Burketown is included in the circuit. In addition, the Court sits in Cloncurry monthly and, every fourth month, Magistrate Manthey continues onto Julia Creek where, at the end of a day's court work, he returns to Mount Isa. The southern most centre serviced from Mount Isa is Birdsville which is visited annually at the time of its nationally renowned horse racing event, the Birdsville Races, to deal with the numerous court matters that result from such a large event. The isolated towns of Boulia and Dajarra are incorporated in a separate court circuit which occurs four times each year.

Table 13: Circuit calendar Mount Isa 2005–06

Court centre	Annual frequency of sittings	No of court days	Return distance from Mount Isa	Transport mode
Birdsville	Once	1	1348km	Chartered aircraft
Boulia	Quarterly	4	577km	4x4 Vehicle
Burketown	Quarterly	4	857km	Chartered aircraft
Camooweal	Every four months	3	383km	4x4 Vehicle
Cloncurry	Monthly	12	240km	4x4 Vehicle
Dajarra	Quarterly	4	384km	4x4 Vehicle
Doomadgee	Monthly	12	936km	Aircraft
Julia Creek	Every four months	3	516km	4x4 Vehicle
Mornington Island	Monthly	12	847km	Chartered aircraft
Normanton	Monthly	12	995km	Chartered aircraft

The Court's work in this vast north-west region has been significantly improved through the training and appointment of Justices of the Peace (JP) in Gulf communities. After appointment, these citizens undertake an important and integral role in the court process within their community. While their primary role is to hold court to hear bail and domestic

violence applications when the Magistrate is not on circuit, they also engender a sense of ownership and responsibility for justice within their community. Recently five JPs were trained and sworn in at Mornington Island and plans are being made for them to have the opportunity to undertake training in mediation.



Magistrate Manthey with newly sworn Justices of the Peace at Mornington Island.

A range of new technology was recently introduced at Mount Isa; however, until some technical difficulties are addressed, the videoconferencing facility has mainly been confined to evidence-taking in trials. Our goal is to extend video technology to link the magistrates in Mount Isa with Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton so that bail applications and remands can be dealt with promptly. Teleconferencing is now regularly used so the magistrate or JPs can attend to urgent routine matters such as bail applications, Temporary Child Protection Orders and Domestic Violence Orders from applicants at remote centres—thus saving people from travelling great distances to access justice at times of dire need.

Since December 2005, the Murri Court resumed sitting monthly at Mount Isa to deal with Indigenous offenders. This court operates with the support and input of members of the Mount Isa District Justice Association Inc. (MIDJAI). A Youth Murri Court will commence operating on a similar basis in the near future. (See Queensland Murri Court report Page 74).

Through community engagement between MIDJAI and Magistrate Manthey since 2003, creative initiatives have been developed in Mount Isa to help the Indigenous Australians in the area reduce the level of offending and to take positive steps towards justice, advocacy and community support. Some of these new directions include:

- establishing Adult Murri Court
- establishing MIDJAI's attendance at the regular Magistrate's Stakeholders Meeting
- establishing Men's Murri Music Club
- conducting Primary Health Checks at the watch house
- accessing Intra-regional Detoxification and Rehabilitation Programs.

Townsville

The Townsville Magistrates Court is the base for six Magistrates who service an area from Palm Island in the east to Richmond in the west (including the centres of Hughenden and Charters Towers) and from Ingham in the north to Ayr in the south.

As the port for national and international exports from the rich mining, cattle and sugar industries and a refining base for nickel and zinc, Townsville is a booming community strengthened by a large defence base and a developing and significant tourism industry. The population of the greater urban area of Townsville, including Thuringowa, was approximately 160 000 this year, making this dual-council city the largest in the northern half of Australia⁸. The Townsville–Thuringowa region's building applications for this financial year totalled \$720m⁹.

In Townsville, more court matters are proceeding to hearing and the length of trials has also increased.

There has been a significant increase in the court listings on Palm Island which will result in more court sitting days being allocated to that centre in the next year. After the destruction of the Palm Island court building in 2004, court sittings on Palm Island were held in temporary facilities until earlier this year when a prefabricated two-room building was erected on the site of the old Police Station. This facility is a temporary one and is expected to be replaced by a multi-purpose Government complex in the near future.

⁸Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005

⁹Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005 Regional Building Approvals

Due to adverse weather conditions or unserviceable aircraft on two occasions this year, magistrates and their clerks were obliged to spend unexpected nights on Palm Island. With such short notice and no available accommodation, they were accommodated and provided for by the CEO of the Palm Island Council and the Department of Corrective Services representative on the island.

As in past years, elders of the local Community Justice Group have attended the Childrens Court sittings at Townsville each Wednesday, to help the magistrate in considering options before sentencing young Indigenous people who appear before the courts. Early in 2006, following six months of consultation with representatives of the Indigenous communities of Ayr, Ingham, Charters Towers, Palm Island and Townsville a twelve-month pilot program began in each of those centres to hold separate Youth and Adult Murri Courts on a regular basis. (See Queensland Murri Court report page 73).

The establishment of Murri Courts at these centres had been greatly championed by Kevin NganWoo who served as Coordinator of the Townsville Thuringowa Community Justice Group since its inception in 2002. Kevin's sudden death in early June 2006 left the Court and its Indigenous community with a great sense of loss but has increased the determination of the Court team involved with Indigenous justice initiatives to meet the challenges he set for the Court and his people. Kevin's involvement in Townsville's Indigenous issues were legendary and are touched on at page 157 of this report.

The Drug Court at Townsville has three magistrates with appointments to preside in the court. (See Drug Courts report at pages 61 to 66). This specialist court began in Townsville in November 2002 and, up to the period ending 30 June 2006, the court has had 26 participants graduate. This year, two Indigenous participants—Edward McLean and Ike Daisy graduated from the Court's drug program and the magistrates shared in their celebration with their families.

The Drug Court magistrates have found the court's videoconferencing facilities to be essential in successfully operating the court in Townsville and Cairns as it enables them to 'meet' regularly with their Drug Court support team members who work in the health and social support fields.

A number of magistrates are involved with the Townsville community through their personal contact with organisations such as universities, colleges and schools, disability support groups, sporting and service clubs, churches and public service entities such as the Army Reserve.

During the past year magistrates presented papers at conferences and community gatherings, including:

- '*Indigenous Sentencing*' and '*Juvenile Justice*' by His Honour Magistrate Glasgow to James Cook University Students and Staff in Townsville
- '*Child Abuse and Reporting Obligations*' by His Honour Magistrate Verra at a National Conference of Army Chaplains in Townsville
- '*The Australian Constitution—How it impacts on peoples lives*' by Her Honour Magistrate Tonkin at the Townsville School Convention for Indigenous Students in Townsville
- '*Therapeutic Jurisprudence*' by Her Honour Magistrate Tonkin to a meeting of the Business Educators Association, NQ Branch in Townsville

When not in court, the Townsville magistrates are often involved in conferences and meetings to help court stakeholders and community members to understand court processes and legislative requirements, and to help establish networks for people to gain ready access to justice. One example was a meeting held this year at the Townsville Hospital between Magistrate Smith (BL) and doctors, nurses, hospital administrators and police where he outlined the key requirements of the *Coroners Act 2003* to help them understand their obligations under that Act. On another occasion, Magistrate Verra met with the Office of Independent Advocacy Service to discuss relevant issues involving homeless people, those with learning difficulties and/or with limited communication skills, or who may have a mental or intellectual impairment who come before the Court.

For many years now, the Court at Townsville has been generously and ably served by a vibrant group of dedicated volunteers. In June this year, JAG and the Court recognised their service to the community when the Chief Magistrate made a presentation of Certificates of Appreciation at a morning tea ceremony at the courthouse.

The Townsville courthouse was built in 1974 and the accommodation now required for the operation of the Queensland Magistrates Court has outgrown the available floor space. A government funded study is expected to commence shortly to evaluate accommodation options for all court services in Townsville to determine how to best accommodate these courts in future to cope with the increased demand for justice services.

Magistrates throughout the region acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of the Court's registry staff in helping to maintain efficient processing of a significant and increasing Court workload. In particular, we thank the depositions clerks, especially those who attend circuit with us, for their efforts above and beyond the call of duty.

The magistrates have established a good professional relationship with the legal profession and prosecution corps in their centres, with the many Youth Justice officers of the Department of Communities, and with representatives of Department of Child Safety and Department of Community Corrections. We recognise the difficulties all these people encounter in providing support for the court and those who come into contact with it, particularly in remote communities; we look forward to working more closely with them to improve the delivery of justice wherever the court is convened.



Acting Magistrate Scott Luxton (centre back) with Magistrates Glasgow, Brennan, Tonkin and Cull after taking his Oath of Office at Townsville Magistrates Court.

Central Region

The Central Region of the Queensland Magistrates Court extends from Bowen in the north to Bundaberg in the south (822 km) and from Yeppoon in the east to Winton in the west (891km)—an area serviced by seven Magistrates.

