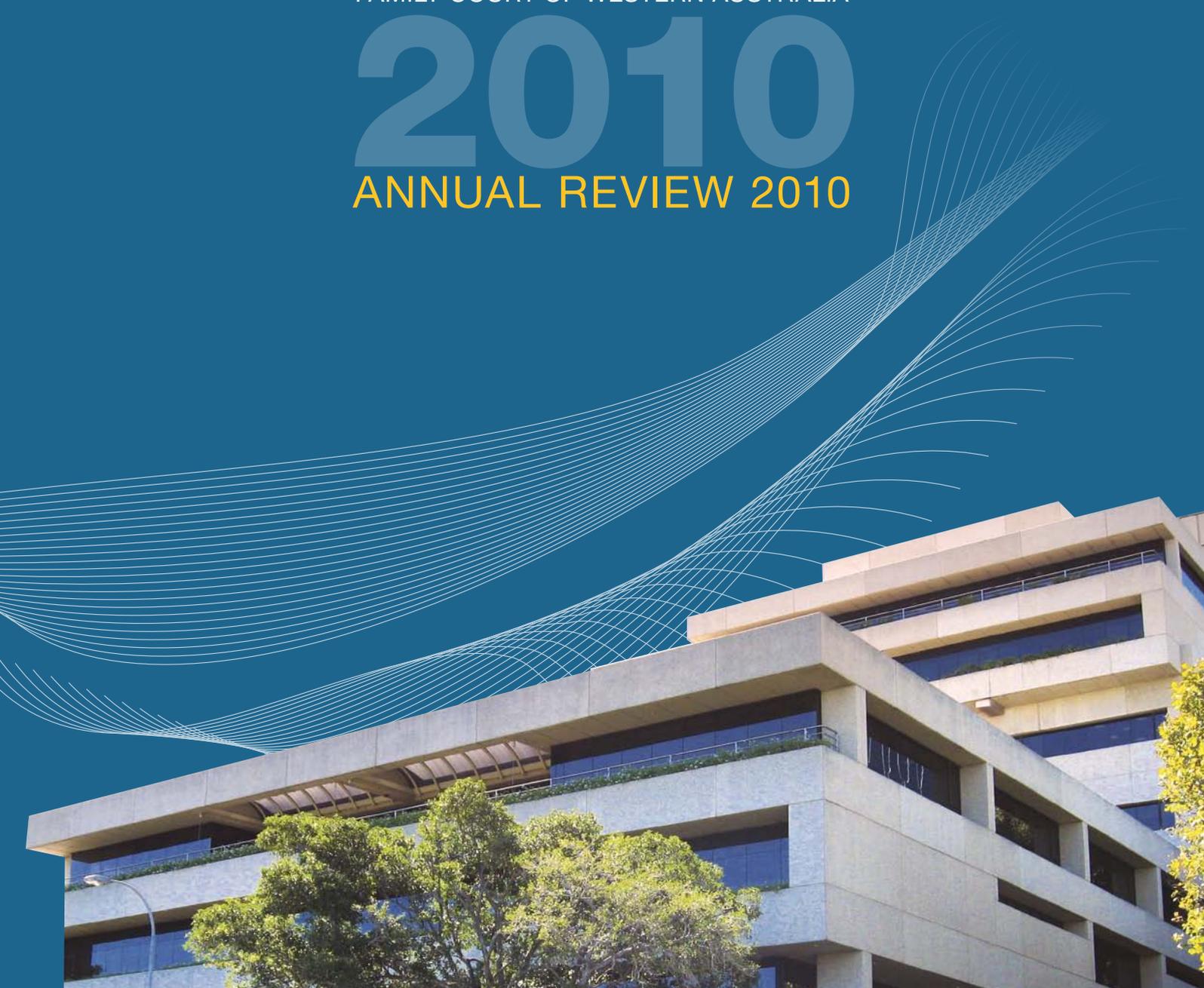




FAMILY COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

2010

ANNUAL REVIEW 2010



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From the Chief Judge

I have pleasure in presenting the annual review of the work of the Family Court of Western Australia for 2009/10.

Service Delivery

In my last report I observed that the most crucial issue facing the Court in 2009/10 would be finding ways to maintain an acceptable level of service in the absence of an acceptable level of funding. I made that observation in light of the publication of the report of the funding review conducted by the Commonwealth Government, the primary funder of the Court's operations.

Examination of the statistics in this Annual Report will show that the Court was unable to provide an acceptable level of service last year, with there being significant increases both in the numbers of matters awaiting trial and the waiting time for trial. As at 30 June 2010 there were 597 matters in the defended list and the median period from commencement of proceedings to trial stood at 100 weeks.

Both of these statistics are unacceptable. In the absence of any indication of funding being provided to allow for the appointment of additional permanent judicial officers, the Court has put in place a range of strategies aimed to stem the increase in the numbers of matters awaiting trial and the delay in matters reaching trial. I will report on the outcome of these in my next report.

Judicial retirement and appointment

The Honourable Justice Julienne Penny retired from office in early July 2009, after 10 years of service to the Court. Her Honour was an outstanding judicial officer who served the Court in many capacities, including as the List Judge and in overseeing the establishment of the Court's website.

The Honourable Justice Simon Moncrieff was welcomed to the Court on 1 September 2009 to fill the vacancy left by Justice Penny. The Court has been fortunate to secure the services of his Honour, who was President of the Family Law Practitioners Association at the time of his appointment and had recently been appointed as Senior Counsel.

The delay between the departure of a judicial officer and the arrival of their replacement can have a significant impact on the operations of the Court. I was grateful that, on this occasion, cooperation between the Commonwealth and State Governments resulted in a delay of only two months between Justice Penny's departure and Justice Moncrieff's arrival.

The two months' delay was exacerbated by the fact that Justice Penny ceased to hear trials in the months prior to her departure in order to clear outstanding leave and to ensure that all outstanding judgments were delivered prior to her commission expiring. As a result, there was a period of about six months during which the Court effectively had only four Judges. This had a significant impact on the increase in the number of matters awaiting trial.

Acting Magistrate and Registrar

My report last year recorded my appreciation to the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Honourable Robert McClelland MP, and the Commonwealth Government for providing funds for the appointment of an Acting Magistrate for 12 months.

The State Government determined it would be appropriate to appoint each of the Court's two Registrars to act as Magistrates for a period of six months. Registrar Colin Kaeser undertook the first period, commencing on 3 February 2010, and remained in that office at the end of the year covered by this report.

