



**Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House
Incorporated**

**NAVIGATING THE
MAGISTRATES COURT**

**A SUBMISSION TO IMPROVE SIGNAGE
AT
BRISBANE CITY MAGISTRATES COURTS**

June 2005

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Disclaimer

This document provides general information only. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy and to keep it current, agency details, law and procedure outlined herein can change constantly. No responsibility is accepted for any loss, damage or injury, financial or otherwise, suffered by any person or organisation acting or relying on this information or anything omitted from it.



Recommendations

Finding the right court

Recommendation 1

A new map be provided in hard copy and on the Magistrates Court's website to give more information of the Brisbane Magistrates Courts and what happens at them and this map be distributed widely and be provided with all relevant court notices, including summons and notices to appear, specifying which court to appear in (See also recommendations 4 and 5 and Figure 4 below).

Roma Street: Improving the Signage System

Recommendation 2

The Roma Street court facility building identification sign located outside the building be changed to read 'Brisbane Traffic and Arrest Courts, 240 Roma Street'.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General 'Map of Courts in Brisbane City' and White Pages listing be changed to read 'Brisbane Traffic and Arrest Courts' in place of 'Brisbane City Watchhouse and Arrest Courts'.

Recommendation 4

- Court 1 should be referred to as the 'arrest court', or alternatively the location for 'arrest hearings'.
- Court 3 should be referred to as the 'traffic court' or alternatively the location for 'traffic matters'.
- The registry should be referred to as the 'information, bail and orders registry' or alternatively, the location for obtaining 'information' and organising 'bail and orders'.

Recommendation 5

Two free-standing 'you-are-here' signs be placed in the small entrance foyer one either side of the security scanner and angled towards the queuing patrons (see figure 3 below). Other procedural information should also be available here such as is recommended later in this submission.

Recommendation 6

The signs should contain the information and diagrams set out in Figure 4 below. Colour-coding and photographs will assist understanding of the information contained in the orientation sign. Graphics will also be useful in this regard. Plain language and simplicity in layout will be important in making the information accessible.

Recommendation 7

The words 'Information, Bail and Orders Registry' be placed on the blank space above the registry windows at the Roma Street courts using pictographs.

Recommendation 8

A sign with the same words be hung from the overhang to be visible by traffic walking from Courts 1 and 2, and from Court 3 (Roma Street).

Recommendation 9

The signs in the notice boards beside the registry windows be replaced with larger signs directing people to pay fines at the George Street Magistrates facility (and including a map with directions from Roma Street to George Street).

Recommendation 10

The directory signs be simplified giving the main locations needed and be placed in the entry foyer and in free standing signs in the walkways to the left and right.

Recommendation 11

The court listing board should be clearly signed as such.

Recommendation 12

The current paper sign on the duty lawyer office door be replaced with a free-standing sign directing people to first check-in at "Legal Aid Queensland, Duty Lawyer Service".

Recommendation 13

The current wording of the paper sign be used on the replacement sign, but with larger font and include wording to the effect that you may be able to use a duty lawyer even if you are ineligible for legal aid.

Recommendation 14

An over-hanging sign be erected on the overhang above Court 1 (as shown in picture 9) doorway, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 1, Arrest Hearings'.

Recommendation 15

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above the Court 3 doorway visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 3, Traffic Matters'.

Recommendation 16

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above the Duty Lawyer office, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Legal Aid Queensland Duty Lawyer, Free Legal Advice'.

Recommendation 17

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above Court 2, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 2'.

Recommendation 18

The pamphlet display installation be removed from the Roma Street court facility waiting area and replaced with a user-friendly pamphlet display system.



Recommendation 19

The new pamphlet display system be kept fully stocked at all times with publications from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, community legal centres and other relevant agencies in court procedures, location of court buildings in Brisbane, Legal Aid and Duty Lawyer assistance, and other relevant information for defendants.

Recommendation 20

The notice board in the Roma Street court facility waiting areas be more effectively used to inform defendants about Magistrates Court procedures and Legal Aid and Duty Lawyer assistance.

Recommendation 21

Information contained in the pamphlet display and the notice boards should be in languages other than English, such as Vietnamese.

Recommendation 22

A large sign be erected on the blank wall space beside the Court 1 doorway at Roma Street court facility to set out the Court's hearing procedure (see **Figure 5** below).

Recommendation 23

This sign include a simple graphical representation of the inside of the Court Room indicating who the relevant people are and where they sit (see **Figure 6** below).

Recommendation 24

A duplicate of the sign be produced on a laminated double-sided A4 card to be always located on the bar table in front of the defendant's seat.

Recommendation 25

The current laminated A4 sign on the front of the clerk's table directing defendants to address the Magistrate as '**Your Honour**' should remain.

Recommendation 26

A similar system be implemented for Court 3, the traffic court.

Recommendation 27

The prosecution's position be clearly marked so that defendants can easily locate the prosecutor as required.

George Street: Improving the Signage System

Recommendation 28

The listing in the White Pages and building and other signage should be updated so that it reads "Brisbane Magistrates Court", and that it include the address or the words "George Street Magistrates Court" or similar (see also **Figure 4**).