From the rich black earth of coal draglines to the white purity of cotton balls, from the lush green of cane fields to the footprints of dinosaurs in the dusty ochre of the outback, from prime sheep-raising channel country to the beef capital, from the glistening ocean to the beckoning glint of hidden gemstones, Central Region has it all. It is said that Central Queensland is a cross-section of almost every iconic environment in the State—the Great Barrier Reef, the Outback, cattle country and the Coral Coast.

The mainstays of the region are mining, cane, cattle production, sheep, fishing and tourism. The population base is diverse and distributed across a large area. Some magistrates in the region spend countless hours in road travel to hold court in wide-spread centres. The Emerald magistrate has the largest area to cover geographically, facing almost 2500km return travel to reach all of his courts. In fact, in the last half-year period only eight weeks court time was constituted in Emerald itself as Table 14 highlights.

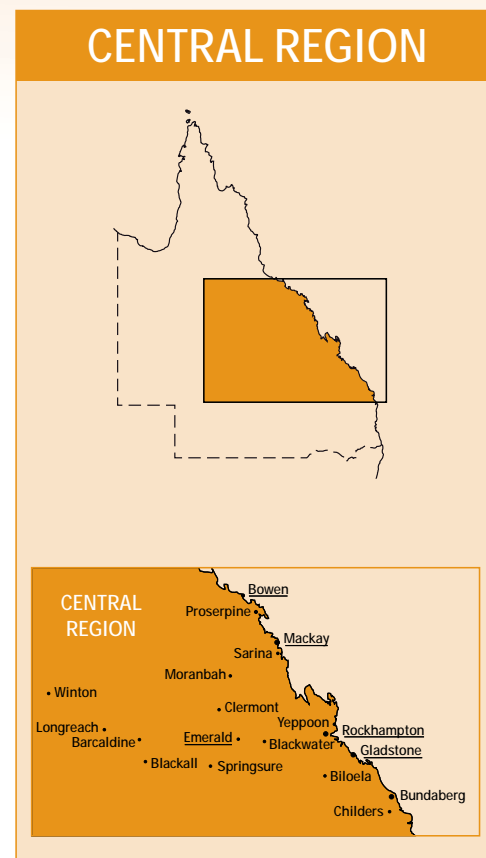


Table 14: Emerald Magistrate’s Court Diary—6 months: January–June 2006

Circuit Courts	Number of weeks	Return distance travel
Emerald	8 weeks	Home Base
Longreach	4 weeks	832km
Eastern Circuit: Blackwater, Clermont, Springsure, Moranbah	6 weeks	730km
Western Circuit: Alpha, Winton, Longreach, Blackall, Barcardine	3 weeks	1405km
Mackay	2 weeks	768km
Brisbane: Coroners Court and Annual Magistrates Conference	2 weeks	Air Travel
Annual Leave	1 week	

Mackay and Rockhampton are the largest population centres. The region has been blessed with a community that draws on many and varied cultural backgrounds, partly evidenced by increasing needs for interpreters in the courts. Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander elders and Community Justice Groups continue to contribute to the community through Murri Courts and their wide-ranging work.

Some remote communities face significant issues of low employment and inadequate facilities and services. One such community is Woorabinda (176km west of Rockhampton). Unfortunately, such environments often bring some of the population into the direct focus of the courts, presenting challenges to the community and courts in effectively dealing with the offending behaviour which can be seen to be the fallout from that environment. The Community Justice Groups in communities such as these do much to address this situation and to assist the courts.

Providing high quality and regular court services to rural and remote communities means that magistrates see a lot of country and maintain busy court lists.

There have been significant developments in court infrastructure in the region this year. Sarina courthouse (35km south of Mackay) is being restructured and refurbished along with the construction of a new Police Station to provide a more appropriate facility for the town. It is expected to be completed later in 2006. Yeppoon courthouse has been listed for the addition of facilities to help those affected by domestic and family violence when they come to court.

Technological upgrades have included the installation of videoconferencing facilities in Rockhampton and Mackay, CCTV facilities, and improved technology for magistrates and, in the courtroom for the profession at large, with the addition of Wi-Fi.

The prevailing economic influence in the region is the resources sector, with many more coal mines being developed in the Bowen Basin this year, particularly in the Moranbah and Blackwater areas. Gladstone and Biloela are also experiencing strong growth in the mining and industrial sectors. The resources boom has seen the workforce double in recent years, which has an impact beyond the mining areas. With rents and property prices soaring to the extent that accommodation is scarce, many mining families settle on the coast, particularly at Mackay and the Capricorn Coast. Miners are the super-commuters of the modern age.

The increase in population (as well as the settlement patterns of that population), and the increase in disposable household incomes, present both benefits and interesting challenges for the community and the Magistrates Courts servicing those communities.

Stakeholders' meetings that were held in the region on issues such as domestic violence, child safety, youth justice, Indigenous issues and Committals Projects have involved government departments and service providers in court processes.

The Queensland Justices of the Peace Association held its conference in the Rockhampton courthouse this year and was provided with a tour of the court facilities. A mock court and training session was held for local JPs in Rockhampton on sentencing and bail issues, as well as a tour of the watch house. Training for mediators by the Alternate Dispute Resolution Branch of JAG was also conducted in the courthouse.

Throughout the year, magistrates of the region also attended and presented papers at regional Law Associations' conferences at Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Cairns. Legal studies students from schools, TAFE and other colleges visited the courts throughout the region and were often addressed by magistrates.

Our magistrates also presented papers at national and international conferences, in the areas of criminology, therapeutic jurisprudence, domestic and family violence, Maritime Law, and Indigenous issues.

Central Region is experiencing an economic boom period with significant growth on the back of the resources and tourism sectors. Increasing population translates to increasing levels of work for the court in all areas of law. Magistrates are striving to provide regular, reliable and quality services to the communities of Central Region, including smaller and remote communities, to continue to improve access to justice for all people.

North Coast Region

The North Coast Region of the Queensland Magistrates Court borders the Brisbane Metropolitan Area at Caboolture and encompasses the popular beach-side towns and lush hinterland centres that make up the Sunshine Coast. To the north-west is the rural district of the Mary Valley with its centre at Gympie; further north, the Wide Bay-Burnett Region is serviced by Kingaroy in the west and, nearer the coast, by the historic river city of Maryborough and the rapidly growing tourist and business city of Hervey Bay—gateway to the world heritage-listed Fraser Island.

Although the demographics of this entire region are diverse, each part of the region has experienced a substantial growth in population for a number of years now. Since 2004, the average annual population growth rate of the Wide-Bay/Burnett/Sunshine Coast area of the State has exceeded the statewide figure of 2.1%¹⁰ and this trend is expected to continue. The current estimated population in the area is approaching 600 000.

The region's community is served by 11 magistrates—four based at Maroochydore, two at Caboolture and one each at Caloundra, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Kingaroy. The magistrates based at Maroochydore conduct regular circuit courts at Noosa and Nambour, while the magistrate at Gympie services the busy Noosa Court three days each fortnight. The magistrate at Maryborough helps with the workload at Bundaberg five days each month. In this region, we are supported by two Acting Magistrates and dedicated registry staff at 13 courthouses.

The largest circuit court in the region is performed by the magistrate based at Kingaroy. The frequency of and distance travelled on these circuits is set out in Table 15.

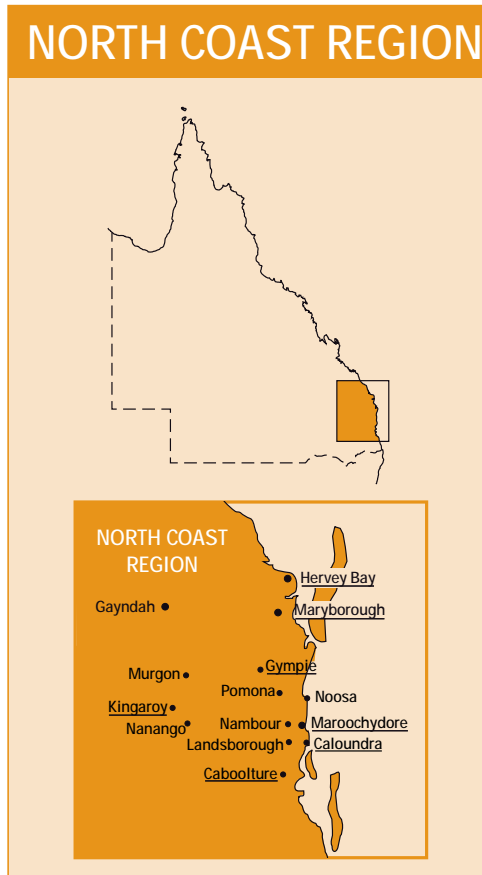


Table 15:
Kingaroy circuits—Distance and frequency of travel

Circuit Court(s)	Frequency	Return trip distance from Kingaroy
Cherbourg	Monthly	104km
Gayndah	Monthly	296km
Murgon	Weekly	90km
Nanango	Fortnightly	50km
Toogoolawah	Monthly	218km

¹⁰Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005

A new courthouse was opened at Caloundra on 16 August 2005 with a magistrate appointed to convene court there on a full-time basis from 12 September 2005. (See article on page 156). This development has led to a steady increase in the workload at Caloundra Court in the Childrens Court, small claims, criminal, and domestic violence jurisdictions—with a commensurate decrease at Maroochydore. As shown in Table 16, this indicates that matters previously lodged and dealt with at Maroochydore are now being handled at the local court—a factor that, no doubt, is appreciated by the residents of the Caloundra district.