The Court was fortunate to secure the services of Mrs Gail Sutherland, a highly experienced practitioner, to act in Registrar Kaeser's role during his time on the Bench.

Indigenous Family Liaison Officer program

During the year under review an independent evaluation of the Indigenous Family Liaison Officer (IFLO) program was undertaken by Sankey Associates.

The report arising out of the evaluation was most positive. It concluded by noting:

"This initiative is a further demonstration of innovation within the Family Court of Western Australia, and, with more time and some improvements to the current operation, considerable value will accrue to ATSI litigants and to the Court. It appears to be increasing the safety of children in some of the Court's most complex cases."

The report went on to note that the Court's initiative in establishing the program was in line with the following remarks made by the Commonwealth Attorney-General to the inaugural Family Law System Conference in Canberra in February 2009:

“The Family Law System also needs to be sensitive to the family relationship issues experienced by Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse people. We need to consider innovations to the justice system more broadly that better engage Indigenous Australians and break cycles of crime and violence in Indigenous families and communities.”

Very important data was gathered during the IFLO evaluation. The most telling statistic was that provided by the Court’s indigenous clients. When responding to the survey question, “how important is it to have an Indigenous consultant to help you with your case at the Family Court”, 84% of indigenous clients gave a rating of 7 or more (using a scale where 1 was “not at all important” and 10 was “very important”). Almost 60% of indigenous respondents to the survey gave a rating of 10.

The original funding for the IFLO program had been provided on a “pilot” basis. Although an extension of funding had been requested, it became apparent in May 2010 that it was not proposed to continue the funding. This was a bitterly disappointing outcome, given the positive evaluation and the high regard in which the program is held by judicial officers, family consultants and, most importantly, indigenous clients. The program was also very good “value for money”, costing only \$209,777 per annum to cover all of the costs associated with having two IFLOs providing services to clients from one end of the State to the other.

Having learned that the funding would not continue, I made personal representations in Canberra to the Attorney-General’s Department, followed up with direct pleas to the Attorney-General and the Honourable Jenny Macklin MP, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. I am most grateful to both the Attorney and Minister Macklin for the fact that following those representations, funding for the program was extended for 12 months.

Regrettably, the extension was accompanied by advice that the funding would not be further extended. It is also regrettable that, in the interim, the Court had lost the services of its original IFLOs, who had obtained more secure employment elsewhere. This loss was a great setback to the program. I will, however, be able to report next year on arrangements that have since been put in place to engage replacement staff.

Notwithstanding the initial indications that funding will not be further extended, I will be continuing to make strong

representations on behalf of indigenous clients to ensure the continuation of the program, which is an excellent example of the important innovations to which the Attorney General referred in his speech in February 2009.

Ongoing innovation

In my last report I noted two “Australia first” innovations introduced in the Court.

The first was the co location of a senior officer from the Department for Child Protection in the Family Court premises to facilitate information sharing and collaboration in the many cases in which risk of child abuse has been identified. Ms Michele Cohen continued to fill this role with distinction throughout the year, and the initiative continues to attract widespread interest.

The other innovation mentioned was the information sharing protocol developed with other agencies dealing with cases involving family violence. The arrangements under this protocol continued to be refined during the year, and have proved most effective in ensuring a more coordinated approach.

Increase in fees

Near the end of the year under review, the Commonwealth announced its intention to increase significantly the fees payable in family law proceedings, including the imposition of fees not previously charged. The anticipated increase in revenue for the Court is very timely, albeit there are a number of limitations on the way in which the Court will be able to utilise these funds.

Whilst recognising the benefit to the Court arising from the increased funding, it is also appropriate to acknowledge the additional impost on clients seeking access to justice. Prior to the introduction of the fee changes, many clients were able to obtain an exemption from all fees. Under the new arrangements, clients seeking exemption are required to pay a fee for making the application to be exempt from fees. Whilst the amount is modest, I am concerned that some clients will be unable to meet the fee and hence will be unable to access the Court’s services.

It is also a concern that full fee paying clients may find the increased level of fees to be prohibitive. This is of particular concern in those matters involving allegations of violence, child abuse and neglect. Parents and other relatives



seeking access to the Court to obtain orders designed to protect children may be dissuaded from doing so due to economic circumstances.

Family Relationship Services Australia

I have been privileged over the last two years to have served as one of two co-opted members on the board of Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA), the peak body for family relationship and support services. FRSA provides national leadership and representation for services that work to strengthen the wellbeing, safety and resilience of families, children and communities.

FRSA represents many of the major organisations that provide invaluable support services to clients of the Court. I consider my appointment is recognition of the efforts made by the Court to work collaboratively with other key members of the family law system.

I am also honoured to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Reference Group, the Advisory Board to the College of Law and the National Board of the Family Law Section which advises on professional development for family lawyers.

Court governance

The management of the Court continues to be overseen by the Board of Management to which the Judges have delegated their authority to make decisions on behalf of the Court, subject always to the right of review.

The Board of Management has met fortnightly throughout the year, often in my absence on Full Court duties in the Eastern States. I am indebted to the Honourable Justice Martin, the Principal Registrar, the Director of Court Counselling and the Executive Manager (and their delegates who attend meetings in their absences) for their ongoing contribution to the work of the Board.

I also acknowledge the many people who willingly give up their personal time to take part in the work of the Court's committees. These committees are of vital importance and have driven the many innovations that have been the hallmark of the Court.

Finally, I thank all of the Judges, Magistrates, Registrars, Family Consultants, Managers and members of court staff for their dedication and commitment throughout the year.

The Honourable Justice Stephen Thackray
Chief Judge
Family Court of Western Australia

The Family Court

Our Jurisdiction

The Family Court of Western Australia was established in 1976 as a State court under the *Family Court Act 1975* (WA).

The Court comprises Judges and Registrars. It is vested with State and Federal jurisdiction in matters of family law and deals with divorce, property of a marriage or de facto relationship, matters relating to children, maintenance and adoptions. Specialist Family Law Magistrates work alongside the Judges and Registrars as an integral part of the Court structure.

The Department of the Attorney General (WA) provides administrative and logistical support for the operation of the Court, which is principally federally funded.