Recommendation 29

Two 'you-are-here' orientation signs be affixed to the existing pillars on the covered section of the George Street Magistrates Court building entrance steps, facing the street. (For example, see **figure 4**)

Recommendation 30

The main directory sign at the top of each video screen should display the alphabetical range that that particular screen covers. For example: "Matters A – D".

Recommendation 31

When there is a main directory display listing civil matters, there should be a clear delineation between criminal and civil listings, perhaps using colour coding.

Recommendation 32

A new free-standing sign be placed near the existing directory sign directing people to the directory to find their name and to Courts 18 and 20 and what they do, and to Fines and Other Payments, SPER and the enquiries counter using pictographs where possible.

Recommendation 33

The new sign be worded as suggested in **Figure 7** below.

Recommendation 34

The directory signs on each floor of the George Street facility be moved to a more visible position.

Recommendation 35

There be a sign below the video board on Level 5 of the George Street facility with the words "Courts 18 and 20, Callover, Committals and Review Courts" and an arrow pointing to the direction of the Courts, with more information about what happens in these courts.

Recommendation 36

There be a free standing sign next to the video board on Level 5 of the George Street facility (possibly the same sign referred to in recommendation 35) with the words "Duty Lawyer" and "Community Corrections" and an arrow pointing to the direction of those services.

Recommendation 37

The signs for the Duty Lawyer and Community Corrections on Level 5 of the George Street facility should provide more detailed information about the process to access those services.

Recommendation 38

Signs for the procedures in Courts 18, 19 and 20 in the George Street facility should be fully developed. These signs should be rewritten in simple English with more explanation about what happens inside each court. The Court 19 sign for example

should not say "...you will then be asked if there is anything you want to say in mitigation", but rather something that clearly outlines the process and what can be said to lessen the penalty if possible. It should also read "ask the Administration officer for information not advice" (assuming you can get information from the administration officer who we understand is the depositions clerk), and the role of the administration officer (depositions clerk: if relevant to the public) should be specified. Standard information pictographs should be used where appropriate.

Recommendation 39

Procedural signs, which existed in the old North Quay complex, should be reinstated in the new George Street facility but should be expanded, similar to the signage recommended for the Roma Street Courts. For example,

Outside the Court Door

- Procedure on Callovers: "To ensure consistency of procedure, Magistrates will deal with adjournments first, then other matters in order of seniority of lawyers, and then unrepresented persons.
- Appearances: "To all legal representatives and unrepresented defendants, on your arrival please approach the Depositions Clerk as soon as possible to give your appearance".

Inside the court, on the wall in good view of the bar table and on the bar table

- The same signs as above
- On the bar table only - "Defendant, if you do not have a lawyer, please stand when talking to the Magistrate. You should address the Magistrate as: `Your Honour'."

Recommendation 40

A diagram of the interior layout of the courts, which would be useful in assisting court users in orienting themselves inside the court room, should be included with the procedural directions posted outside.

Recommendation 41

When appropriate, all signs recommended in this paper should be similarly applied for the civil courts and procedures.

Reaching individual users

Recommendation 42

Any signs that are to be introduced to the Magistrates Courts should be compliant with Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) and with the `Australian Standard 1428.2 (1992) Design for Access and Mobility'.

Recommendation 43

Signs must be in simple English (not bureaucratese or legalese) and easy to read and understand (such as 'You are here' and 'What do I have to do' and "Where do I go/do now").

Provision must be made for languages other than English, for people who are illiterate and for people who are vision or hearing impaired. As such, proper implementation of the recommended signs will require professional input for design, production and installation.

Recommendation 44

Signs should be provided in Braille.

Recommendation 45

Defendants should have access to a touch-screen kiosk in the Roma Street facility and the ground level and level 5 of the George Street facility which duplicates all signage and speaks to defendants who are unable to read. There should also be screens for different languages.

Recommendation 46

Information should be provided in brochures, available at the courts and elsewhere, in English and other languages as outlined on page 10 of this submission.

Recommendation 47

The Department of Justice work with the other agencies, such as the Queensland Police Service, to standardise the forms so that a clear "Where and When" box appears on all forms directing people to the appropriate court and that as far as possible, a map be attached or a link to the court's website be shown for the location of the courts.

Recommendation 48

The Queensland Government create a State courts and tribunals website which provides location, general information, procedures, rules, guidelines and practice directions, judgments (where appropriate), an e-filing facility (which takes the party through forms in a way which explains what is required to reduce error), fees, fact sheets on areas of law and legal issues, links to useful information, case information, listings and timetables and a search capacity for access to all Queensland courts and tribunals.

What is QPILCH?

The Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated (QPILCH) is a non-profit community based legal service that coordinates the provision of pro bono legal services in public interest matters. QPILCH also provides some direct services through targeted projects, including the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic, the Administrative Law Clinic, the Refugee and Immigration Legal Support Project and the Consumer Law Advice Clinic.

Why did QPILCH prepare this submission?