Courthouses at Caloundra, Maroochydore, Kingaroy, Noosa, Gympie, Maryborough and Hervey Bay have all been equipped with CCTV, videoconferencing and vulnerable witness room facilities which have allowed hearings to be conducted more effectively where distance and vulnerability are in issue. In June 2006, the Maroochydore courthouse became a wireless internet (Wi-Fi) site. This facility will increase efficiency in communication and legal referencing for the many legal practitioners and others connected with the justice system who attend the courthouse.

Table 16:
Extract of regional totals 2004–05—Comparison of Caloundra and Maroochydore

	Caloundra	Maroochydore	Total
Crime—Adult Defendants			
2004–05	664	6700	7364
2005–06	1964	6012	7976
Crime—Childrens Court			
2004–05	0	332	332
2005–06	67	267	334
Civil Claims			
2004–05	358	481	839
2005–06	296	542	838
Minor Debt			
2004–05	97	422	519
2005–06	106	433	539
Small Claims			
2004–05	48	659	707
2005–06	157	605	762
DV lodgements			
2004–05	31	1068	1099
2005–06	296	737	1033

Early in 2006, a Murri Court was convened at Caboolture and has continued to operate regularly. In May 2006, the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) commenced a Fines History Project at Caboolture courthouse. For the 12 month period of the project, a SPER Officer has been seconded to the Court's registry to provide the Court with a fine payment history of a defendant when a magistrate is considering the imposing a fine as a sentencing option. The object of the project is to maintain the integrity of fines as a viable sentencing option—by either confirming to the court a defendant's prior acceptable form of compliance with fine orders or identifying a history that would suggest such an option would be ineffective considering the defendant's financial circumstances and the burden that paying a fine would have on the person (this is in accordance with section 48 of the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992*). The project was commenced after consultation with local stakeholders including the Department of Corrective Services, the local Law Association and the Queensland Police Service.

Plans are underway to establish a QMERIT Pilot Program at Maroochydore Magistrates Court in August 2006. This is a voluntary, bail based, pre-plea diversion program which will enable defendants charged with drug offences, who have a demonstrated and treatable drug problem, to access treatment and rehabilitation opportunities.

Caboolture's population growth, together with an increase in the number of police and a proactive policing policy in the area, has resulted in an increased workload in the criminal jurisdiction and this trend is expected to continue. This increase is demonstrated in Table 17.

Table 17:
Caboolture Region 2004–05
and 2005–06

	Caboolture
Crime—Adult Defendants	
2004–05	3899
2005–06	4388
Crime—Childrens Court	
2004–05	308
2005–06	350

Apart from court commitments, the magistrates in the North Coast Region continue to actively engage with the community outside court sitting hours. We regularly attend meetings with representatives of government departments and special interest groups to ensure a high standard of court support. Our family activities and special interests help keep us informed about developments in our respective communities. Our magistrates at Maroochydore preside in a Secondary Schools Moot Competition which is conducted annually by the Sunshine Coast Lawyers Association. Each of our local courts are regularly visited by students from secondary schools and colleges and, whenever an opportunity presents itself, Magistrates speak with the students to give them an insight into our justice system. Our magistrate at Caloundra is regularly requested to speak to local community groups and has developed important links with the community of her district.

Each member of the magistracy of the North Coast Region is part of a cohesive team and they work together with their respective court staff to ensure ready access to justice for their fellow citizens.

Brisbane Region

The Brisbane Region of the Queensland Magistrates Court is urban and commercial in nature and covers the Brisbane metropolitan area that stretches from the shores of the Redcliffe Peninsula in the north to the southern sections of the Redlands District, encompassing the many islands of Moreton Bay in the east, and across to the eastern slopes of the D'Aguilar Range where Brisbane's western suburbs have spread. Brisbane is Australia's third largest city and, of Australia's six capital cities, the largest in area, occupying 1140 square kilometres. It is home to around 1.5 million people¹¹.

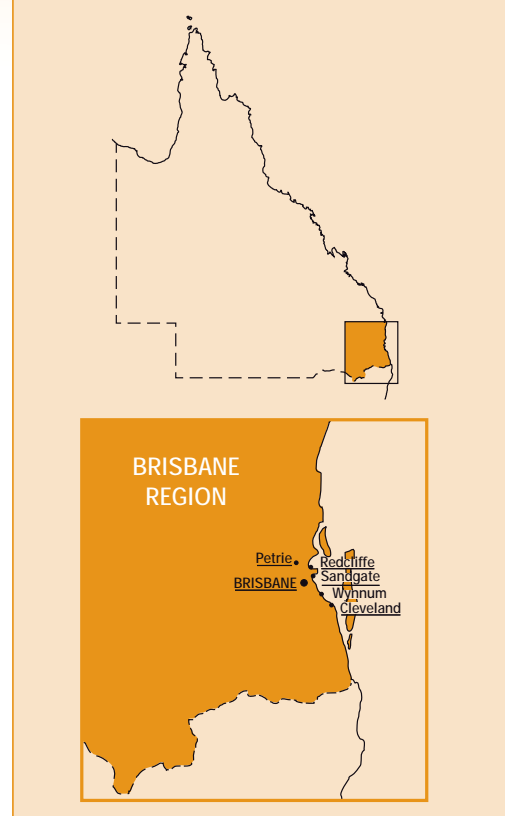
The region is served by 28 magistrates, with 23 of those based at the Brisbane Magistrates Court and the remaining five magistrates are based at courts situated on the outer rim of the region at Petrie, Redcliffe, Sandgate, Wynnum and Cleveland.

The 23 Brisbane-based positions include two part-time magistrates who, together, occupy one full-time magistrate's position. That number also includes the State Coroner and Deputy Coroner, the Referee of the Small Claims Tribunal, the Childrens Court Magistrate as well as the Industrial Magistrate. Two Brisbane magistrates sit at the outer Brisbane court centres on a weekly basis to ensure the workload of those courts is dealt with in a reasonable period of time. Longer hearings are adjourned to Brisbane.

Court infrastructure

The Brisbane Magistrates Court is made up of three complexes situated within walking distance of each other—the Brisbane Magistrates Court in George Street, the Roma Street Arrest Courts, and the Childrens Court in Quay Street.

BRISBANE REGION



The main court complex is situated at 363 George Street in a state-of-the-art building that was opened on 16 November 2004. This building houses a large court registry that services all the Court's jurisdictions including the Small Claims Tribunal. There are twenty-five hearing rooms throughout the complex—19 Magistrates Courts, two Coroners Courts, and four Small Claims hearing rooms.

Two courtrooms on the first level of the building are dedicated for the use of the State Coroner and Deputy Coroner and their large administration office is situated in an area adjacent to those courtrooms.

¹¹OESR Australian Demographic Statistics Qld Gvt 2005



Entrance to Brisbane Arrest Courts at 240 Roma Street, Brisbane

On level 6 of the building, two courtrooms have been assigned to the hearing of domestic violence matters. Secure access to these courtrooms is assured through a specially designed, secure 'waiting lounge' for aggrieved people and their children. This facility is made up of a lounge area with a kitchenette, an en-suite toilet and a glass-walled playroom where children can play in view of the parent while pre-hearing consultation is provided by Legal Aid's Court Assistance professionals. A room has also been provided for DV Connect to provide professional support for men involved in domestic violence proceedings. On the same level, four hearing rooms are reserved for the Small Claims Tribunal.

Brisbane's Murri Court is convened weekly in Courtroom 32 on level 7 in a unique setting, as can be seen in the photograph in the Murri Court section of this report. On the same level is Court 34, the largest courtroom in the complex which is often used for trials involving a number of defendants, commissions of inquiry, and ceremonial events.

Apart from the courtrooms and hearing rooms, the building accommodates magistrates' chambers, a library and conference room, a large court registry,

court and justice administration offices, the Dispute Resolution Branch, and a day-detention and prisoner-transfer area. The conference room has been well used by various legal/community organisations for a number of public presentations and meetings this year.