Our Area of Operation

Apart from the Perth Metropolitan area, the Court also provides services to the following regional centres:

Albany
Broome
Bunbury
Geraldton
Kalgoorlie

Our Workload

Number of applications received	14,861
Matter finalisations	12,887
Divorce applications	5,324
Final order applications	2,750
Appeals	25
Finalisations by trial	255

Our People

5	Judges
9.6	Magistrates/Registrars
52.5	Registry support staff
35	Judicial support staff
15	Family Consultants and Indigenous Family Liaison Officer
6	Counselling support staff



Our Budget

FAMILY COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA		
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2010		
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Commonwealth Grants	17,090,709	
Court Fees	2,424,248	
Other Revenue	51,723	
State Contribution - De Facto Matters	186,258	
State Contribution - Specified Callings	160,398	
	<u>19,913,336</u>	
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries and Superannuation	11,386,807	
Building Rentals and General Maintenance	5,037,720	
Administration Expenses	3,535,544	
	<u>19,960,071</u>	
Subtotal - 2009/10 Operating Result	-	<u>46,735</u>

Our Judiciary

As at 30 June 2010 the Family Court Judges, Magistrates and Registrars were:

Chief Judge

The Honourable Justice Stephen Thackray

Judges

The Honourable Justice Carolyn Martin
The Honourable Justice Jane Crisford
The Honourable Justice Stephen Crooks
The Honourable Justice Simon Moncrieff

Principal Registrar

Magistrate David Monaghan

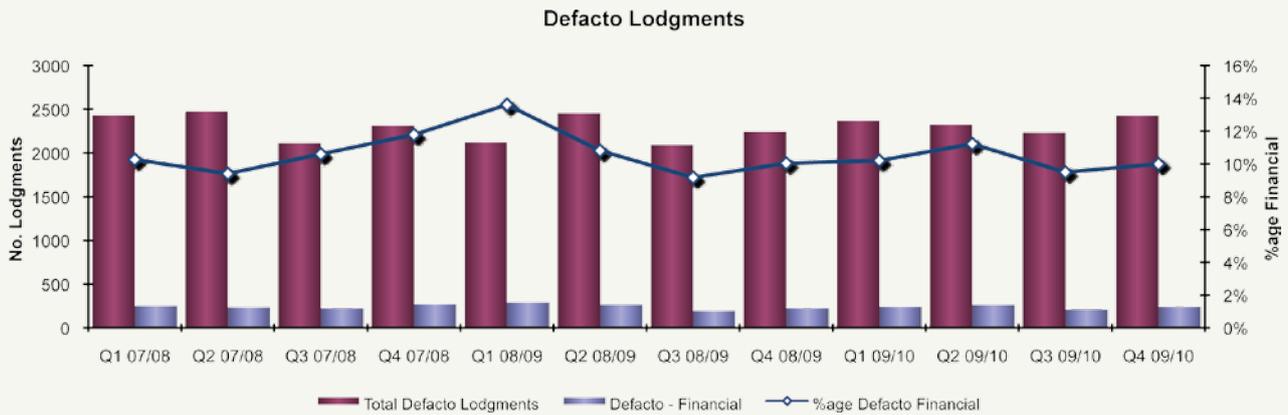
Magistrates/Registrars

Magistrate Christopher Judges
Magistrate Ronald Fleming
Magistrate Annette Andrews
Magistrate Alan Moroni
Magistrate Elizabeth Stewart
Magistrate Jill Vander Wal
Magistrate Susan Duncanson
Acting Magistrate Colin Kaeser
Registrar Sally Vanderfeen
Registrar Gail Sutherland



Case Workload

An increase was seen in filings in both children's cases and matters involving settlement of property in 2009/10.



During the year, over 60% of children's matters were commenced on the basis that a certificate was filed establishing a ground of exemption from attending compulsory family dispute resolution. This is an increase of 5% from the preceding year due to an increased volume of certificates filed (13.3%).

There was a significant increase in the percentage of matters in which the applicant was self represented at the time of filing of applications in matters involving children (up from 38.5% to 47.6%). A slight decrease in self representation (down from 13.4% to 12.3%) was recorded in matters involving financial issues. The ratio of self representation in divorces continues to remain steady at around 82%.

There was a slight reduction in the proportion of applications made in proceedings where the parties were never married. These now represent about 42% of the total number of applications (excluding divorces), down from about 45% last year.

Applications for property settlements in de facto matters now represent over 10% of all applications for final orders.

2009/10 saw a continuing high volume of applications seeking only consent orders. There were 2,445 such applications this year, the great majority relating to property settlement.

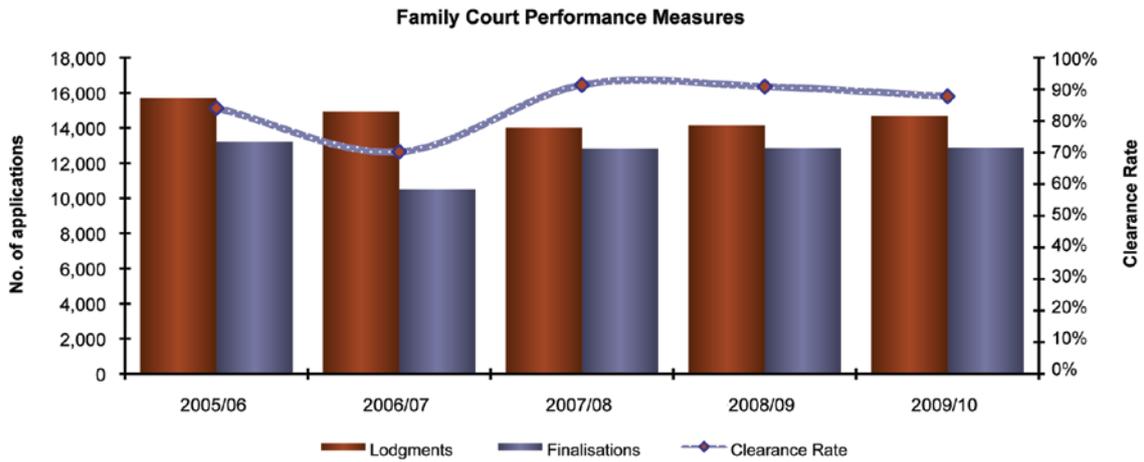
Court Performance

An increase in the number of lodgments was seen in 2009/10, with a slight increase in total finalisations. The total of finalisations is calculated by a rule which deems matters to have been finalised where there has been no activity for 12 months or longer. This provides a more accurate reflection of the efficiency of the Court. It should also be noted that many matters are not finalised because the Court does not consider it is in the interests of the children for the matter to be finalised. Many other matters are not finalised because the parties involved, for a variety of reasons, have not advanced the preparation of the matter for final hearing.

