

SACOSS Representative: Gabrielle Canny

Courts Administration Authority, Community Relations Committee

In the year under review the Community Reference Group (CRG) of the Community Relations Committee, which represents community views to the Courts Administration Authority (CAA), met on two occasions -10 September 2008 and 25 March 2009. This reference group is designed to maintain trust and confidence in the Courts and provides useful information and opportunities to submit community views directly to the CAA.

The CRG has been in existence for 4 years, starting with 9 members, now increasing to 16. At the September 2008 meeting Dr Andrew Cannon, Deputy Chief Magistrate gave up to date information on Debt recovery processes and procedures available for enforcing court orders in the Magistrates Court. There was continuing discussion regarding the Adelaide Thinkers in Residence Program, and the CAA proposal that the next Thinker in Residence would be tackling justice issues.

The March 2009 meeting confirmed that the government was proceeding with a Justice Thinker in Residence appointment. It was subsequently announced was Judge Peggy Hora, a retired Californian Supreme Court justice, was to be appointed, with her residency commencing in August 2009. The CRG will meet with Judge Peggy Hora in September 2009. There was also information provided to the Committee members on the backlog of criminal matters and the foreshadowed opening of the Sturt Street Justice precinct in September 2009. Discussion of the progress on the Community Involvement Plan 2008-2009 and redesign of Ask the Judge website also took place.

During the March 2009 meeting information was received from Justice Bleby on the use of expert evidence in the courts and from Justice Hannon on the changes to the Industrial Court, Industrial Commission and Workers Compensation Tribunal and from the Deputy State Coroner, Tony Schapel on inquests and the Coroners Court. There was discussion around the success of the Courts Open day held during Law Week each year and of the plans for 2009 when a forensic science display and a tour of the basement holding cells will be highlights of the Open Day. This annual event attracts crowds of more than 2000 who take advantage of a rare opportunity to look behind the scenes of the State's main trial court.

Members will review the Committee's Terms of Reference in September 2009 to ensure the Committee membership represents all users of the courts and that the Committee continues to be useful in providing feedback to court staff from the perspective of the user.