The complex at 240 Roma Street is referred to as the Arrest Courts because the three courts that it houses deal with matters that arise immediately or soon after a person is arrested on an offence. While it is a much smaller complex, the three courts that operate at this location have, on some occasions throughout the year, processed over 200 defendants daily. These courts are serviced by a busy registry and the public area includes interview rooms that are constantly in use by Duty Lawyers, legal practitioners and their clients, volunteer court personnel, and officers of JAG and the Department of Corrective Services who work in the area of court diversion. Because of the workload of the Illicit Drug Court Diversion Program and the implementation of new pilot programs such as the Homeless Persons Court Diversion Program and the Court's Special Circumstances List, all of which operate through referral of defendants appearing before the Arrest Courts, interview rooms and office facilities are needed for Court Liaison Officers who are working in these areas. The Roma Street Arrest Courts complex is expected to be refurbished next year to allow more office accommodation for these Court Diversion Programs to operate more effectively.

Since March 1984, the Childrens Court sits daily in a purpose-built complex located at Quay Street (off Roma Street). The waiting areas and courtroom environments of this complex are designed to engender a comfortable atmosphere in which to resolve issues concerning youth and families. Within this complex there is a dedicated Youth Murri Court and a private office for the use of visiting elders. (See Childrens Court report on pages 50 to 51).

New infrastructure

The Sandgate courthouse refurbishment is underway and all efforts are being made to ensure minimal disturbance to court sittings during the process. The \$4.7m complex is being built on the existing site in Keogh Street, adjacent to the police station. Within the complex there will be a magistrate's courtroom, a mediation room, holding facilities, a registry office, and public waiting areas including interview rooms. The new courthouse will have the latest technology, such as closed circuit television (CCTV) facilities to enable child witnesses and sexual assault victims to give evidence from a separate room in the court precinct.

Court facilities in the Brisbane Region will be further improved in two years' time with the completion of a proposed \$11 m Pine Rivers courthouse project which will be a new venue for the court operations that are currently conducted at the Petrie courthouse. Construction on this project is expected to begin late in 2006 and finish towards the end of 2007.

Court workload

The daily court operations serviced by Brisbane Region's 28 magistrates are managed by Deputy Chief Magistrate Hine, the regional coordinating magistrate for the Brisbane region, and are a large part of his administrative duties. Together with the magistrates who manage the courts in the outer centres of the region, he holds regular and frequent meetings with registry and court support personnel, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure that court workloads are managed at an optimum level.

Because of the substantial increase in court work at Southport, the number of magistrates working there has been supplemented by not replacing Brisbane magistrates on leave; instead, an acting magistrate is appointed to Southport. This effectively provides Southport with one extra magistrate, even though it inevitably has an effect on the Brisbane court list. Another example of this collegiate approach within the court is the regular assistance given to the Brisbane Magistrates Court by the magistrates based at Sandgate, Redcliffe, and Ipswich.

Throughout the Brisbane Region, the volume of work involving adult offenders in the criminal jurisdiction has increased substantially in three years.

The Childrens Court matters for the region have remained fairly constant over the past three years, except in Brisbane where the number of defendants has dropped by 39%. This may be due, in part, to the effectiveness of the Youth Murri Court where once-constant offenders have responded well to rehabilitation initiatives implemented by that court.

The civil jurisdiction has remained constant in the 'suburban' court centres; however, the Brisbane Magistrates Court has experienced an increase of approximately 25%.

The comparative figures for the past three years for the criminal, Childrens Court, and civil claims jurisdictions are detailed in Tables 18 and 19.

Table 18: Number of defendants in criminal jurisdiction

Centre	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Criminal Jurisdiction—Adults			
Petrie	1900	2330	2804
Redcliffe	2869	3522	3475
Sandgate	2122	2811	3097
Cleveland	2228	2748	2994
Brisbane	27439	28394	31980
Childrens Court			
Petrie	212	173	235
Redcliffe	227	251	209
Sandgate	244	279	250
Cleveland	142	181	150
Brisbane	1590	1148	974

Table 19: Number of civil claims

Centre	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Civil			
Petrie	1133	1087	1262
Redcliffe	550	432	390
Sandgate	316	293	285
Cleveland	1322	1220	1237
Brisbane	20963	22925	26066

Court improvement strategies

Third Arrest Court

In the course of the year, several court management initiatives were undertaken by the Brisbane magistracy to ensure the efficient operation of the court for the benefit of the public, defendants and members of the legal profession.

With the increasing number of offenders appearing daily before the Arrests Courts in Brisbane, it became necessary to open a third Arrest Court as a pilot. It had become obvious from the increase in the court workload that two magistrates were unable to manage the volume of matters listed daily before the two courts and still have time to deal with each matter in a considered way. Magistrates were working from 9am until after 6pm on a regular basis; this also increased pressure on support staff.

Of course, the instigation of the extra court had implications for the resources of other organisations: it became necessary for the Queensland Police Service to provide another prosecutor and for the Legal Aid Office and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Service to provide extra staff. This having been achieved, the new arrangements have been accepted and have operated effectively; therefore, the arrangement will become permanent.

Homeless Persons Court and Special Circumstances List

Since May this year, magistrates presiding in the Arrest Courts have had access to two new diversionary pilot projects. Magistrates have been able to refer people who appear to be homeless or have a mental disability and/or mental incapacity, and are charged with public nuisance and minor street offences, to the Homeless Persons Liaison Officer (HPLO). This officer is stationed at the Arrest Court and is present during court hours to assess people referred to him for their eligibility to be included in the Homeless Persons Court Diversion Pilot

Program or to be included in the Court's Special Circumstances List Project. The object of this referral is to give the court guidance in addressing the underlying problems that result in them being charged with these offences by incorporating residency and health requirements into court orders to motivate their rehabilitation and to reduce their appearances before the court. Further details on these projects are available at pages 75 to 77.

Full day Chamber List

Another initiative involving civil matters that commenced on 5 May 2006 is the introduction of a full day Chamber List of applications to be heard at the Brisbane Magistrates Court. This pilot program has all civil chamber matters being heard each Friday instead of hearings by a Chamber Magistrate Monday to Friday between 9am and 10am and 2pm to 2.30pm.

The Chamber List involves approximately 25 matters. It is presided over by one magistrate who may hand over a lengthy matter to a second magistrate. Matters are heard in order of brevity, with consent orders and adjournments taking priority. The court's civil registry staff play an active role in the listing and managing of the Chamber List by contacting the parties and their legal representatives midweek to ascertain the status of matters since the filing date and ensure that drafts of orders being sought are placed with the files.

The reason for piloting a single Chamber List was to streamline the hearing of these matters into a single day to provide greater efficiency for the legal profession and their clients, rather than 'fit them in' around other court lists that operate from 10am and 2pm each day. Another reason was to develop expertise and efficiencies in the type of applications that are usually listed, namely, summary and default judgement applications, applications to strike out pleadings, and other interlocutory applications.

If this Chamber List pilot operates effectively, Brisbane magistrates may be in a position to commence court earlier in the day, thereby increasing the volume of work processed in other jurisdictions. By bringing the practice of the Magistrates Court into line with that of other courts, the benefits to the legal profession, their clients and the public should be maximised.

Visiting judicial officers

In the course of the year, the Brisbane Magistrates Court has been host to visiting judicial officers from overseas and interstate.

During September 2005 Magistrate Mohammed Khan, the resident Magistrate from Lautoka, Fiji spent two weeks at the Brisbane Magistrates Court to gain insight into our Court's various jurisdictions, our court management strategies, and the operation of the Dispute Resolution Branch of JAG.



Magistrate Mohammed Khan (Fiji) with Deputy Director-General (JAG) Jim McGowan and Chief Magistrate Judge Irwin.

As Magistrates in Fiji do not have access to computers, our Court arranged for a surplus laptop computer to be donated to Magistrate Khan for his use when he returned to Fiji. The computer has enabled Magistrate Khan to have access to the internet and email functions which have greatly improved communication and information sharing between the Fijian magistracy and their Queensland and Australian colleagues.

In April 2006, a delegation from the National Judges College of China located in Beijing visited the Brisbane Magistrates Court. They were welcomed by the Deputy Director-General, JAG and engaged in discussions about the Murri Court and the role of Justices of the Peace. Justice Byrne of the Supreme Court, Judges Trafford-Walker and Forde of the District Court and Magistrate O'Shea from Bundaberg joined the Chief Magistrate, Judge Irwin in the discussions and on a tour of the Murri Court.

At our Annual State Conference in May, all our magistrates had the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with Chief Magistrate John Numapo and Senior Magistrate Sasa Inkung from Papua New Guinea. Both magistrates had attended the National Court Drug Diversions Initiatives Conference which was held in Brisbane immediately prior to our state conference and, as a result of the links forged during their visit, communication has continued with them through email, particularly information on the application of therapeutic jurisprudence.

We also had the company of Magistrate Robert Lawrence from Rockingham, Western Australia and Magistrate Peter Dixon from Hobart, Tasmania at our state conference. Magistrate Lawrence is the President of the Australian Magistrates Association and is well known to many of our magistrates. Magistrate Dixon was involved in two presentations at our conference—one involving the interesting concept of exchange programs of judicial officers between states and territories to broaden judicial experience.