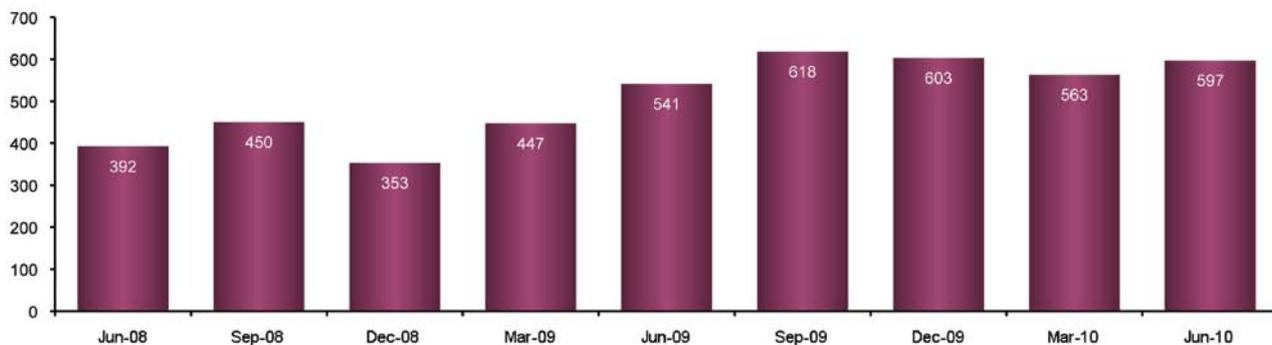
The Court’s clearance ratio is a measure of whether the Court is keeping up with its workload (number of finalisations divided by the number of lodgments). In 2009/10 the clearance ratio was 87.8%, a small decrease from the previous year (90.9%).

e-Filing

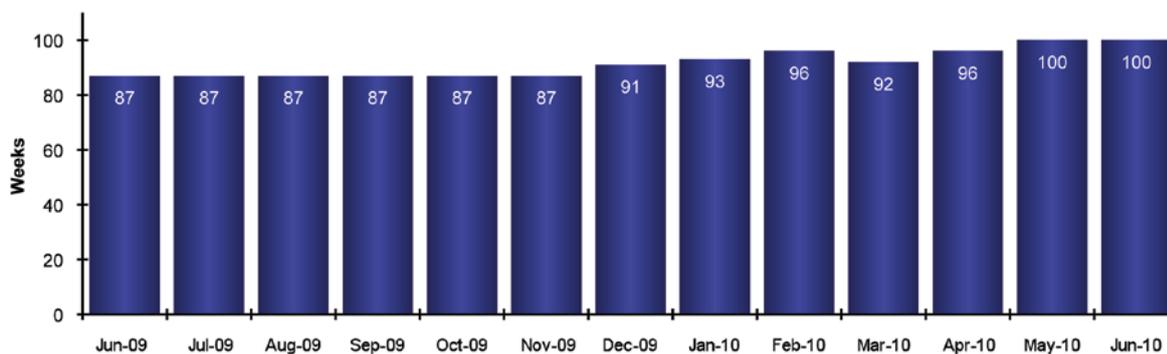
With the introduction of the e-Filing process, lawyers are able to file supporting documents electronically. They can also view details about parties they represent, documents filed and court events. In March 2010 e-Filing of divorce applications was implemented through the Commonwealth Courts Portal (CCP).



Matters in Defended List



Time to Trial (weeks)



Trials

The number of matters awaiting trial increased during the year. As at June 2010 there were total of 597 matters awaiting trial. The increase in the number of matters awaiting trial may be seen as related, in part, to the retirement of Justice Penny, who ceased hearing trials in early March 2009.

As at June 2010 the median delay to trial stood at 100 weeks, an increase of 13 weeks from June 2009. An increasing trend is seen in the delay to trial which is reflected in the graph. The increase is partly attributable to the departure of Justice Penny and the delay in the appointment of her replacement.

Judicial Caseload

In 2009/10, there were 159 matters listed for trial before a Judge and 96 trials listed before Magistrates.

In addition to matters listed for trial, there were 262 matters listed for appointments in Duty Judge Lists, a decrease of 26.6% from the previous year. There were 1,060 matters listed for other appointments before Judges which is consistent with the previous year (1,062).

The Judges deal with all work associated with the Court's jurisdiction under the Adoption Act 1994 (WA). There were 37 applications made for adoption and 43 ancillary applications filed in relation to adoption proceedings. In total 34 adoption orders were made in the course of the year.

Appellate Work

There were 25 appeals/applications for leave to appeal filed in relation to decisions made by the Judges and Magistrates in the exercise of federal jurisdiction.

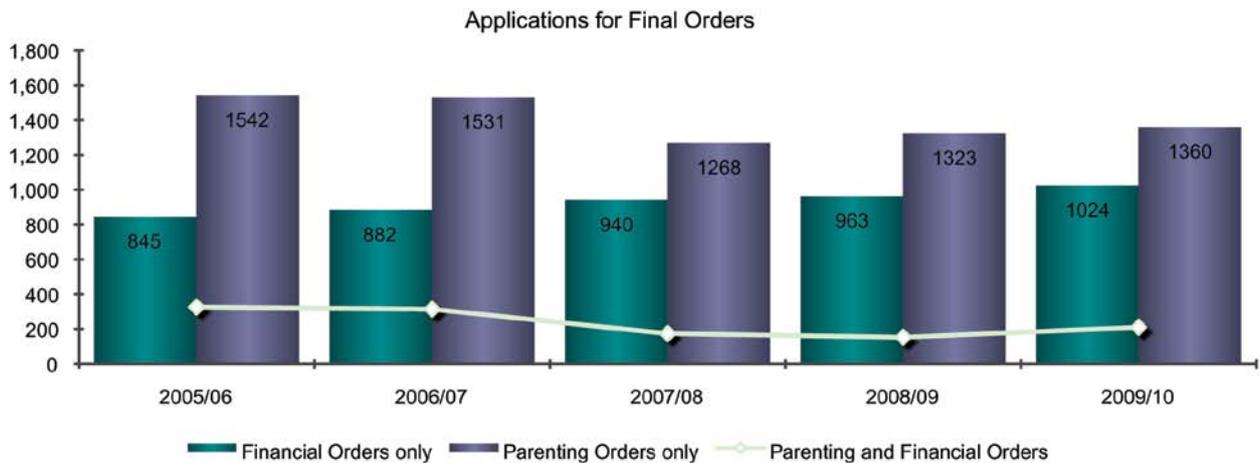
Appeals from a judge exercising non-federal jurisdiction are heard by the Supreme Court of Western Australia Court of Appeal. Four such appeals were filed during the year under review.