Clients of our clinics who often suffer disadvantage regularly have matters before the Magistrates Courts. While QPILCH is able to provide advice and minor extended assistance through the clinics, we are unable to attend court or assist them at the Registry. Many people are traumatised and intimidated by the court process. They therefore need what assistance is available to negotiate the court system.

What is the purpose of this submission?

The purpose of this submission is to improve the signage systems for Brisbane City's Magistrates Courts with a view to increasing the accessibility of the Courts for disadvantaged defendants, particularly those who are unrepresented in criminal proceedings.

The submission outlines the shortcomings of current signage systems and recommends specific solutions to those shortcomings.

While we have largely confined our recommendations to the criminal courts, the recommendations contained herein are applicable to the civil courts.

What does it hope to achieve?

The objective of the submission is to recommend an improved wayfinding and signage system for users of the Magistrates Court facilities in Roma Street (Courts 1 - 3) and the new George Street courts, taking account of:

- a) The information and cues users need to navigate the facility easily and efficiently;
- b) Plain-language-in-law strategies for providing accessible written and other format information;
- c) The special needs of unrepresented litigants and other disadvantaged and disabled users;
- d) Relevant legislative requirements and codes/standards of practice for signage systems;



- e) Research on wayfinding behaviour from environmental psychology and architecture fields.

"Users" means (especially) defendants and visitors.

Methodology

This project identified five steps to develop recommendations for signage improvements:

1. Mapping of facilities
2. Identifying sign types required
3. Identifying information required
4. Capabilities of users
5. Bringing it together.

1) Mapping of the Court Facilities

- a) Physical mapping of (interior) layout including:
- Floor-plan (what rooms where)
 - Dimensions
 - Design (colour, lighting), and
 - existing signage.
- b) Procedural mapping of the facilities to match each stage of a dispute/trial process with the appropriate room, personnel, and diversions.

2) Identifying the Sign Types Required

- a) Identify (and assess) any existing signage design features:
- Colour
 - Style
 - Typeface
 - Materials (tactile? non-reflective?)
 - Size and shape
 - Location (where in building and at what height)
 - Permanency
 - Consistency, and
 - Other access capabilities (plain-language, audible, multilingual).
- b) Identify signs required for wayfinding by information type:
- Identifying signs
 - Directional signs
 - Procedural and educational signs, or
 - Other.

c) And by matching to locations in the facility:

- Entrances/exits
- Lobby/common areas
- Counter staff/security desk areas
- Lifts
- Court rooms (outside and inside)
- Conference and service rooms (outside and inside)
- Other.

3) Decide What Information is Needed

a) So the user knows:

- Whether they are in the right place (building, room, person)
- What happens in a certain place
- Who everyone is (relative to location)
- Who they need to see (i.e. What everyone does)
- Where they need to go next (directional and procedural)
- Where they go or who they ask for more information
- Other.

For example:

At the building entrances:

- What the courts do
- Where you should go
- Who you should see

At each court room and in handouts and on website:

- What the court does
- Who everyone is and where they sit
- How and when to enter your plea
- What will happen next (including where to go to organise bail, fines, and community orders)

Inside each court room:

- How to address the Magistrate
- Who everyone is and where they sit

b) How will it be presented:

- Plain-language
- Graphics and pictures
- Simplicity.

4) Capabilities of Users

- a) Gather information (empirical research) on needs of disadvantaged users, specifically unrepresented litigants, who come into contact with the facilities:
 - Illiteracy and print-handicapped
 - Multilingual
 - Intellectual disability
 - Vision/hearing impairment
 - Computer illiteracy
 - Other.
- b) Identify (and apply) any relevant legislative or best practice requirements on (signage) accessibility:
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
 - Australian Standards
- c) Identify (and assess) technologies and strategies to improve accessibility of signage systems for disadvantaged users:
 - Generally
 - You are here maps
 - Colour coding
 - Clear, large typeface
 - Locate at eye-level (standing or sitting?)
 - Non-reflective surface
 - High contrast colour
 - Unobscured view
 - Uncluttered
 - Consistency
 - Brochures as well
 - Plain language
 - Pictographs (international standard)
 - Audible signage
 - Languages other than English
 - Tactile typeface/Braille.

5) Putting It All Together

- a) Holistic wayfinding package incorporating:
 - Signs
 - Maps
 - Brochures
 - Web pages
 - Telephone information service.
- b) Detailing:
 - Design (colour, style, dimensions etc)
 - System (primary, secondary, supporting signs etc)



- Layout (where in building, and at what height etc)
- Content (including other languages if appropriate)
- Materials and technology (non-reflective, tactile, audible etc if appropriate).

Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding is the science of organising and defining information in order to assist users in navigating their way around unfamiliar territory.¹ The process of finding your way requires knowing where you are, seeing where you want to be and understanding the best way to get there.² Assisting wayfinding is vital in decreasing the stress that first time court users experience due to prolonged uncertainty, lack of predictability and stimulus overload.³

People who find themselves in unfamiliar environments need to know where they actually are in the complex, the layout of the complex, and the location of their destination in order to formulate their action plan.⁴ Signage is only one component of wayfinding which involves considering such factors as the architectural design of the built environment, lighting, noise and climate. While the scope of this project does not allow the incorporation of these factors it is useful to acknowledge them. The design of the existing court facilities including factors such as lifts, the number of levels, and corridors has a large effect on the way in which an effective signage system should be designed. Signs must then be matched to these locations:

- Entrances/exits
- Lobby/common areas
- Counter staff/security desk areas
- Lifts
- Court rooms outside and inside)
- Conference and service rooms (outside and inside).

Thus, wayfinding signs need to address different information needs such as directional and procedural questions. To adequately convey information via signs, certain design features need to be considered and include:

- Colour
- Style
- Typeface
- Raised and non-reflective materials
- Size and shape
- Location (where in building and at what height)
- Permanency

¹ Urban and Environmental Graphics (2002).

² Urban and Environmental Graphics (2002).

³ De Young (1999).

⁴ Muhlhausen (2002).

- Consistency, and
- Other access capabilities (plain-language, audible, multilingual).

Unrepresented and Disadvantaged Defendants

Defendants are often either unrepresented or are disadvantaged in some way. While some unrepresented litigants may choose to represent themselves, often unrepresented parties are unable to afford legal assistance.⁵ These groups have special needs that must be considered when designing signage systems. There are a number of issues that need to be considered in order to ensure the court is accessible to all defendants:

- Illiteracy
- Non-English speaking backgrounds
- Intellectual disability, and
- Visual / hearing impairment.

With regard to common languages other than English spoken by defendants, Queensland Interpreting and Translation Services⁶ provided the following list of languages in order of demand for interpreters:

- Vietnamese
- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- Arabic
- Italian
- Spanish
- Auslan.

⁵ ALRC, Adversarial Background Paper 4 (1996) *The Unrepresented Party* (especially Ch 3 Policy and Cost Implications for Courts).

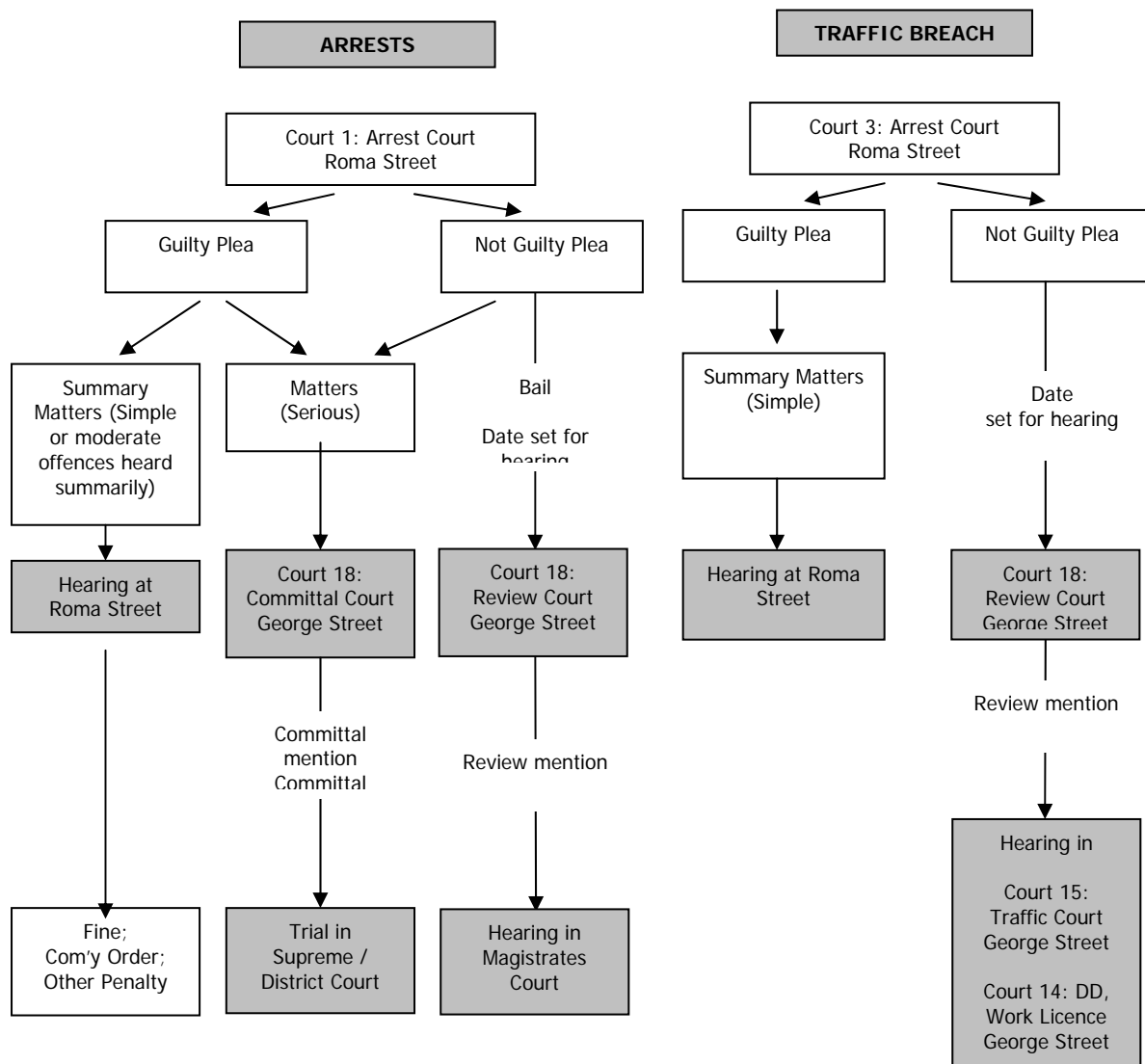
⁶ Queensland Interpreting and Translation Services, June 2005.