Visiting delegates from the Judicial College in Beijing.

Deputy Chief Magistrate Hine received a visit from Sir Albert Palmer, Chief Justice of the Solomon Islands, in June 2006. The purpose of Sir Albert's visit was to gain insight into our court management practices, especially our listing process and the daily allocation of hearings to magistrates in court centres where several magistrates preside.



Gathering of Magistrates with Sir Albert Palmer, Chief Justice Solomon Islands (l-r) Magistrate Hall, Magistrate Roney, Sir Albert Palmer, Magistrate Payne, Magistrate Sarra and Regional Coordinating Magistrate MacCallum.

Judge Peggy Hora from the Superior Court of Alameda County, California USA, was guest at a lunchtime seminar held at the Brisbane Magistrates Court in June 2006. At the seminar organised by Mr Gregory Wiman, JAG's Drug Court Manager, she met with magistrates, legal officers, government policy officers and university lecturers and spoke on the trends developing in Drug Courts in America. One topic of particular interest to our magistrates was the trend of young women, often with children, who have methamphetamine addiction developed from 'party drug' use.

Residential rehabilitation options for women with children are not uncommon in the USA and are being tried in Queensland; however, they are relatively unheard of in other parts of Australia. Queensland's response to meeting the need for opportunities for residential rehabilitation for drug addicted women caring for children is the Accommodation Support Program operated through the Drug Court. The seminar was very thought-provoking and has resulted in ongoing discussion between the attendees.

Community involvement

Throughout the Brisbane Region, the Queensland Magistrates Courts regularly receive group visits from schools and secondary colleges from the Brisbane metropolitan area as well as from country areas. Registry staff facilitate these visits and a Magistrate from the Court usually takes the opportunity to engage with the students in the courtroom to explain the court's place in our society and the role of magistrates.

Interaction with students at tertiary level is particularly advanced through work experience programs such as the University of Queensland's WATL program and the Queensland University of Technology's Internship Program.

Many Brisbane-based magistrates regularly give of their personal time to preside in moot courts arranged by the law faculties of the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University. Many magistrates also actively participate in the conduct of the Bar Practice Course. (See Community information and Legal education on pages 86 to 88).

Throughout the year, Magistrates Dean and Smith (WJ) addressed police recruits at the Queensland Police Academy about the court system and the vital role of evidence in its proceedings.

Brisbane magistrates often engage with the community at special events which mark community activities and interests. For example, Magistrate Roney, who presides over the Special Circumstances List, attended the opening of the South Brisbane Homelessness Information and Referral Service in March 2006 and was involved in activities at the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre during Homelessness Week this year.

The operation of the Brisbane Murri Court is of special interest to Deputy Chief Magistrate Hine who has been involved with the development of the Court from its earliest stages. Together with Brisbane Magistrates Sarra and Payne, he keeps in regular contact with the Indigenous elders who volunteer to attend the court on a roster basis to assist and advise the magistrates who convene that court. A more detailed report on the Murri Court appears on page 70.

During Queensland's Law Week (21–27 May 2006) Magistrate Thacker discussed the operation of the Queensland Drug Court on radio. The Chief Magistrate and Deputy Chief Magistrate presided in moot courts at the Law Week Open Day which was held at the Brisbane Magistrates Court on Sunday 21 May 2006.

The magistrates based at Brisbane have attended lunch-hour seminars and meetings throughout the year to share information on their court work and take advantage of information sessions about new legislation and rehabilitation programs that may be incorporated into sentences.

Future growth

With the recent increase in urban density in the inner-city region of Brisbane, as well as major new urban developments occurring in fringe areas such as Mango Hill in the north, Springfield Lakes in the south-west, and the Redlands district in the east, government estimates forecast that the greater Brisbane metropolitan area will house another 190 000 people by 2007, bringing the total population in the region to 1.8 million people.

Inevitably, court lists in central Brisbane and the outer suburbs will expand; however, the magistrates of the Brisbane Region will continue to develop and trial court listing and case management strategies to help meet the ever-present challenge of delivering justice in a timely manner to the people of Brisbane.

¹²2006 Queensland Transport: Study of Brisbane Metropolitan Sub-Region 2007

South-East Region

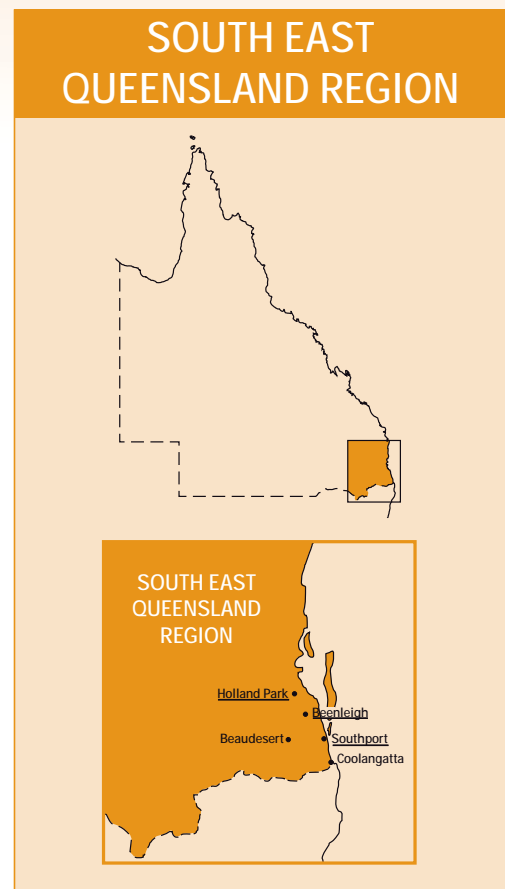
The South-East Region of the Magistrates Court covers all courthouses south of the Brisbane Magistrates Court in George Street.

The area is a long narrow strip of land running along the coast from just south of the Brisbane central business district (CBD) at suburban Holland Park, through the rapidly developing urban centre of Beenleigh, and along the Gold Coast corridor to the New South Wales border at Coolangatta. The region extends inland through the commercial centre of Nerang and the Gold Coast Hinterland to Beaudesert—a busy centre for horse breeding and beef cattle. The region covers urban and rural areas, with an emphasis on tourism and business activities. It is an attractive and vibrant place to live with a temperate climate, easy access to beautiful beaches, and great economic opportunities. Because of its myriad of attractions, the region is the fastest growing in Australia.

It is well serviced by roads, the most important being the Pacific Highway (or, as it is locally known, the M1), which provides access to and from Brisbane. The M1 is, in itself, a source of a considerable number of traffic offences that come before our courts, the most alarming of which is high speed racing.

The region's courts are served by 12 magistrates in the following locations:

- Beenleigh—4 magistrates
- Beaudesert—served by circuit from Beenleigh
- Holland Park—1 magistrate
- Southport—6 magistrates and 1 full time relieving magistrate
- Coolangatta—served by circuit from Southport.



Beenleigh magistrates convene a weekly court at Beaudesert Magistrates Court and, each month, two extra trial days are held at Beaudesert. Southport magistrates travel weekly to Coolangatta Magistrates Court, and each month, one extra trial day is held at Coolangatta.

Population demographics have a real impact on the type of work done by the courts in the South-East Region. Each court centre in the region has its own personality. Beaudesert and Coolangatta Magistrates Courts retain an air of a quiet, more country-style Queensland. Holland Park is part of metropolitan Brisbane, while Beenleigh Magistrates Court is in the midst of another area of great urban growth.

Southport and Coolangatta

Southport Magistrates Court is one of the busiest courts in Queensland, servicing a rapidly growing region. For example:

- Southport deals with more domestic violence and child protection applications than any other court centre in Queensland.
- only Brisbane deals with more criminal matters and civil claims (including small claims) than Southport.

As at June 2005, the Gold Coast population was estimated to be 490 398—an increase of nearly 80 000 from 1999. The Gold Coast is by far the second largest city in Queensland, surpassing Townsville, the third largest city, by an estimated 330 000 people as at 30 June 2005.¹³

As well as the large permanent population, there are, throughout the year, temporary increases in population during annual holiday periods and special events. The average number of tourists at the Gold Coast each day has increased from 77 270 in 2000–2001 to 84 555 in 2004–2005.¹⁴ The most significant holiday periods are centred around Easter and Christmas; however, visitor numbers also swell during the staging of the Indy 300 and during Schoolies week, a phenomena that occurs towards the end of November and early December each year. At these times, the population is increased by holiday-makers which, unfortunately, means the amount of minor crime and drug and traffic offences coming before the Southport Magistrates Court also increases.

The attraction of the Gold Coast to many people does mean there is a level of instability to the population. People new to the coast can lack the support structures available in their home communities.