Warrants

In addition to their regular duties in the family law jurisdiction, Judges deal with applications for Telecommunications Interception Warrants.

The great majority of these applications need to be heard on an urgent basis and are sought at all hours of the day and night. In the year under review the Judges dealt with 338 such applications, an increase of 18.2% from the previous year (286).





Magistrates' Work

Applications for Final Orders

There was a total of 2,750 applications for final orders regarding property and/or children, compared with 2,591 for the previous year.

Of those 2,750 applications 1,360 (49.5%) sought parenting orders only, 1,024 (37.2%) sought property orders only, and 210 (7.6%) sought both parenting and property orders. The remaining applications relate to other orders sought, such as passports and injunctions.

In the preceding year, the corresponding percentages were 51.1%, 37.1% and 5.9% respectively. Numerically there was an increase of 37 applications seeking parenting orders only, 61 seeking property orders only and 57 seeking both parenting and property orders.

Of the 1,360 applications filed seeking parenting orders only, 567 (41.7%) were filed by married parties and 793 (58.3%) by unmarried parties. This is in line with the preceding year; corresponding percentages were 41.8% and 58.2% respectively.

Of the 1,024 applications filed seeking property orders only, 773 (75.5%) were filed by married parties and 250 (24.4%) by unmarried parties. In the preceding year, the corresponding percentages were 73.1% and 26.9% respectively. Only one application involved a same gender couple compared with three in the preceding period. 126 of the property settlement applications (12.3%) were filed by parties without legal representation, compared with 13.4% in the preceding year.

Of the 210 applications filed seeking both parenting and property orders, 175 (83.3%) were filed by married parties and 35 (16.7%) by unmarried parties. In the preceding year the corresponding percentages were 74.5% and 25.5% respectively.

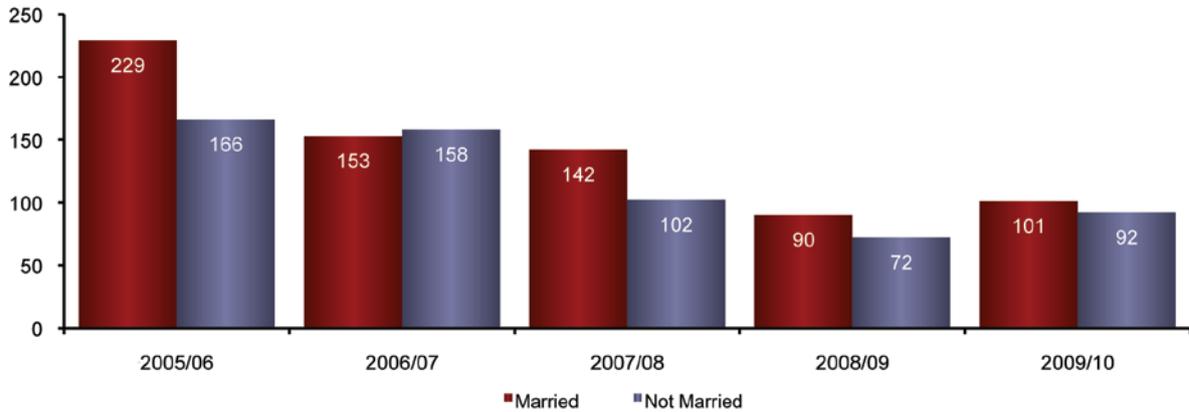
Applications for interim orders

There were 4,225 applications for interim orders, compared with 4,028 in the previous period.

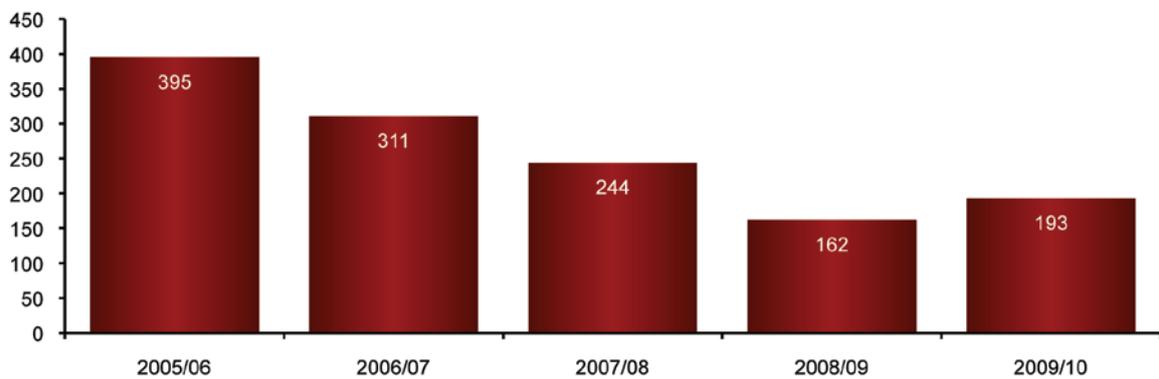
Applications for Spousal Maintenance, Child Maintenance and Child Support

There were 142 applications seeking spousal maintenance, child maintenance or child support orders, the same number as in the preceding year.

Order Contravention and Contempt Applications - Parenting



Order Contravention and Contempt Applications - Parenting



Order Applications for Contravention and Contempt Applications

There were 193 applications alleging contravention of a parenting order, compared with 162 in the previous year and 244 in 2007/2008. This continues to be an encouraging statistic, demonstrating one of the benefits of individual management of parenting order cases in addition to the Court’s control over the filing of applications in child-related proceedings.

Of those 193 applications, 149 (77.2%) were filed by applicants without legal representation. 101 were filed in relation to children of a marriage (52.3%) and 92 in relation to ex nuptial children (47.7%).

Case assessment conferences and hearings

Magistrates and Family Consultants conducted 1,463 case assessment conferences/hearings where only parenting orders were sought and 200 case assessment conferences/hearings where both parenting and property orders were sought. The comparable figures in the previous year were 1,505 and 180 respectively.

