



JUSTICE SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing a range of services to people who use the courts, court staff and the judiciary

Attorney General's Library

Director Library Services: Yvonne Brown

- Provides legal source material and information for the Attorney General, Officers of the Department, legal officers from NSW Government Departments, members of the legal profession and law libraries.

Law Courts Library

Librarian: Lesley O'Loughlin

- Provides legal resources and information for the Courts, Commissions and Tribunals in the Law Courts Building and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

NSW Law Libraries

Director Library Services: Yvonne Brown

- NSW Law Libraries is a network of Court Libraries that provides library and information services to lower, intermediate and specialist jurisdictions and tribunals.

Office of the Sheriff

Sheriff of NSW: Bruce Kelly

- Provides court security and support services.
- Manages the jury system.
- Enforces the civil law by serving and executing civil orders.

Reporting Services Branch

Director: Barbara Flett

- Operates State-wide court reporting, sound recording and transcript services to various Courts, Boards and Tribunals.

Attorney General's Library

The Attorney General's Library is part of a network of libraries providing specialised information to a range of clients.

Goal: Continuously improve our services and increase satisfaction among our diverse clients.

The profile of work processed by the Attorney General's Library continued to change during the year, reflecting the expanding use of information technology across the Department. The increased capability of the Department's Intranet service, *Infolink*, has increased the Library's ability to deliver guides and current awareness services to every desktop in the Department, including our hard copy publications. As more resources are available online via the Library network and the Intranet, the number of hard copy items being borrowed has declined, particularly items such as caselaw and statutes.

A key initiative for the Attorney General's Library, as well as other libraries within the Department, has been the development of the

Virtual Library Project. Using combined purchasing power and advances in information technology, the project aims to deliver commercially available databases to every desktop computer in the Department, and to rationalise existing purchases of CD-ROM and online access agreements. The project will also deliver cost savings in licensing fees, service delivery and administration of subscriptions.

The Review of Library Services, which resulted in 86 recommendations to improve staffing, sharing of technology, rationalisation of resources and improve services to all Departmental clients, continues to move forward. To date, 90 per cent of these recommendations have been fully or partially implemented. The past year has emphasised the regrading and restructuring of staffing and a proposal to merge the Attorney General's Library and the NSW Law Libraries is currently being considered.

Other achievements for the Library include:

- reclassifying the Loose Leaf Services Collection into a main sequence, providing a more comprehensive analysis of subject content;
- completing a major review of all long term overdue loans with appropriate adjustment to loan and collection records;
- introducing new library services brochures during the year;
- adding services available in CD-ROM format to the Library Collection; and
- completing a complex data transfer process bringing the Anti-Discrimination Board Library onto the Dynix database which now lists the holdings of all libraries in the Department.

The Year Ahead

The key priorities for the Attorney General's Library for the coming year are to:

- complete the restructure;
- expand and update the Library's home page on the Internet and the Departmental Intranet to include all current awareness publications;

- complete the Review of Library Services Recommendations and continue to improve and rationalise services in the most cost effective way using the *Virtual Library Project* as a model;
- continue to review the collection development policies and resources based on increasing availability of electronic services; and
- select and implement a replacement library management system for Dynix for all libraries in the Department which will have a more user friendly interface and make the catalogue available on the Internet and Intranet.

The Law Courts Library

The Law Courts Library provides services to the High Court, the Federal Court, the Supreme Court of NSW and the commissions and tribunals located within the Law Courts Building.

Goal: Continuously improve our services and increase satisfaction among our diverse clients.

The responsibility for maintaining the Supreme Court Judges chamber and floor collections was transferred from the NSW Law Libraries to the Law Courts Library during the year. The Supreme Court judiciary and their staff will benefit from having all their library and information needs provided from a single location within the Law Courts Building instead of divided as previously between two libraries.

A review of the Library's publications and current awareness service resulted in a reduction in the hard copy publications produced and an increase in the use of electronic resources, such as email, to access this material. This provides Library clients with

The Virtual Library project aims to deliver commercially available databases to every desktop computer in the Department.



All Sheriffs are carefully trained in tactical communication, the ethical use of force and defensive tactics.

desktop access to current information.

The Library worked with the other libraries within the Department to develop stage one of the *Virtual Library Project* to

deliver to the desktop,

via Infolink, all CCH, LBC and Butterworths Internet services.