Young people, who may be homeless and not receiving any social security benefits, are attracted by the lifestyle, the weather and the beach. Hence, the child protection, juvenile justice and domestic violence jurisdictions are continually busy.

Due to the transient nature of a significant proportion of the population, there are high numbers of renters rather than owners of residential properties. This, in turn, leads to a high number of residential tenancy disputes, especially around peak holiday times, which is reflected in the high number of small claims matters.

All the issues mentioned above are exacerbated because many overseas nationals holiday here and, if and when offences are committed by them, interpretation services are usually needed which slows down the progress of court proceedings.

A marked increase in the region's population growth has meant an increasing workload and a backlog of cases in the courts. In addition, the area is now serviced by three Queensland Police Districts—Gold Coast, Logan and, more recently, Coomera. Increasing police numbers reflect increasing populations, which means increasing crime leading to increasing numbers of defendants and charges that must be dealt with by our courts.

¹³Gold Coast City Council Annual Report 2004–05 and Townsville City Council Community Information Bulletin/Common Questions <www.townsville.qld.gov.au/questions>

¹⁴Gold Coast City Council Annual Report 2005–05

While the number of criminal charges has grown, the number of available court days has not. Hence, there is an unfortunate delay in Southport for a trial or committal hearing of up to six months, depending on the length of a matter. Delays in the Magistrates Courts, ultimately, can lead to delays in matters coming before the Supreme and District Courts of Queensland—and this situation is not in the interests of victims of crime, defendants or justice. These delays are despite supplementing Southport's effective complement of six magistrates by an additional magistrate by not replacing magistrates on leave in Brisbane.

To reduce the backlog in Southport, new review procedures have been implemented to ensure that matters listed proceed on the day. This process has been successful to the extent that magistrates can be assured now of spending nearly all day, every day, in court as fewer matters are being settled unexpectedly on the day of the hearing. However, successfully managing the list means added pressure on magistrates who have no time allocated for reserve judgments or other work outside the courtroom.

Regular meetings between the Coordinating Magistrate, the profession and law enforcement supervisors have been useful in addressing day-to-day issues as well as attempting to address a more strategic approach to coping with the pressures on the court. One memorable suggestion by the profession, Night Court, has not yet progressed; however, it is an example of some of the more innovative approaches that have been suggested. The holding of regular meetings with interested parties has kept magistrates in Southport in tune with the requirements of the community.

In Southport, Magistrate Rinaudo assumed responsibility for the coronial jurisdiction. During the past year, he has made every effort to streamline the coronial process for the benefit of all involved; particularly for the next-of-kin of the deceased. This has been achieved through improved communication with the Gold Coast Hospital Mortuary staff, forensic pathologists and the police. The Coroner and his clerk have attended meetings at the hospital on a regular basis and have facilitated meetings with the police.

A number of important issues have been addressed and resolved as a result of these meetings. Improved processing of coronial matters has been achieved, wherever possible, by obtaining a Cause of Death certificate at an early time or ensuring that autopsies are ordered and undertaken as soon as possible to enable the next-of-kin to make funeral arrangements.

Some delays continue to be experienced when there are problems with identification because of a lack of next-of-kin or severe decomposition. DNA testing continues to take too long for processing.

A significant number of police investigations were outstanding at the end of the last year. With improved recording of information and regular meetings with police at a high level, the number of outstanding reports, particularly those that were some years old, has reduced dramatically. Of course, some, by their nature, will take a longer time to complete—for example, those involving suspicious circumstances where police investigations have failed to identify a perpetrator. Thanks must go to the police who assist the State Coroner for their support and assistance in maintaining cooperation with the Gold Coast police.

It should be noted, in particular, that Magistrate Rinaudo spends a great deal of his personal time outside court hours doing Coroner's work as there is not sufficient court time available to be allocated for this purpose.

Magistrate Pirie has assumed responsibility for the children's jurisdiction at Southport for the past three years. This period has seen a significant growth in the jurisdiction. Because of the legislative changes, and the changes to the jurisdiction, no comparative figures are available for the regional centre for children's Care and Protection Orders. However, there has been an increase in those orders on the Gold Coast from 265 in 2001 to 792 in 2005¹⁵—an increase of 198%. This increase is exacerbated by the fact that a Case Plan must now be presented to the court for its consideration. While these plans are a positive development, this process has led to a marked increase in the time taken in court to deal with each case. Southport now allocates one and one half court days weekly to the Childrens Court list (which includes juvenile justice matters). This is a significant increase from one morning weekly five years ago. The size of Care and Protection Applications, including the amount of material filed in contested applications, has also increased. Again, regular meetings between the court with relevant stakeholders, including the Departments of Child Safety, Corrective Services and the private profession, have significantly helped to ensure that the needs of children and others are met efficiently and within the legislative framework. Magistrate Pirie also spends a considerable amount of personal time outside court hours preparing matters to enable the Childrens Court to run smoothly. When this is taken into account, the matters on the Childrens Court list, in practical terms, occupy at least two days.

Beenleigh and Beaudesert

Approximately half-way between Brisbane and the Gold Coast lies what used to be the sleepy town of Beenleigh. Although by-passed by the M1 national highway, Beenleigh has awoken to be one of the busiest provincial towns in south-east Queensland. It services much of the light industry that has sprung up along the highway as well as the highly populated City of Logan, another fast growing urban district to the south of Brisbane.

As a result of the huge population growth being experienced in its surrounding districts, the Beenleigh Court is also experiencing some of the same problems as Southport—although not yet to the same extent. The case lists in Beenleigh currently allow a hearing to be listed about three months after the court is notified that a matter will be a trial. Like Southport, Beenleigh has seen a marked increase in the number of Child Care and Protection matters as a consequence of the Department of Child Safety developing an increased regional presence in the areas south of Brisbane CBD. Beenleigh had the second largest number of child protection matters in Queensland; it has the third highest number of criminal and civil lodgements (even without small claims); and it also has the second largest number of applications in the domestic violence area.

¹⁵Dept of Child Safety Statistics created by K. O'Neil 10/3/06

Holland Park

Holland Park is a one-magistrate centre that is convened on a full-time basis by Magistrate Arnold, with extra assistance at least two days each week, from Magistrate Quinlan from Wynnum and a relieving magistrate from Brisbane. A Brisbane magistrate also attends Holland Park for Childrens Court matters.

This court is kept particularly busy by the high number of traffic offences committed on the M1 and provides a good example of how these offences on that stretch of highway contribute to the workload of the courts positioned along its route. The court list currently allows listing of hearings after two months which extends out to, but rarely exceeds, three months. Court workloads at Holland Park have remained stable over the last twelve months; however, as the area south-east of Brisbane CBD continues to grow, Holland Park will, inevitably, become a busier court centre.

Technology

Some of the challenges discussed above have been alleviated by the continued growth in the supply and use of technology. Our magistrates are now able to use their computers in courtrooms and this assists greatly with receiving and processing evidence and assessing electronic reference to statutes and precedent cases. The use of videoconferencing is also expected to reduce court lists. While state of the art equipment has been installed in courthouses within the region, the lack of suitable reciprocal equipment in places such as the *Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre* has, to date, limited the use and effectiveness of this facility. However, its use in other areas, such as taking evidence from children, has proved invaluable. An improvement to the technology at the correctional centre would significantly increase court efficiency (as well as Corrective Services' efficiency).

The greater use of modern technology continues with the roll-out of digital recording equipment scheduled for courts in the region in August 2006 and access to a new sentencing database coming online in the near future. All these exciting advances will, no doubt, increase the support to magistrates which will result in greater efficiency.

Apart from in-court and out-of-court judicial work, magistrates at each of our centres take the opportunity to address groups of local school and college students when they visit our courtrooms to gain an insight to justice in action. Tertiary students involved in legal studies at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus and Bond University regularly attend our courts as part of their practical assignments. This year, one of our magistrates at Southport participated in a work experience program that gave a legal undergraduate the opportunity to closely observe the variety of legal work dealt with, both in-court and out-of-court, by magistrates.

As citizens of our region, through our family and social interests, the magistracy of the South-East Region feels a strong connectivity with the communities we serve. As our workload increases in this thriving region, we look forward to an increase in our number so that we may keep pace with the community's need of timely access to justice.

South-West Region

The South-West Region of the Magistrates Court encompasses an oval-shaped area of Queensland that begins and ends at Stanthorpe and sweeps in a vast arc north-east to the outer western Brisbane suburb of Richlands, then north-west across the Great Dividing Range to Taroom, down to Queensland's border apex with South Australia and New South Wales, and eastward along the state's southern border.

The Regional Coordinating Magistrate for the South-West Region is currently based in the city of Ipswich. There are ten magistrates servicing 22 court centres in this region from the bases listed below in Table 20.

Ipswich

The city of Ipswich has a population of approximately 140 000 and, in June 2005, it was ranked third in Queensland's ten fastest population growth local government areas¹⁶. It is Queensland's oldest city and, arguably, has some of the best private and public colonial architecture, much of which has been preserved so that the inner city street scene retains an air of yesteryear.