Registrars' Work

Conferences

Registrars conducted 563 procedural conferences compared with 856 in the preceding year. 8.3% of cases settled at a procedural conference, slightly down from the preceding year (10.6%).

Registrars conducted 1,204 conciliation conferences, compared with 1,246 in the preceding period. 13% of cases settled at a conciliation conference, this is on par with the preceding year.

Registrars conducted 231 pre-trial conferences compared with 346 in the preceding year. The settlement rate of 6.5% at pre-trial conferences is less than the 9.8% recorded in the preceding year.

Applications for Consent Orders

There were 2,445 applications for consent orders filed compared with 2,239 in the preceding year. Of these applications, 1,992 (81.5%) sought property settlement orders only. 1,430 (58.5%) of those property applications were filed by parties to a marriage, 562 (26.8%) by de facto partners and 6 by same gender couples (0.2%).

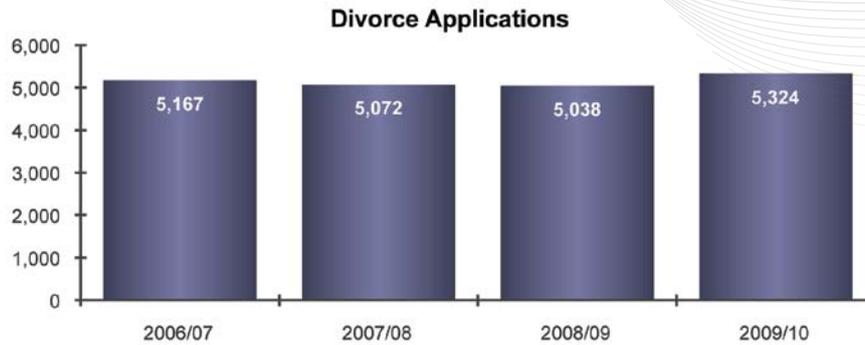
Of the 2,445 applications, 194 (7.9%) sought parenting orders only. 106 (54.6%) of those parenting applications were filed by parties to a marriage and the balance by unmarried parties.

Of the 2,445 applications, 260 (10.6%) sought both property and parenting orders. 225 (92%) of those applications were filed by parties to a marriage and the balance by unmarried parties.



Applications for Consent Orders





Divorce Applications

There were 5,324 applications for divorce filed, an increase of 5.7% compared with 5,038 in the preceding year.

Of the 5,324 applications 82.5% were filed by persons without legal representation. In 65% of cases the application was dealt with in the absence of the parties. The ratio of self represented litigants and applications dealt with in the absence of the parties remained consistent with 2008/09.

Regional Circuits

The specialist Family Law Magistrates provide valuable support and advice to country Magistrates and conduct regular circuits to regional centres. The Judges circuit to the same centres as required, hearing defended matters.

The Bunbury Courthouse, where the Judges and Magistrates of the Court sit on circuit most regularly,

has received a much needed renovation. This provided additional conference rooms and a more suitable and spacious waiting area. Much planning for this work was done in 2009/10, with works commencing in June 2010.

Duty Lawyer Services

LegalAid Western Australia continues to provide a permanent on-site service in the Court at Perth. This service provides a full range of Legal Aid services, including representation in Court, assistance with drafting documents, legal advice and referral to Legal Aid's Alternative Dispute Resolution services.

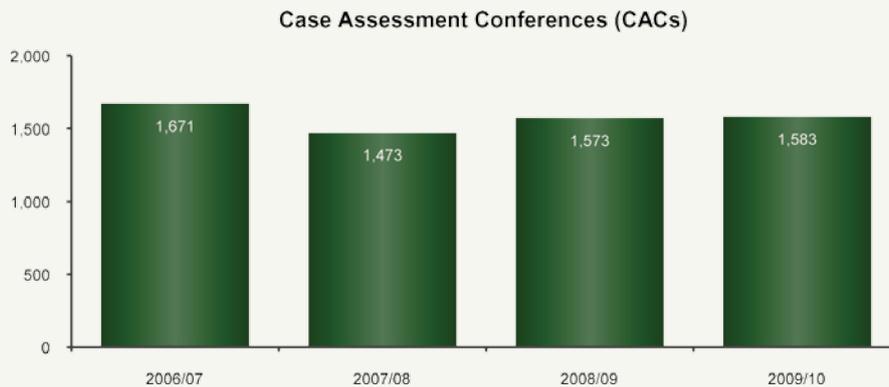
Referrals to the service are made by judicial officers, family consultants, registrars and Registry staff. The Court is grateful for the outstanding service provided to clients by Legal Aid WA.

The Legal Aid Service at the Court provided 3,607 services to 3,204 clients in 2009/10. This represents a 22.2% increase in services and a 9.2% increase in clients.



Counselling and Consultancy Service

The Family Consultants continue to case manage children's cases collaboratively with the judiciary.



Each new family presenting to the Court seeking directions regarding parenting are assessed for risk at the first court event, the case assessment conference. During the case assessment conference key issues are identified and parents are assisted to attempt to resolve underlying issues and to negotiate safe and sustainable short and medium term outcomes. Through a range of case management strategies, the majority of cases over time achieve long term sustainable outcomes without having to go to trial.

Case Assessment Conferences

Despite a decline in Family Consultant resources throughout the year, the numbers of new children's cases dealt with by the Family Consultants has continued at the same level as the previous year. The extent of follow up case management conferences and family reports continue to be the major part of the work of the service, but this may not be sustainable in the longer term with the diminished resources. This has triggered a review of the Child Related Proceedings program, in order to ensure that the Family Consultant resources are prioritised toward high conflict, higher risk cases that require more intensive, collaborative case management. Towards the end of the reporting period, to manage the increased demand, the wait time for Case Assessment Conferences was getting longer, and some children's cases were proceeding without the involvement of the Family Consultant.