The Library also underwent a partial restructure during the year. Many positions were given new grades to more adequately reflect the skill levels and experience needed to undertake the duties of each of these positions.

The Year Ahead

The key priorities for the Law Courts Library for the coming year are to:

- implement stage two of the *Virtual Library Project*;
- develop a proposal to replace the existing Library Management System (Dynix) with a windows based alternative; and
- rationalise the Supreme Court Chamber and floor collections, converting all manual records to electronic format and adding details of the floor collections to the Library's online catalogue.

NSW Law Libraries

The libraries within NSW Law Libraries are the Compensation Court Library, Downing Centre Library, Industrial Relations Commission Library and the Land and Environment Court Library. The service is provided to the judiciary and their staff, court staff and designated clients. NSW Law Libraries are also responsible for the provision of service to courthouses throughout NSW and the management of chamber and floor collections.

Goals: Continuously improve our services and increase satisfaction among our diverse clients.

A number of initiatives were introduced during the year to improve services provided to clients of the NSW Law Libraries.

The Compensation Court Library undertook a comparison of the serial titles in CD-ROM with online format with regard to price, availability and reliability. This resulted in 12 existing CD-ROM titles being replaced by online format and two new titles being acquired in online format.

A Quality Team was formed with the Clerk of the Local Court, Wollongong, to cull out-of-date texts from courthouses in the South East and South West region of the State. So far, 10 courthouses have been culled of outdated texts.

A Library was created for the Industrial Relations Commissioners at Xerox House by reorganising and culling existing material. Space has been provided for future expansion of this collection. A small database of texts, reports and journals has also been created to facilitate access to the collection.

Other achievements for the Libraries include:

- the development of a client survey for judicial officers using the Downing Centre Library;
- the development of new guides to the collections of the Compensation Court Library, Downing Centre Library and the Industrial Relations Commission Library;
- the negotiation of a substantial discount on the supply of Jackson and Byron: Local Courts (Civil Claims) Practice, releasing funding for other purposes; and
- the review of District Court subscriptions in both chambers and courthouses, resulting in the cancellation of 13 titles and the release of funding for more appropriate and relevant titles.

The Year Ahead

The key priorities for the NSW Law Libraries for the coming year are to:

- make available the catalogue of all libraries in the Department via the Intranet in partnership with the libraries within the Department;

- provide desktop access via the Intranet for material currently being provided in CD-ROM format;
- conduct a client survey for users of the Compensation Court Library; and
- extend the program of culling out-of-date texts to other courthouses.

Office of the Sheriff

The Office of the Sheriff supports the integrity of the justice system by providing services to the Attorney General, Government and members of the community who use the courts. The Sheriff's Office also provides information and consultancy services to the Department and other Government Agencies.

Goal: Contribute to the development of a legal system and laws in NSW that further the principles of justice and contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Government.

Improving the safety of all those attending the State's courts and tribunals has continued to be a priority for the Sheriff's Office this year.

The provision of a physical security presence has a demonstrated benefit in allowing all participants access to their rights in safety. Sheriff's officers provide those services at the State's criminal trial courts, selected Local Courts and many Tribunals, including the Residential Tribunal. The commitment of officer hours to security services continued to increase over 1998–99 (+6 per cent).

The emphasis on inter-agency cooperation and planning, at both the corporate and local levels, continued in 1999–2000. Coordinating groups like the Standing Interagency Advisory Committee on Court Security and the Court Security Operations Committee continued to meet regularly on priority issues. An initiative at Newcastle to introduce a local Security Forum, including court users and judicial officers, is one model of coordinating immediate workplace improvements under consideration for wider application.

The benefits of better planning have allowed operational security services to be

complemented by a range of capital improvements under the *Court Security Improvement Program*. These initiatives include:

- the refurbishment of witness, jury and court support facilities;
- significant upgrades to physical security at 14 court locations;
- the installation of duress and intruder alarms in all court locations;
- a significant upgrade of the Central Sheriff's Control, creating the capability to remotely monitor surveillance systems across the State; and
- the provision of additional security equipment to selected Sheriff's Offices and which can be rapidly redeployed to high risk locations.

All Sheriff's officers are now fully trained and accredited to competency based standards in tactical communications, the ethical use of force, defensive tactics and the use of the batons and handcuffs.

A comprehensive incident reporting database, available to Sheriff's officers, court staff, judicial officers and court users (such as Domestic Violence Support workers), is providing better information about when, where and how security incidents occur in the courts. The database has been instrumental in the planning for improvements in court security.