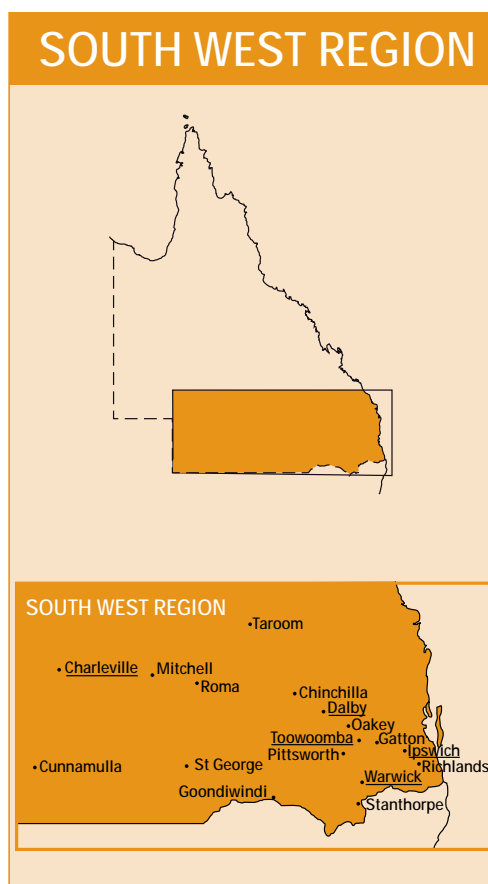


Table 20: Circuit Centres for the South-West Region

Court base	Number of magistrates	Circuit centres
Charleville	1	Cunnamulla, Mitchell, Quilpie, Roma, Tambo
Dalby	1	Chinchilla, Dirranbandi, Millmerran, Oakey, Pittsworth, St George, Taroom
Ipswich	3	Assists in Brisbane 2 days per fortnight
Richlands	2	Assists in Brisbane when required
Toowoomba	2	Gatton 4 days per month
Warwick	1	Goondiwindi, Inglewood, Stanthorpe

¹⁶Old Government OESR Regional Population Growth 2004–05



Design of the new Ipswich Courthouse.

A new courthouse is to be built to replace the current building which was opened in 1981. The new complex will be built to a design sympathetic with its surrounds. The building will be on South Street and will provide eight Magistrates Courts (including a Special Purpose Court) and three District Courts.

The Ipswich Magistrates Court is currently consulting with the local community and members of the legal profession about the possible establishment of a Murri Court. Although a number of attempts have been made in previous years, it appears that the success of the Brisbane Murri Court has influenced the community and legal profession to engage with the court in this endeavour. The court is expected to be operational by the beginning of 2007.

Recently, Samoan community elders have requested permission to attend court to help in the sentencing process. This has been conducted on an informal basis to date; however, in time, we may see the rise of a court for people from these backgrounds, conducted along similar lines to the Murri Court.

Ipswich Magistrates Court is a study in emerging multicultural societies. While there is a significant representation from the Indigenous community, there is also an increasing number of people from the Pacific Islands and Asia (mainly from Vietnam), which means there is a regular demand for interpreter services.

A Drug Court has also been convened in Ipswich each week since the initiation of the pilot program 2000.

Recent technical innovations within the Ipswich courthouse have improved our Court's operation. The installation of video links with correctional institutions has removed the need for prisoners to be brought in to court unnecessarily for mentions and adjournments. This has meant a great saving in court time and security costs. The provision of vulnerable witness rooms, wireless internet connections and digital recording of court proceedings has also been appreciated by the magistrates and by court users.

The magistrates at Ipswich hold regular stakeholder meetings to ensure that services are provided in the most efficient manner possible. There is a good working relationship with these groups and this enables our court, which has a busy list, to operate effectively.

The court has, like so many others throughout the State, been assisted by the invaluable services of the Court Support Volunteers. Some of those currently attending court have been providing this service for over ten years. Without them, the operation of the Court would be more difficult. From time-to-time, these volunteers provide support to families and friends of defendants as well as the victims and witnesses who may be attending hearings.

In the near future, Mental Health Liaison Officers will be stationed at the Ipswich Magistrates Court to help assess people appearing before the Court who have mental health issues. This is an area that has been of considerable concern to all magistrates and court users because there is a perception that many people who may need help are being diverted into the justice system rather than the health system. This service makes it possible to identify those with mental health issues at an earlier stage.

The court is regularly visited by groups of students from the local schools and colleges and most magistrates take the opportunity to speak to and answer some insightful questions from these students about the workings of the court and the justice system generally. Magistrates also endeavour to attend as many local community functions as possible and to maintain contact with the Ipswich community.

Western Districts—Richlands

This district embraces several outer western suburbs of Brisbane and is situated adjacent to growth areas along the western corridor leading to Ipswich. It is a mixture of sprawling urban development and industrial areas and, with the recent development of new residential areas, has led to an increase in the number of younger families residing in the district.

There is a diversity of culture and language with a strong Asian influence within the community. With a higher than average population with non-English speaking backgrounds, there is constant demand for interpretation services in our court. Unfortunately, this usually results in cases being dealt with more slowly and this can affect the court list.

The community is served by a new and modern Magistrates Court complex situated at Richlands. Regular meetings take place from time-to-time between the magistrates and the court's stakeholders to review and assess the delivery of our justice services.

Located nearby are the correctional facilities at Wacol. The planned introduction of videoconferencing technology in 2006–2007 to link the Richlands Court with correctional facilities is much anticipated. This will allow court proceedings to be held in the presence of prisoners, without the necessity of bringing them physically before the court, and will provide efficiency and security benefits to the court, corrective services, police and the community.

The year culminated in the recognition of ongoing services provided by a willing band of Court Support Volunteers. These people freely give up their own time on a daily basis to attend the court and provide assistance. Their activities include arranging interviews with the duty solicitor, guiding people to the relevant courtroom, and providing assistance with documentation on court matters. Often they are called upon to provide emotional support to victims, family and friends who attend court proceedings. Some of the volunteers have tirelessly offered their services for over 15 years. It was important that their significant contribution to the courts was recognised in the presentation of Certificates of Appreciation, by the Attorney-General, at a ceremony held on 1 June 2006 at the Richlands Magistrates Court.

Toowoomba

With a population of over 90 000 residents, Toowoomba is Queensland's largest inland city. The city is situated 130 kilometres west of Brisbane and services the fertile Darling Downs region which is known for its grain, cotton, beef, pork and dairy industries. It is interesting to note that the most significant industries of employment in the district are retail, health and community services, such as secondary, tertiary and rural education centres¹⁷.

As a result of the Federal Government's Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) Visa, which allows skilled migrants who are willing to commit three years to regional areas to gain permanent entry to Australia, Toowoomba has experienced a 500 per cent rise, over the past three years, in the number of resettled refugees—the majority of whom are from Southern Sudan¹⁸. The court, along with other essential services, has been required to cope with the sudden communication difficulties involved with language and cultural differences. The need for ready local access to trained court interpreters has become obvious in Toowoomba as with a number of other centres.

People attending court in Toowoomba are given practical and emotional support from a dedicated team of Court Support Volunteers from the local community who attend court daily on a roster basis. Plans are in place to have the Chief Magistrate present Certificates

of Appreciation to the volunteers at an official ceremony at the courthouse in the near future.

Throughout the year, the Toowoomba magistracy has appreciated the assistance of a barrister, Mr Daniel Toombes, who has been provided to the court through the Advocacy and Support Centre, as a six month project, to give legal advice, support and representation to people with an intellectual disability and/or mental incapacity who live within the Toowoomba community. Mr Toombes' work commenced in 2005 and was funded through Legal Aid Queensland after consultation with the magistrates and local police. It has led to positive outcomes for the court and the community. Shortly, the Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service will position a Mental Health Liaison Officer at the court to help assess people appearing before the court who may have mental health issues.

The Toowoomba magistrates regularly consult with community leaders and court stakeholders on justice issues. Throughout the year, discussions have been held with domestic violence support organisations, Child Safety Officers, Legal Aid solicitors and members of the watch house staff. One topic that has been raised in all of these meetings is the need for a refurbishment of the courthouse at Toowoomba to provide adequate facilities for the varied needs of people who are required to attend court.



Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to court volunteers at Toowoomba Courthouse.

¹⁷Toowoomba City Council Report 2005

¹⁸DIMA Review of Resettlement Program 2005

Dalby

Dalby is situated north-west of Toowoomba on the Warrego national highway which runs from Brisbane to Darwin and lies at the crossroads of the Warrego, Moonie, Condamine and Bunya state highways, that link all the capital cities of Australia. The 10 000 residents of this thriving country town are only a few hours driving distance from the cities of Brisbane and Toowoomba and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

Each year, the Dalby-based magistrate and depositions clerk travel 20 000 to 25 000 kilometres to convene courts in the district. Often, the driving on circuit trips is done during dawn and dusk hours and, with the number of kangaroos that traverse the country highways at those times of day, travelling can be quite hazardous. The Dalby magistrate's circuit program is detailed below in Table 21.

