



## MEETING COMMUNIQUÉ

**Thursday, 14 July 2016**  
**Brisbane**

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On Thursday, 14 July 2016, the Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council (Council) held its fifth meeting. The meeting focused on the **law and justice framework** for domestic and family violence, one of three key themes of the *Not Now, Not Ever* report.

The **Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General** delivered a presentation to Council on the department's implementation of recommendations of the *Not Now, Not Ever* report. The **Chief Magistrate, Judge Ray Rinaudo**, an ex-officio member of Council, provided an update on progress of implementation of recommendations relevant to the Magistrates Courts, and **Magistrate Colin Strofield** provided an overview of the operation of the **Southport specialist domestic and family violence court**.

The Director-General highlighted some of the **key achievements** of the reform process to date, within the **context of challenges** faced in responding to domestic and family violence across the state. A key aspect of the department's responsibilities relates to law reforms, including:

- establishment of the **Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board** to review domestic and family violence-related deaths
- providing domestic and family violence victims with automatic '**special witness status**' to support their evidence in criminal proceedings
- creation of the **new offence of strangulation in a domestic setting**, and
- introduction of the **domestic violence notation scheme**, which records the domestic and family violence context of offences on criminal histories.

The Director-General outlined initiatives funded through the 2016-17 State Budget including rollout of **additional specialist courts**, supporting community justice groups in **discrete Indigenous communities** and continuation of the state-wide **duty lawyer scheme**. The Director-General emphasised the importance of leadership and contributions by employees to **cultural change** in the department and provided a brief overview of the **Southport court trial**.

The **Chief Magistrate** presented an overview of implementation actions including development of the domestic and family violence **bench book** and **professional development** activities for Magistrates. Early improvements identified through the conduct of the Southport specialist court trial are being **implemented in other Magistrates Courts** across Queensland.

**Magistrate Strofield** gave Council an overview of key features of the **Southport specialist court trial**. The **specialist registry, duty lawyer services, timely determination** of applications, **continuity of judicial consideration** and **improved information-sharing** between government and non-government agencies were identified as particularly beneficial features of the trial.

Following presentations, Council engaged in a round table discussion with **justice sector representatives** regarding the domestic and family violence reform process.

The **Queensland Law Society** updated Council on implementation of recommendations directed to it in the *Not Now, Not Ever* report, including development of **best practice guidelines** due for release in late July and **delivery of education events** for legal practitioners.

**Queensland Corrective Services** provided an overview of **offender intervention programs** delivered through the corrective services system based on principles such as risks of offending and tailoring interventions to meet individuals' needs.

**Legal Aid Queensland** described progress on the roll-out of the state-wide **duty lawyer service** now available at **14 Magistrates Courts** across the State to provide advice to applicants and respondents in domestic and family violence matters.

The **Bar Association of Queensland** noted the need to **balance the rights of respondents and defendants with the welfare of vulnerable witnesses**, emphasising that both principles are fundamental to proper operation of the justice process.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service** reported on its work with the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service in examining **social responses to domestic and family violence in Indigenous communities** and community services available to support those affected to navigate the legal system.

The **Women's Legal Service** advised Council of contributions to the domestic and family violence law reform process, through **services to support clients** and providing **submissions and input** into government's implementation activities.

Finally, **Griffith University** presented an overview of the process for **evaluation of the Southport specialist court trial** to assess its efficacy and consider how the specialist court model can be implemented more broadly.

Council **acknowledges the contributions and commitment** of justice sector stakeholders to the reform process and emphasises the importance of a **fair and robust law and justice framework** able to respond to the needs of victims of domestic and family violence and to hold perpetrators to account.