Understanding the court process

Defendants will make their first appearance in Court 1, the arrest court or Court 3 which deals with traffic matters. Defendants charged with a summary offence will often be required to enter a plea at the first appearance although they may also be remanded to another appearance date. This first appearance will usually determine whether the matter will proceed further.

It is at this initial stage of a matter that signage will be especially important in assisting court users. Not only do defendants need to locate the correct facility and court room for their hearing, but they need to be aware of court procedure. For example, for hearings in Court 1, defendants are required to indicate their appearance to the prosecutor. Unrepresented defendants also need to be aware of court etiquette, such as how to address the Magistrate and where to stand. A flowchart detailing the likely steps for a criminal and traffic matter as it proceeds through the Magistrates Court is shown as **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Flowchart of criminal/traffic matters



Finding the Right Court

This project is concerned with directing defendants through the initial stages of their criminal matters (and to a lesser extent the other work of the Magistrates Court). This involves designing both directional and procedural signage to assist particularly unrepresented defendants in navigating and understanding the Magistrates Court process.

In Brisbane City, originating proceedings are dealt with in the Roma Street court facility and often proceed to the new George Street court building. The duality of facilities is confusing, particularly for people who are unaccustomed to court processes and are attending the facilities for the first time.

Defendants appearing and dealt with at the Roma Street facility may also be required to pay fines. This will require payment at the George Street facility. Bail and community orders, however, can be organised at the Roma Street facility. Many defendants assume fines can be paid at the Roma Street registry. Presently, signs directing defendants to the George Street registry are easily missed. More adequate signage is required (see later).

If a matter proceeds from the Roma Street facility, defendants may be required to appear at the George Street building in Courts 18 or 20 for callover or review for pleas, summary trials or committal hearing. A map is currently located on the Department of Justice website. **[See Figure 2]**

Figure 2: Map of the Courts

This map was obtained from <http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/courts/pdfs/courtsmap.pdf> It has been cropped and can be adjusted by clicking on the crop icon on the picture toolbar.



1. Brisbane Magistrates Court
363 George Street
9. Brisbane City Watchhouse and Arrest Courts
240 Roma street (opp. Roma Street Station)

Recommendation 1

A new map be provided in hard copy and on the Magistrates Court's website to give more information of the Brisbane Magistrates Courts and what happens at them and this map be distributed widely and be provided with all relevant court notices, including summons and notices to appear, specifying which court to appear in (See also recommendations 4 and 5 and Figure 4 below).

Roma Street: Improving the Signage System - Problems and Solutions

Change of name for the Roma Street court facility

Referring to the building as 'Roma Street Magistrates Court' is confusing. The only matters heard at the Roma Street facility are traffic and arrest/summons matters. The White Pages listing refers to the Roma Street facility as 'Arrest Courts'. There is no mention of traffic matters in this listing. The Department of Justice and Attorney General 'Map of Courts in Brisbane City' refers to it as 'Brisbane City Watchhouse and Arrest Courts' (see Figure 2 above). The Roma Street facility building identification sign (located outside the building) refers to it as 'Roma Street Magistrates Court' (see Picture 1 and 2 below). This inconsistency is potentially confusing.

Picture 1: Front of Roma Street Facility



Picture 2: Close up of sign for Roma Street Facility



Recommendation 2

The Roma Street court facility building identification signed located outside the building be changed to read 'Brisbane Traffic and Arrest Courts, 240 Roma Street'.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General 'Map of Courts in Brisbane City' and White Pages listing be changed to read 'Brisbane Traffic and Arrest Courts' in place of 'Brisbane City Watchhouse and Arrest Courts'.

Introduction of an orientation or 'You Are Here' map at the entrance of the Roma Street court facility

Because there are currently two Magistrates Court facilities in Brisbane City, it is important for people to be sure they are attending the right building for their matter. Further, once people are satisfied that they are at the right location, they need to be oriented to the general layout of the building, particularly when they will be looking for a particular court room or person.

The physical design of the Roma Street building is such that people have no choice but to enter the building through a set of sliding glass doors, a small empty foyer, and finally a security scanner. On busy mornings, this foyer and the footpath outside is filled with queuing patrons waiting to pass through security. The queue moves slowly. Whilst this is unsatisfactory, especially during inclement weather, the opportunity to inform people should be taken.