Table 21: Dalby Circuits
–Distance and frequency of travel

Circuit centre	Frequency	Round trip distance from Dalby
Chinchilla	Monthly	167km
Dirranbandi	Quarterly	853km
Millmerran	Monthly	198km
Oakey	Monthly	109km
Pittsworth	Monthly	174km
St George	Monthly	606km
Taroom	Quarterly	514km

The anticipated installation of video links next year at Dirranbandi, St George and Taroom courthouses will enable the Dalby magistrate to deal with urgent arrest matters from the home base without the need to have people who are held in custody at those centres, or at Roma, conveyed long

distances, at considerable expense, by road –only for them to receive bail and then have to be transported back to their home centre. Judicial time spent in travelling to these centres for court callovers and short matters will also be reduced and then used more productively.

Refurbishment of the courthouse at St George has recently commenced. At present, apart from Dalby, only the courts at Oakey and Chinchilla have a permanent court recording facility and the equipping of the other courthouses with such essential equipment is a priority. The aim is to install equipment that became available as a result of the Brisbane Courts' transition to digital recording technology.

In Dirranbandi the Magistrates Court sits in the local police station. As is the case with the courts in Cape communities, this is inconsistent with the reassurance of trust in judicial independence.

Warwick

The city of Warwick is located at the junction of the New England and Cunningham Highways, 83 kilometres south of Toowoomba. The population of the Warwick Shire is estimated at 21 387 and, of them, 11 000 are city residents¹⁹. The Warwick district is renowned for some of Australia's best agricultural and diary produce; however, it has a wide range of industry that includes dairy processing, maize milling, livestock transportation, and brick and paving manufacturing.

The circuit centres serviced by Warwick's resident magistrate are Inglewood and the border towns of Goondiwindi and Stanthorpe. Over the past twelve months, Magistrate Cridland has travelled between 10 000 and 12 000 kilometres to attend these courts.

¹⁹Warwick Shire Council 2005 Annual Report

Remoteness of western rural centres often means that magistrates are restricted when considering sentence options that would be readily available to defendants in regional cities. However, renovations at the courthouses of Stanthorpe and Goondiwindi this year included the construction of vulnerable witness rooms. Apart from providing an opportunity for children to give their evidence to courts via CCTV, the suite (which includes a toilet) has also enabled Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice Officers from Warwick to conduct interviews and urinalysis testing on court callover days as part of their pro-active monitoring of the court's Intensive Correction Orders and Intensive Rehabilitation Orders. Although these orders are onerous for the offender, they give them an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves while living in the community and undertaking community service, instead of being incarcerated. Importantly, DrugArm is now established in Warwick, Stanthorpe and Goondiwindi and their services are regularly used by Corrective Services. This structural and personnel infrastructure has increased the court's ability to prescribe more therapeutic sentences for youthful offenders at these centres. Other developments that have helped the court in this region this year have been:

- the ability of Juvenile Justice officers to propose and supervise effective conditional bail programs for juveniles who reside in Killarney;
- the provision of support workers to help aggrieved people prior to hearings in the Domestic Violence jurisdiction at several court centres; and
- the establishment of a permanent office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Service in Warwick to attend more directly to Indigenous Australians at Warwick and its circuit centres.

Charleville

Charleville is situated on the banks of the Warrego River, approximately 740 kilometres west of Brisbane. The area of Queensland that falls within Magistrate Costello's jurisdiction includes the towns of Cunnamulla, Mitchell, Quilpie, Roma and Tambo and is equivalent in size to the State of Victoria. Table 22 below indicates the distances he has to travel on his circuits.

Table 22: Charleville Circuits
—Distance and frequency of travel

Circuit centre	Frequency	Round trip distance from Charleville
Cunnamulla	Monthly	400km
Mitchell	Quarterly	360km
Quilpie	Quarterly	420km
Roma	Fortnightly	536km
Tambo	Quarterly	401km

In each of these centres, the Magistrates Court is appreciated as an important part of the community. Apart from providing access to justice, the staff at the local courthouses often act as government agents, providing services, advice and assistance to community members on a variety of issues.

This year, the continuing drought has had an adverse impact on the people and local economies of the far south-west and, in most centres, remoteness of locality results in a lack of readily available and affordable legal representation. In the criminal jurisdiction, public nuisance offences (such as wilful destruction of public and private property) appear to be on the increase, with an over-representation of Indigenous people before the court. It is also concerning to note that 107 children were dealt with in Cunnamulla's Childrens Court this year compared to 51 the previous year. The number of break-and-enter offences have been of particular concern to the people of Cunnamulla.



(l-r) Sylvia Wilson-Kuhbauch, Neil McShane (Police Prosecutor) Magistrate Costello, Peter Alexander (Registrar), Heidi Everitt and Christine Monaghan (Court Services Officers, JAG).

The community leaders of Cunnamulla are particularly pro-active in seeking government support to improve living conditions at that centre. Their driving concern lies with a lack of recreation and social activities for the town's young people. Some time ago, the local disused picture theatre was converted into a youth sports centre. A sports facilitator was engaged to run sports training and activities at the centre. However, because there is no form of transport to convey sports teams to regional competitions, the Magistrates Court has supported efforts to fund the acquisition of a community bus. This vehicle would also help children from the local schools participate in regional educational activities. It would also allow access to the large properties owned and operated by local Indigenous organisations for cultural education and camps for local young people.

Magistrate Costello has welcomed the support of Cunnamulla's community leaders to address justice issues in Cunnamulla. Through his close association with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Queensland

Ambulance Service, Magistrate Costello has referred to various courses Probation Officers that may be suitable for offenders to undertake during the course of their Probation Orders. His contact with local Community Health Officers has resulted in a Community Health Clinic being set up in a spare room at the Cunnamulla courthouse each court callover day to provide free-of-charge, voluntary health checks for people at the court. A senior nurse and a health worker conduct the clinic and offer a variety of examinations, including checks for diabetes and blood pressure and, where necessary, refer people onto the hospital for specialists' attention. Another extremely positive move for the court and the town this year has been the formation of a Community Justice Group in Cunnamulla. Group members attend court regularly and advise the magistrate on cultural and antecedent information about Indigenous offenders who come before the court. This group's involvement with the court has already had positive impact on the rate of recidivism.

During the year, the courthouse at Charleville was re-roofed and covered car accommodation was provided for judicial and registry officers. The court's witness room was also upgraded. In Roma, the Magistrates Court has been able to use the CCTV facilities that were installed there this year for the benefit of the court and the community.

Use of driving simulator at Roma Courthouse

Following in-depth ground work by Magistrate Costello, people who come before the Roma Magistrates Court on drink driving offences and speed related offences may be given an opportunity to gain insight to their driving behaviour through two programs installed in a portable driving simulator positioned in the courthouse. The simulator forms the basis of a Drink Driver Program and a Defensive Driving Program.

The Drink Driver Program, designed for a person with a medium to high blood/alcohol reading, uses the simulator and special goggles to allow a person to experience the differences in perception and behaviour between driving in a sober state and driving over the prescribed alcohol limit. It also uses a 'walk-the-line' detector, videos and a powerpoint presentation to re-enforce the overall program message about how alcohol adversely influences the reactions of the body.

The Defensive Driving Program uses a simulator and a powerpoint presentation to indicate the necessary reaction times required when erratic driving behaviour and excessive speed are combined with a range of driving conditions that can be normally encountered. The programs are run by Safe Drive Training (Australia) Pty Ltd, a Brisbane based company, with their trainers and equipment brought to Roma for each session.

In appropriate cases, the court orders offenders to undertake the courses as conditions of a probation order and are provided as a voluntary alternative to the imposition of a fine.

The first series of simulator sessions was conducted at the Roma courthouse on Monday, 8 May 2006. The Manager of Roma's Community Corrections Office has advised of very positive feedback from the people who have undertaken the courses. The objective of the program is that, by providing offenders an opportunity to better understand the impact of drink driving and speed, such offending will not be repeated.

The courts within the South-West Region are served by dedicated magistrates, some of whom can spend the best part of a day driving to and from courts. The kilometres travelled by Magistrates based in Charleville, Warwick, Dalby and, to a lesser extent, Toowoomba total many thousands each year.

The isolation of some of these locations does have an impact on access to justice; however, with the improvement in communications, it is easier for advice and/or assistance to be obtained. Hopefully, it will soon be possible to conduct callovers for some of these courts by video link from the 'home centre'—thus making more effective use of the magistrate's time and more expeditious resolution of matters for the benefit of community members. We look forward to reporting on these developments and other improvements to the delivery of justice throughout the region next year.



Portable driving simulator used for Drink Driver and Defensive Driving Programs.

