

# **Courts Consulting the Community 2006**

## **Welcome Speech by The Hon John Doyle AC, Chief Justice of South Australia**

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. I welcome you here today on behalf of the State Courts Administration Council.

The Courts Administration Authority is made up of the Council, which runs it, the Administrator and about 760 staff members who work for the Authority.

The Courts Administration Authority provides administrative support and administrative services for the judiciary in the State Courts. It also provides registry services and similar services.

The members of Council are here today. I invite them to stand. They are:

Justice Sulan, my alternate

Judge Worthington, the Chief Judge of the District Court

Judge Simpson, who is the Chief Judge's alternate

Dr Cannon, the Acting Chief Magistrate

Also present are the Administrator, who is our Chief Executive Officer, and members of the Executive Management Committee. I invite them to stand.

They are:

Gary Thompson, State Courts Administrator

Trevor O'Rourke, Director, Corporate Services

Chris Doull, Director, Policy Planning & Research Division

Edie Bransbury, Registrar, Supreme Court

Michael Moore, Registrar, District Court

Robert Lindsay, Director & Principal Registrar, Magistrates Court

Mark Stokes, Sheriff

In addition with us are members of the Community Reference Group, which works as a consultative body with our Community Relations Committee.

Also present are some members of the Courts Aboriginal Reference Group, which is chaired by Justice Sulan. This body provides advice to the Council on matters affecting the Aboriginal peoples.

Finally, there are those of you whom we have invited here today. You may not have had much contact with the Courts. No doubt you are wondering what you have let yourself in for.

I welcome you also. I take this opportunity to say how grateful we are to you for giving up a day of your time to work with us. What we are doing today is done for the public benefit. Your contribution is important. And we realise that we are asking a lot, when we ask you to spend a day on this task. So, as I said, we are grateful to you.

We completed the first Courts Consulting the Community Survey in 2000. That was a survey of about 1,000 people aged 16 years or more, asking a number of questions about the court system. It was quite a detailed survey.

Recently we repeated the survey, asking the same questions.

With the results of the 2000 survey and the 2006 survey, and you will hear about the 2006 survey shortly, we are in a position to compare community attitudes to the courts, and community understanding of the courts, in 2000 and in 2006.

Today we have two purposes. First, to hear your views about the results of the surveys, and the implications that can be drawn from them. The second is to hear your suggestions about the areas that interest you, and to which you think we should give priority in the light of the survey results.

But first of all we will give you a run down on what we have done since the Courts Consulting the Community Conference in 2000. We will also outline our new strategic plan, which synthesises a lot of information from within and from outside the CAA.

And Jason Dunstone, whose firm conducted both surveys, will give you a summary of the results of the latest survey. We are not going to go through the responses to every question. That would take too long.

But if you have queries about topics that you think should be covered, raise these with Jason during his session.

As I said, the second reason we are here today is to hear your suggestions about the areas that interest and concern you, and to which you think we should give priority.

You might wonder why we invite your suggestions, bearing in mind that the CAA already has adopted a new strategic plan.

The answer is that your input will affect and influence how we implement the plan. You might identify gaps in our approach, or cause us to change the emphasis in our approach. You might think there are things that we need to look at more closely.

There is one important point that I want to make. Our system of government is said to involve three branches of government. They are the legislative branch or parliament, that makes the law; the executive branch, that is the party that is in government, that administers the law; and then finally the judicial branch, that decides disputes about the application of the law.

I ask you to bear in mind that there is a limit to what the judicial branch can do. We are limited having regard to our function, which is to administer justice. And we are limited by our resources. And the prime function of the CAA is to provide administrative services and facilities for the courts.

We regard the relationship between the courts and the community as an important matter, but we have limited funding to spend in that area.

I also want to emphasise that it is not appropriate for the courts or the CAA to lobby the Government for changes in social policy, other than in matters that affect quite directly the work of the Courts. We have to be careful not to enter the area that the Executive Government regards as its area.

During the course of today there may be occasions when you want to clarify aspects of what I have said, and aspects of the role of the judiciary. You will find that at each table there will be a member of the judiciary and a senior member of our staff, to help you if you want any help in this respect. Do not hesitate to raise any questions with them, or with any of us from the CAA.

I do encourage you to participate as actively as you can. We are keen to ensure that decisions we make later are informed by your views and suggestions. And we are keen to share our information with you.

We are here mainly to listen to you, and to answer your questions. We are not here to tell you what we are doing, so much as to hear your views about what we might do.

I add that, as I am sure you will realise, it is not appropriate for us to discuss individual cases or individual situations that have come before the Courts. We are trying to focus on the big picture.

I assure you that we will take the comments you make today and consider them in relation to our strategic and business plans. We will make the results of the survey and the outcomes of this conference public, and publish them on our website.

Present today are several members of different news media. They are participating in the same way as the rest of you. Nothing that you say will be

reported in a manner that identifies you with a particular point of view. Any reporting of today will be confined to the general issue of what we are trying to achieve, and the general trend of discussion.

I thank you, in anticipation of the contribution that I know you will make.

I now hand over to Gary Thompson, the State Courts Administrator.