The key locations to highlight on the orientation map are Courts 1 and 3 (the arrest and traffic courts); the duty lawyer; and the registry. Information should be freely available at the registry because some people cannot read. It is important for people finding their way to be oriented to the locations they need by reference to the location's purpose or function.

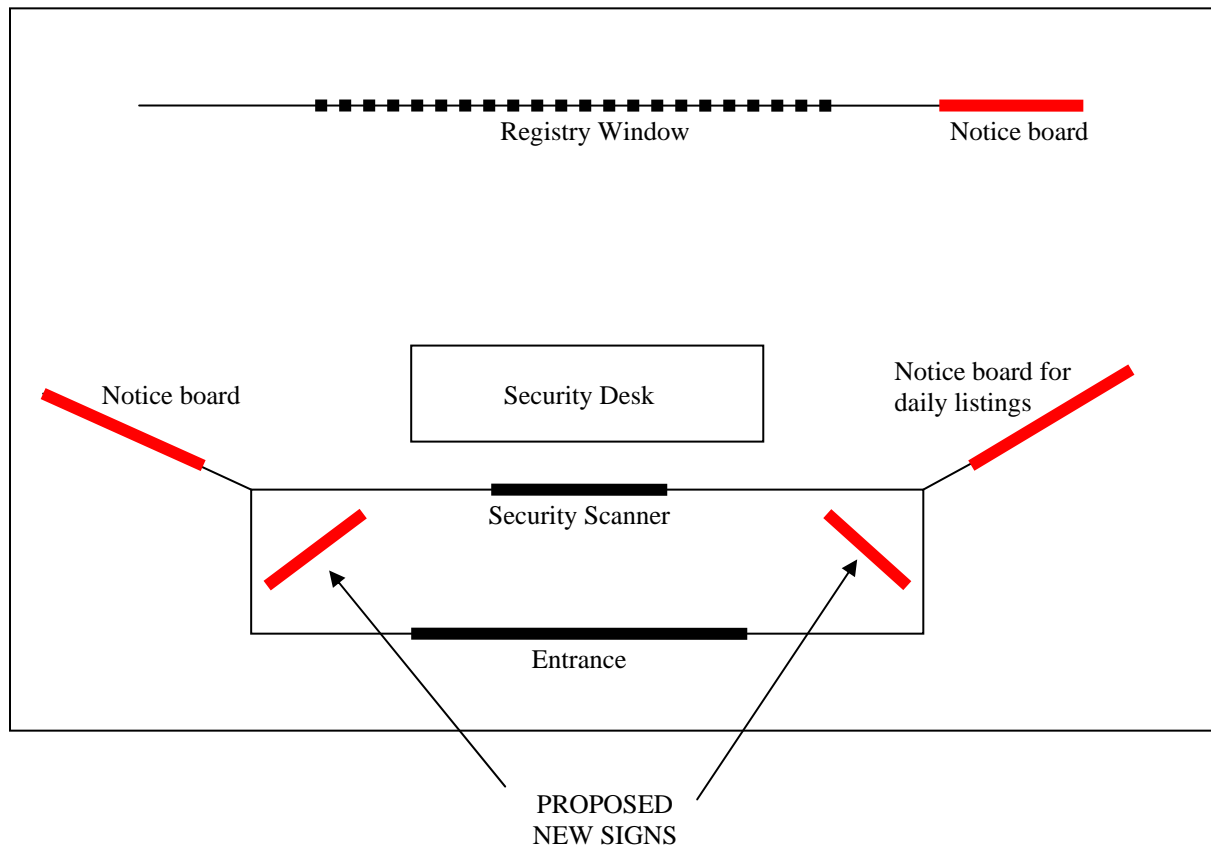
Recommendation 4

- Court 1 should be referred to as the 'arrest court', or alternatively the location for 'arrest hearings'.
- Court 3 should be referred to as the 'traffic court' or alternatively the location for 'traffic matters'.
- The registry should be referred to as the 'information, bail and orders registry' or alternatively, the location for obtaining 'information' and organising 'bail and orders'.

Recommendation 5

Two free-standing 'you-are-here' signs be placed in the small entrance foyer one either side of the security scanner and angled towards the queuing patrons (see figure 3 below). Other procedural information should also be available here such as is recommended later in this submission.

Figure 3: Front entrance plan to Roma Street



Recommendation 6

The signs should contain the information and diagrams set out in Figure 4 below.

Colour-coding and photographs will assist understanding of the information contained in the orientation sign. Graphics will also be useful in this regard. Plain language and simplicity in layout will be important in making the information accessible.

Figure 4: Information to be contained on 'you-are-here' orientation signs



Signing the Roma Street court facility registry office

Currently, the registry office at the Roma Street court facility is not signed. It is important for people to know the function of the registry in relation to the steps defendants need to take. At the Roma Street courts, defendants will most often be required to use the registry to organise bail and community orders. There is a large blank space above the registry window suitable for signage. There is also a large overhang suitable for hanging signage.

