

Court Network Newsletter

June 2007

Executive Director's Report

I hope things are well for you at your court. It was good to see approximately 45 members attend the open meeting held in April, including two members from Queensland, where several new projects were discussed. A clear message was delivered by several attendees regarding the care we must take in preserving the image and reputation of Networkers, a message which is consistent with the approach we have taken to introduce new projects court and judicial leaders have requested we deliver. In May, 16 new volunteers started their training for the Blue Jacket and Hospitality projects in the Melbourne Magistrates court. Court leadership is looking forward to their commencement in late June and the positive impact they will have on the welfare of court users.

Our work in Queensland continues apace. A further meeting was held in late May with their Attorney's representatives regarding a pilot project in Brisbane's District, Magistrates and Supreme Courts. I look forward to bringing you more news on this and other initiatives in the next Newsletter.

Nic Bolto
Executive Director

Update from the State Manager

I can't believe it's half way through the year already. It has been a very busy six months for me and I feel that I am now beginning to have a better sense of organisation. I have started making arrangements to make another trip out to visit all of the courts and look forward to catching up with you all again soon.

Working with Children checks: Over the next few months your Program Managers will start the process of assisting all Networkers to apply for the check. We have been advised that we are a mandated organisation however we have been given an extension to the timelines for completing the checks for all volunteers.

Safety Issue: All courts have a requirement to have Evacuation and Safety procedures in place for all staff/workers. I am aware that in many courts there is a practice of signing yourself in and out of the building (or recording this in your diary), however, it appears that this may not occur in all courts. Can all Networkers please



State Mgr Update *continued...*

ensure that they record their times of attendance in the Court Network diary. Program Managers will discuss this further with you at the next team meeting.

Arrangements for the 2007 State Conference have been finalised. The conference will be held at the William Angliss Centre on Thursday 1st November. Whilst attending the conference is no longer compulsory, I encourage everyone to attend what I hope will be a very informative day and a great opportunity for you all to catch up. You will all receive your invitation to the event, including details of guest presenters, at a later date.

The 2007 Continuing Education Program has also been finalised. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of our training venue, places are limited to 30 people. Program Managers have placed a calendar in each court and I encourage everyone to avail themselves of this information and book early.

A new Program Manager is due to commence in early June. This will result in some changes to Program Manager court allocations. I hope that this is not too disruptive for Networkers and anticipate a smooth handover at an arranged team meeting for any affected courts.

New Recruits: We have 25 recruits who have completed their training and are ready to commence their probation. All recruits will gain their initial experience in a Magistrates, Family, or VCAT jurisdiction.

We have had the very sad passing of our valued colleague, Philomena Vascio (Wangaratta Court). I wish to also express our sincere condolences to Maj Williams (Program Manager Warnambool) for the sad loss of her sister.

Sue Wilson
Victorian State Manager

And the Award goes to...

Earlier last month Court Network received a Bronze Award in the 2007 ARAs (Australasian Reporting Awards). Court Network's 2006 Annual Report successfully provided satisfactory coverage of most of the ARA criteria, as well as presenting quality disclosures in a key number of major areas.

Court Whip Around....

Congratulations to Warrnambool and Mildura Courts on reaching their two year milestone.

Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) and VCAT are now almost settled with trainees ready to graduate in June. NJC has commenced conducting tours of the facility (including one that involved the Attorney General) and have been recognised for their excellent work and commitment despite a slow start to the centre.

Bendigo and Shepparton region Networkers jointly participated in a very informative and useful education session in relation to working with cultural diversity, with a particular focus on Koori issues.

Recruitment for regional courts has commenced with Geelong/Colac/Warrnambool. Planning is underway for additional recruitment for the Shepparton region, Mildura, and Gippsland for later in the year.

A majority of the Melbourne and Metropolitan courts have experienced a need for additional numbers in their ranks, and so it is with great relief that we have new trainees ready to be placed into the courts. All courts report that they are extremely busy, with new reforms in Family Law and Sexual Assault.

Well done to all teams and congratulations in particular go to the Supreme Court team who were recognised by the Chief Justice for their contribution to the process of more than 400 admissions of lawyers to the bar.

Special Interest

Each year I watch the Anzac march with great sadness remembering all those lost in past and present world conflicts. I also have a huge sense of pride reflecting on the sacrifices that so many made so that we might enjoy freedom. My chest swells enormously when I see Network's own Jean Parry (a Networker for 17 years) looking immaculate wearing her original uniform, with medals, leading the combined nurses. Jean nursed with the VAD's in the Middle East from 1939. She and our other Network veterans have our thanks and admiration.



Dorothy Hood
Program Manager

The Training Corner

Late last month the first group of 2007 Trainees completed their program and are now due to commence their probation period. Ten full days in education sessions at Court Network and up to another ten days in Melbourne courts, and in one case, in the Echuca court, have provided twenty-four keen new volunteers with a comprehensive preparation for networking. There is a level of excitement and enthusiasm in the group, especially since they received their individual placement in a court where their practise will soon commence.

Networker training addresses background knowledge, personal skills and practise to fit volunteers for a highly professional approach to offering support to court users, and to ensure they are ready to join teams of Networkers who are already active in assisting people at Court. When they join a court team, they are then inducted to that court routine and practise.

Training rounds:

A second round of training will be offered in October for Melbourne Metropolitan volunteers. There is also training to be conducted before October in several Victorian regions. One is due to commence in the first week of June at Geelong, while plans are underway for Mildura, Gippsland, Shepparton/ Wangaratta and Wodonga.

There is a list of interested people maintained at the Court Network office, and it is from this register that invitations are issued when the training is to be offered in Melbourne and in Regional Victoria where newspaper advertisements may also be used.

Earlier in 2007, a second round of training was also conducted in Brisbane for the 2006 Pilot introduction of Court Network in the Commonwealth Law courts.

A different kind of training is also running in May for Blue Jacket and Hospitality workers. This is a new venture, which will introduce volunteers to a different role. These workers will offer immediate greeting and direction-giving to people entering court and will assist the coffee cart provision, also a new Court Network venture at Melbourne Magistrates Court.

News

Court Network places a high value on training and welcomes a wide range of volunteers. To make training more accessible, no training costs will be levied on volunteers commencing in 2007. Costs for Police check are now also borne by Court Network, not the volunteer.

Judy Frazer
Training Manager