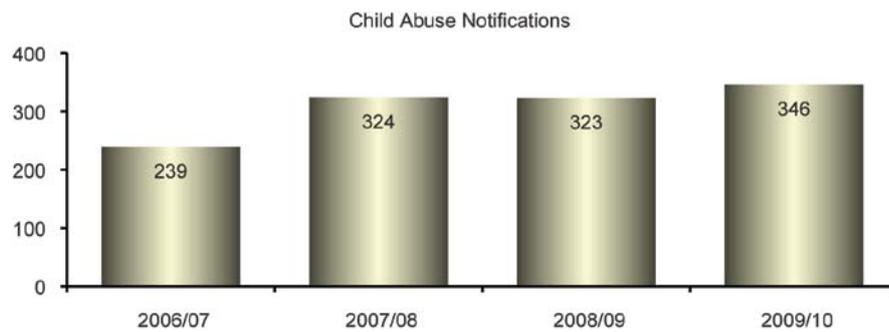
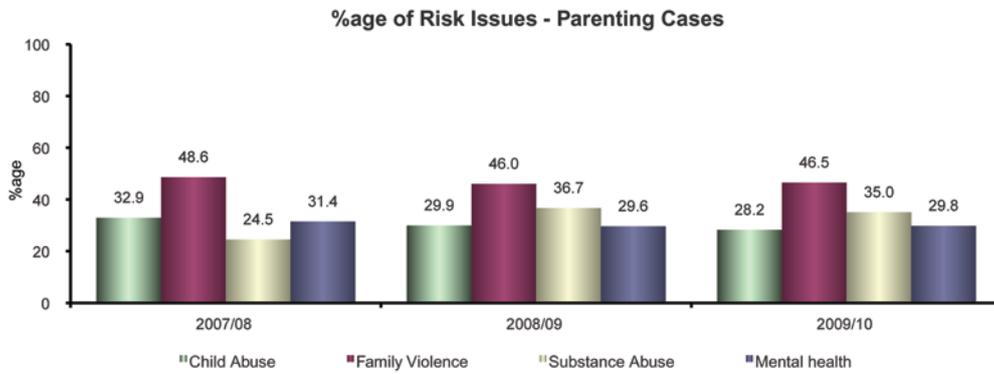


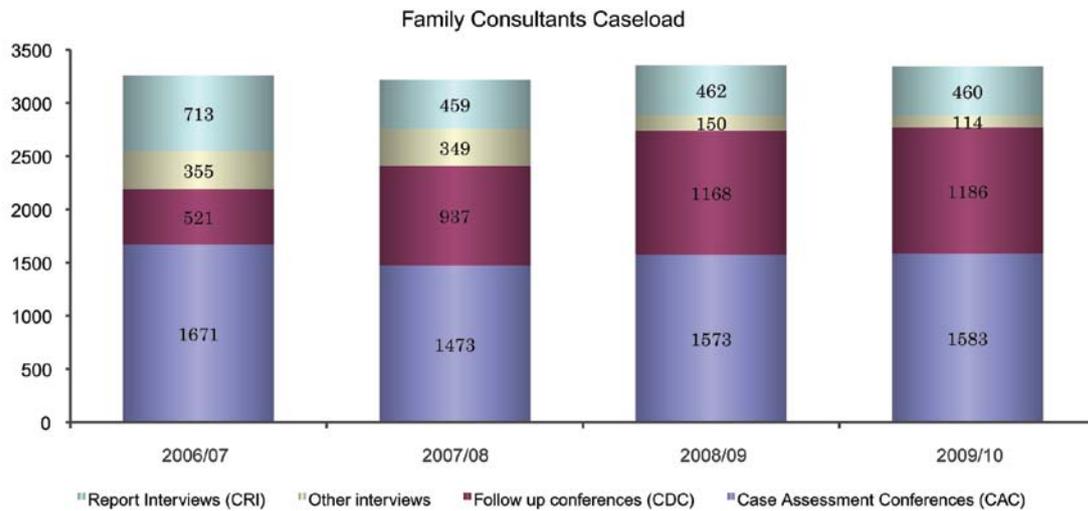
Risks Identified

The level of risk identified and reported to the Court by Family Consultants has continued at similar levels to the previous year. In the following table the range of risk issues identified in 56% of new cases highlights the continued need to focus on family violence, and the increased incidence and reporting of substance abuse. Many of these cases have a multiplicity of risk issues requiring collaboration with agencies within and external to the family law sector to

ensure children are safe and to assist families to overcome some of the complex issues that impact on their ability to parent their children effectively.

This is further reflected in the high number of cases where Form 4 Notifications of Child Abuse and/or Family Violence are filed as shown in the graph. The capacity of the Court to respond to and manage these cases has been greatly enhanced by the placement of a senior worker from the Department for Child Protection at the Court on a full time basis.





Indigenous Family Liaison Officers

In the two and a half years since the inception of the Indigenous Family Liaison Officers (IFLO) pilot, numbers of indigenous clients continued to increase until early 2010. Due to the funding of the program scheduled to cease in June 2010, the two IFLO's were both successful in obtaining longer term positions external to the service. Although the funding was renewed (June 2010) for a further 12 months, momentum had been already lost, and the IFLOs were not available to continue. Whilst the indigenous clients will continue to be serviced like any other client families, the specialist knowledge and expertise that had been successfully developed through the program to assist

this vulnerable and complex client group will struggle to be maintained until new IFLOs can be employed and the long term future of the program is secured.

Senior Practice Development Officer

The Department for Child Protection (“DCP”) continue to be the key stakeholder of the Family Court Counselling and Consultancy Service, confirming the need for the continued presence of the Senior Child Protection Worker in the Court premises. This initiative was the result of demand for reliable information exchange between the Court and DCP.

As demand increased for information that enables the Family Consultants and the Court to work with DCP, priority had to be given to cases where children were most at risk. Working collaboratively with DCP, the Family Consultant and the managing judicial officer, are able to achieve safer outcomes for children. The unquestionable value for DCP and the Court in having a dedicated Child Protection Consultant at the Court demonstrates the need for continuation of the role for the foreseeable future.

Our Services

In 2009/10 the Court has made considerable progress in the areas described below which highlights the initiative of the jurisdiction and its progressive approach to the management of family law matters in Western Australia.

Customer Service

The Court continues to focus on streamlining and improving its customer service, with the aim of better delivery of services, focused on the needs of clients. There have been an increasing number of customers served at the Registry counter. In 2009/10 the number of customers served in the second half of the year was above the year's monthly average of 185.



Legal Aid WA Family Court Service

Legal Aid WA Family Court Services continued to provide a strong and well patronised service to Court customers. Family Court Services dealt with 3,607 referrals throughout 2009/10.