Importantly, defendants may also be required to pay fines. Fines, however, can only be paid at the George Street Magistrates Court registry on the ground level. It is important for people to be aware of this. At the moment, signs on the registry windows direct people to pay fines at the George Street Magistrates Court facility. (see Picture 3)

Picture 3: Roma Street registry window



In the Roma Street facilities, there are main directory signs above and to the right of the registry window indicating the location of various facilities by arrows. However, this sign is lengthy (See **Picture 4**). It is unnecessarily confusing and this information can be communicated in a more meaningful way. The notice board is quite high on the wall and can be easily missed.

There are also two notice boards with lockable glass doors on either side of the registry windows where it would be appropriate to hang additional signs. (See **Picture 5**)

The listings board is located diagonally opposite the Registry window (See **Picture 6**).

These lists are not useful for those who cannot see or read so the information needs to be provided in other formats (see later).

Picture 4: Directory sign above the registry window



Picture 5: Notice board to the side of the registry window



Picture 6: Court listings



Recommendation 7

The words 'Information, Bail and Orders Registry' be placed on the blank space above the registry windows at the Roma Street courts using pictographs.

Recommendation 8

A sign with the same words be hung from the overhang to be visible by traffic walking from Courts 1 and 2, and from Court 3 (Roma Street).

Recommendation 9

The signs in the notice boards beside the registry windows be replaced with larger signs directing people to pay fines at the George Street Magistrates facility (and including a map with directions from Roma Street to George Street).

Recommendation 10

The directory signs be simplified giving the main locations needed and be placed in the entry foyer and in free standing signs in the walkways to the left and right.

Recommendation 11

The court listing board should be clearly signed as such.

Improvement of signage directing people to legal aid office for Duty Lawyer service at the Roma Street court facility

The current situation is confusing and inadequate to meet the needs of defendants using the duty lawyer service at the Roma Street court facility for the first time.

The procedure is such that defendants must first approach the Legal Aid office to 'check-in'. Their details are taken and their name is put on a waiting list. When they are called, they see the duty lawyer in the duty lawyer office. Currently, a paper sign on the duty lawyer's door directs people to check-in with the Legal Aid office first. (See **Picture 7**) The sign says:

IF YOU WISH TO SEE THE DUTY LAWYER
(for matters other than traffic offences)

...

Picture 7: Current signage on duty lawyer office door



Next to the Legal Aid office door is a more detailed sign of who the duty lawyer will represent (see **Picture 8** below).

Picture 8: Signage on Legal Aid Office Door



It is important that procedures are easy to follow. It is best if people are directed to the Legal Aid office first or one sign be used; “Duty Lawyer Service (Legal Aid Queensland)”. It is also important that people realise that they might still be able to use the duty lawyer service, even though they are ineligible for legal aid.

Recommendation 12

The current paper sign on the duty lawyer office door be replaced with a free-standing sign directing people to first check-in at “Legal Aid Queensland, Duty Lawyer Service”.

Recommendation 13

The current wording of the paper sign be used on the replacement sign, but with larger font and include wording to the effect that you may be able to use a duty lawyer even if you are ineligible for legal aid.

Signing the Court Rooms and Other Key Locations at the Roma Street Court Facility

Current signage for the court rooms, the duty lawyer and the Legal Aid office is located flat on the doors. For the court rooms, there are additional pillar signs on either side of the doorway. The Court Rooms are identified by number only. It is difficult to see from the entrance or when walking through the waiting areas where the Court Rooms are. A defendant may not know which Court Room they are going to from the notice to appear or summons and they probably would not have looked at the listings board. When they find the Court Room, they will need to know it is the right court for their matter. The signs need to be visible from a distance. See **Picture 9** below.

Picture 9: Roma Street court room signs



Recommendation 14

An over-hanging sign be erected on the overhang above Court 1 (as shown in picture 9 above) doorway, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 1, Arrest Hearings'.

Recommendation 15

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above the Court 3 doorway visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 3, Traffic Matters'.

Recommendation 16

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above the Duty Lawyer office, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Legal Aid Queensland Duty Lawyer, Free Legal Advice'.

Court 2 is currently used as an overflow court. When defendants who report to the prosecutor indicate that they intend to plead guilty and are unrepresented or matters can be otherwise dealt with quickly, a magistrate in Court 2 will hear the charges and thus relieve Court 1. There is nothing to indicate that this is the function of Court 2. If its current use changes, the recommended signage should reflect its use.

Recommendation 17

A hanging sign be erected on the overhang above Court 2, visible to traffic walking through the waiting area, with the words 'Court 2'.

Better use of pamphlet displays and notice boards in the Roma Street court facility waiting areas

The main waiting area at the Roma Street court facility includes a pamphlet display with almost 30 'pockets'. However, these pockets are poorly designed so that it is physically impossible to retrieve stored pamphlets that are not in a standard A4 size. Further, several visits to the Roma Street court facility revealed that the pamphlet display was virtually empty. See **Picture 10** below.

Picture 10: Pamphlet display at Roma Street



Similarly, there are two large notice boards with lockable glass doors located in the waiting areas which are largely unused. See **Picture 11** below.