The Sheriff's Office also worked towards increasing the efficiency of the State's jury system during the year. A key priority was to reduce the number of potential jurors who are required to attend court, but are not ultimately required to serve. This means that fewer persons are inconvenienced needlessly, and that the listing of trials is not compromised.

Other initiatives designed to further streamline the jury system include:

- eliminating the need for jurors to complete and return a jury questionnaire;
- increasing the penalties in relation to non-attendance; and
- implementing a new Jury Roll process



where all Jury Districts are updated every 12 months, and every district is refreshed each month.

The *Juror Support Program* was implemented during the year. The objective of the program is to provide better information and support to all those who are called for jury service. The program is comprised of three complementary initiatives. Firstly, a specialist Juror Support Coordinator has been recruited to establish and monitor the program. Secondly, a new *Juror Induction Video* has been produced for the education and awareness of all those who are potential jurors in NSW. The video is now being shown as a standard introduction to jury service right across the State.

The final phase of the program to provide State-wide, professional debriefing and counselling services for any juror who is adversely affected by their service was also implemented. A network of professionally qualified counsellors who can respond quickly to any identified need, anywhere in the State, is now in place.

The roll out of information technology to Sheriff's Office centres across the State continued this year. Computers were installed in all but seven Sheriff's Office centres. The design and development of a new *Sheriff's Office Records Tracking System (SORTS)* is almost finished and will be ready to roll out in the first quarter of 2000-01.

The Year Ahead

The key priorities of the Office of the Sheriff for the coming year are to:

- implement the 2000-01 Local Courts Security Strategy;
- increase the processing of Property Seizure Orders under the Fine Enforcement system;
- publish the new Sheriff's Office Handbook;
- introduce a new Sheriff's Office Code of Conduct;
- complete planning for the new Sheriff's Act; and
- complete a Training Skills Audit.

A Juror Induction Video was produced this year as part of the *Juror Support Program* which aims to provide better information and support to those called for jury service.



Reporting Services Branch

"RSB completed a three-year program to train court reporters to use Computer Aided Transcript."

Reporting Services Branch (RSB) produced 808,000 pages of transcript during the year, providing comprehensive records of court proceedings for clients including members of the judiciary,

the legal profession and the public.

Goals: Continuously improve our services and increase satisfaction among our diverse clients.

This year, demand for services increased significantly due to the appointment of Acting Judges to address court delays. As a result, transcript services were provided at an average of 120 sittings every day, compared with 114 per day for the previous three years. Demand for daily transcripts accounted for approximately 32.5 per cent of the workload. In cases where a transcript was not required on the same day, RSB achieved an average turnaround of 15 days. Revenue from transcript sales decreased by \$279,000 to \$4.1 million.

The RSB's transcript database was expanded to include all centres. This followed the installation of new PCs which were connected to the Department's wide area (WAN) communications network.

RSB completed a three-year program during the year to retrain court reporters to use Computer Aided Transcript which has improved efficiency. Ninety-one per cent of court reported transcripts are made using this new system, which represents a 6 per cent increase.

The program to re-equip courts with more up-to-date sound recording equipment continued this year, with priority given to courthouses in country NSW which is now complete. The re-equipment program has now extended to metropolitan courts. CBD courthouses will follow metropolitan courts as funds and resources permit. This equipment will

enhance quality of sound with a resultant effect of a more efficient and timely production of transcript.

The Year Ahead

The key priorities for Reporting Services Branch in the coming year are to further improve client services through utilising advanced technology, focusing on:

- extending the transcript orders database to Local Court sales outlets and standardise client service procedures for determining eligibility and fees across all jurisdictions;
- reviewing electronic transcript standards, in consultation with judicial officers, to achieve "medium neutral" standard (i.e. standards applicable to hard copy, or a variety of work processing systems) that will assist the judiciary in the introduction of electronic appeal books;
- achieving greater cost effectiveness by reallocating resources across various court jurisdictions and using sound recording in courts requiring delayed or no transcript, and court reporters only in courts requiring daily transcripts; and
- piloting the introduction of remote sound recording in the District Court under the *Technology in the Courtroom Project* and evaluate the potential savings from this technology.

[Sound Reporter Sue Verguizas monitoring dual courts simultaneously from the remote booth located on Level 6 at the Downing Centre.](#)