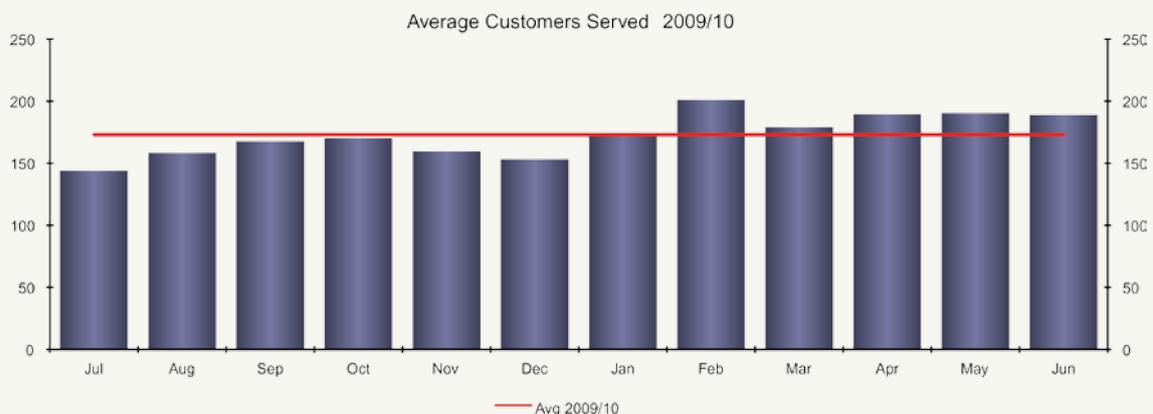
Information Sessions and Tours

The Court continues to conduct weekly information sessions for people commencing actions within the Court, covering both child related and financial matters. The same sessions are accredited and offered by four suburban community legal centres and two regional centres.

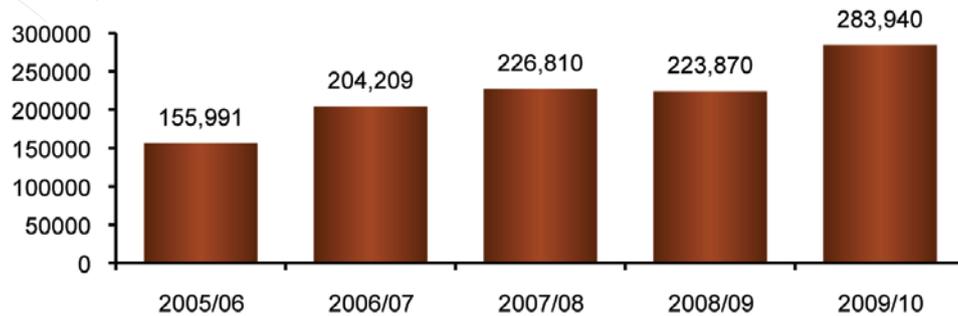
The Court offers Court Induction tours to departmental officers, legal students and a range of community assistance agencies. In 2009/10 the Manager of Customer Services conducted a total of 31 tours.

Commonwealth Courts Portal (CCP)

The Family Court of Australia, Federal Court of Australia, and Federal Magistrates Court of Australia, together with this Court, have worked towards the development of the Commonwealth Courts Portal which enables online inquiry via a website. Lawyers are able to view details about parties, documents filed and court events. Self represented litigants can also access similar information via the Court's website using the file search facility.



FCWA Website Hits



Website and Publications

Since its development in 2004, the Court's website continues to be the most effective means of providing information to litigants and legal practitioners. It offers a range of information including court listings, procedural advice, links to legislation, access to forms and links to outside agencies where clients may obtain further assistance.

The graph shows a significant increase in the number of visits recorded in 2009/10 as the website continues to be very popular amongst legal practitioners and clients.

Child-Minding Service

A child-minding service is offered for those clients who are attending court or have appointments with the counselling service. This service is well patronised with a total of 1,504 children utilising the on-site facilities throughout the year, with a monthly average of 125 children. The centre cared for a total of 19 children on its busiest days of the year in October and November 2009 and also in April 2010.

Justices of Peace

Justices of the Peace, appointed by the Governor, are authorised to carry out a wide range of official administrative and judicial duties in the community. Their many tasks include witnessing affidavits used in court proceedings.



An annual afternoon tea is hosted by the Chief Judge in appreciation of the valuable voluntary work which a small dedicated group of Justices of the Peace provide to the Court.



Graduate Program

In November 2008 a total of 13 graduates commenced a Graduate Development Program implemented by the Department as Graduate Policy Project Officers (Level 3) for an 18 month program.

Upon successful completion of their rotations (six months in length) in Court and Tribunal Services graduates were offered permanent placements within the Department.

Recognition of Service Awards

Staff from across the Department were recently honoured with awards recognising long service in the public sector. Framed certificates and lapel pins were presented to employees who have given 25, 30 and 35 consecutive years of service.

Future Directions

The Court has identified a number of initiatives which will continue to improve service delivery. The initiatives include:

Electronic Learning Management System (ELMS)

An Electronic Learning Management System tool, currently in development, to be implemented across all Departments early in 2011. This tool will be used for both information and training purposes. The Court is working towards developing packages for all key registry procedures.

Website update

2011 will see the Court working towards updating and redesigning its website. This will mean a more user friendly site, a fresh new look and more information.

Cognos reporting

A Memorandum of Understanding having now been signed with the Family Court of Australia, the Court can proceed with development of new automated reports using the Cognos reporting tool.

Several reports are currently at the development stage. The court aims to commence implementation of these reports in 2011, with all data for both internal and departmental reporting being extracted through monthly reports.

E-Filing for casetrack

The Court now provides e-Filing (electronic filing) of divorce applications and limited supplementary documents via the Commonwealth Courts Portal. Further important enhancements are expected in 2010/11.

Time to Trial

The Chief Judge has formed a Time to Trial Committee to look at ways to reduce the delay in matters reaching trial. The progress of this project will be reported in the next Annual Review.

IPO program

The Court is piloting an Internet Protocol Over Optical (IPO) computer program. This tool will be of assistance in dealing with cases where it is not desirable for one party to be in the same courtroom as the other party.

E-filing – Form 1 Initiating Applications

The Form 1 is used to initiate proceedings, other than divorces. It is anticipated that in 2010/11 it will be possible to e-file this document, as well as supplementary documents which can already be e-filed.

Casetrack financials

The Court has commenced a project to streamline financial transactions which are processed at the front counter. This will assist the court in monitoring, balancing and reporting on application fees received. It is anticipated this will be implemented in 2011/12.



PABX replacement project

The Court will be upgrading its Private Automatic Branch Exchange (PABX) telephone system and handsets in late 2010/11.



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