

Friday 14 March 2008

Media Statement

Courts increase media access to criminal exhibits

Queensland courts have become even more open to public scrutiny with today's gazettal of new provisions allowing media organisations to copy and publish exhibits in criminal trials.

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey said the Criminal Practice Amendment Rule made under the *Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991* provided a statutory basis for judges and magistrates to permit the copying and publication of exhibits tendered at trial.

"The media plays an important role in reporting on court proceedings and ensuring justice is seen to be done," Chief Justice de Jersey said.

"These amendments make it easier for journalists to access, copy, publish and broadcast a wide range of exhibits, including documents, photographs and audio-visual recordings.

"In fact, they allow any member of the public to apply for an order permitting the copying and publishing of an exhibit during or after a trial."

Chief Justice de Jersey said the new provisions applied primarily to supreme and district courts, but also extended to trial exhibits tendered in magistrates courts where defendants had chosen to have their matters heard without a jury.

"These amendments deliver an appropriate balance between the dual public interests in the proper administration of justice and being informed," he said.

"Judges and magistrates who receive applications to copy and publish exhibits will consider factors such as the public interest, the nature of the proposed publication, the nature of the exhibit and the likely effect of publication on victims and their families.

Chief Justice de Jersey said the amendments were a response to heightened media and public interest in making exhibits more easily available.

"Until recent years, non-party access to exhibits in criminal proceedings has been on an ad hoc basis," he said.

"The new provisions will help to ensure greater consistency in permitting access to trial exhibits in Queensland courts."

Media contact: The Office of the Chief Justice, (07) 3247 4279