Picture 11: Notice boards in waiting areas at Roma Street



Recommendation 18

The pamphlet display installation be removed from the Roma Street court facility waiting area and replaced with a user-friendly pamphlet display system.

Recommendation 19

The new pamphlet display system be kept fully stocked at all times with publications from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, community legal centres and other relevant agencies in court procedures, location of court buildings in Brisbane, Legal Aid and Duty Lawyer assistance, and other relevant information for defendants.

Recommendation 20

The notice board in the Roma Street court facility waiting areas be more effectively used to inform defendants about Magistrates Court procedures and Legal Aid and Duty Lawyer assistance.

Recommendation 21

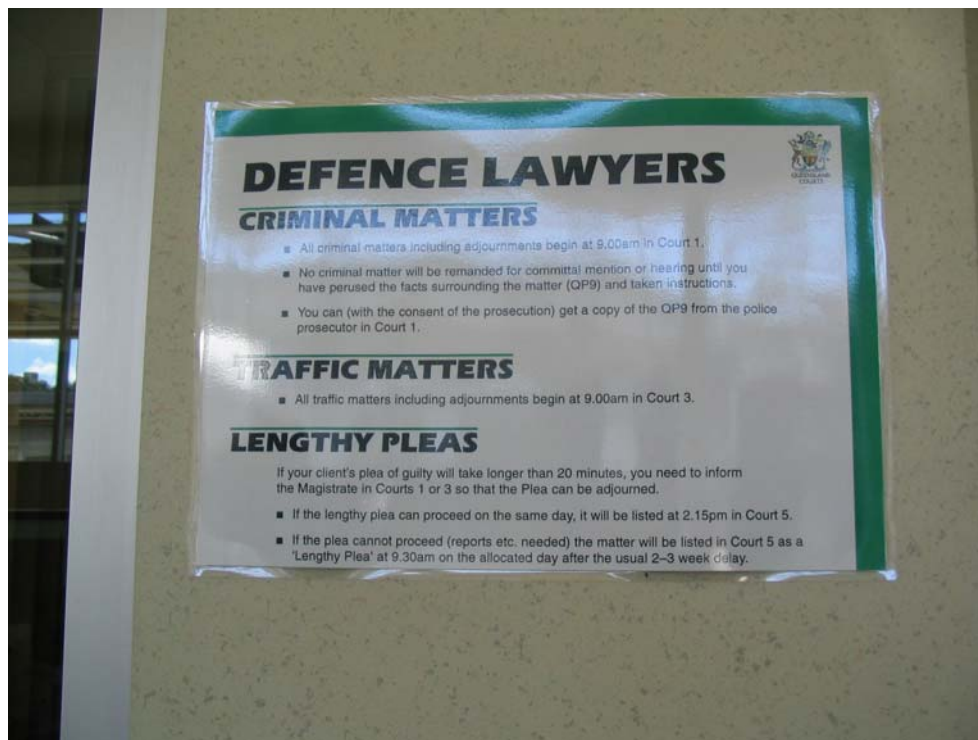
Information contained in the pamphlet display and the notice boards should be in languages other than English, such as Vietnamese.

Signage for court room procedure

Once people have found the right court building and the right court room within the facility, they need to be oriented to relevant procedures. For the Arrest Court (Court 1), defendants need to immediately report to the Prosecutor. Unrepresented defendants will also need to be familiarised with the way the hearing will operate and what they will need to do. Court procedure can be confusing but it need not be so daunting.

Outside Court 1 are two laminated signs. One is for defence lawyers and procedural matters such as time of hearing and lengthy pleas. The other sign directs people to the duty lawyer service (see **Picture 12** and **Picture 13** below).

Picture 12: Sign for defence lawyers outside Court 1



Picture 13: Sign directing defendants to see a duty lawyer outside Court 1



Recommendation 22

A large sign be erected on the blank wall space beside the Court 1 doorway at Roma Street court facility to set out the Court's hearing procedure (see **Figure 5** below).

Figure 5: Suggested sign beside doorway to Court 1⁷

Arrest Hearings (Court 1)

1. You must report to the Prosecutor when you arrive.
2. You will be called to appear in the Court by the Prosecutor.
3. Inside the Court, you will stand on the left of the "bar table".
4. The Prosecutor will read your charge to the Court. If you are unsure of the charge, you can ask to see the charge sheet.
5. The Magistrate will ask for your plea. If you are unsure what plea to enter, you should see the Duty Lawyer before you go in.
6. If you have not had a chance to see the duty lawyer, you can ask that the matter be stood down temporarily or if you want to see your own lawyer before you enter a plea you can ask for an adjournment for mention at a later date.
7. You should refer to the Magistrate as 'Your Honour'.

⁷ The Magistrates Court interior layout diagram included here from the Qld Department of Justice and Attorney-General website at http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/courts/about/mag_room.htm

8. The Magistrate will then tell you what happens next.
9. If you need to organise bail or a community order, go to the Registry in this building.
10. If you need to pay a fine, go to the Registry in the Brisbane Magistrates Court building at George Street.

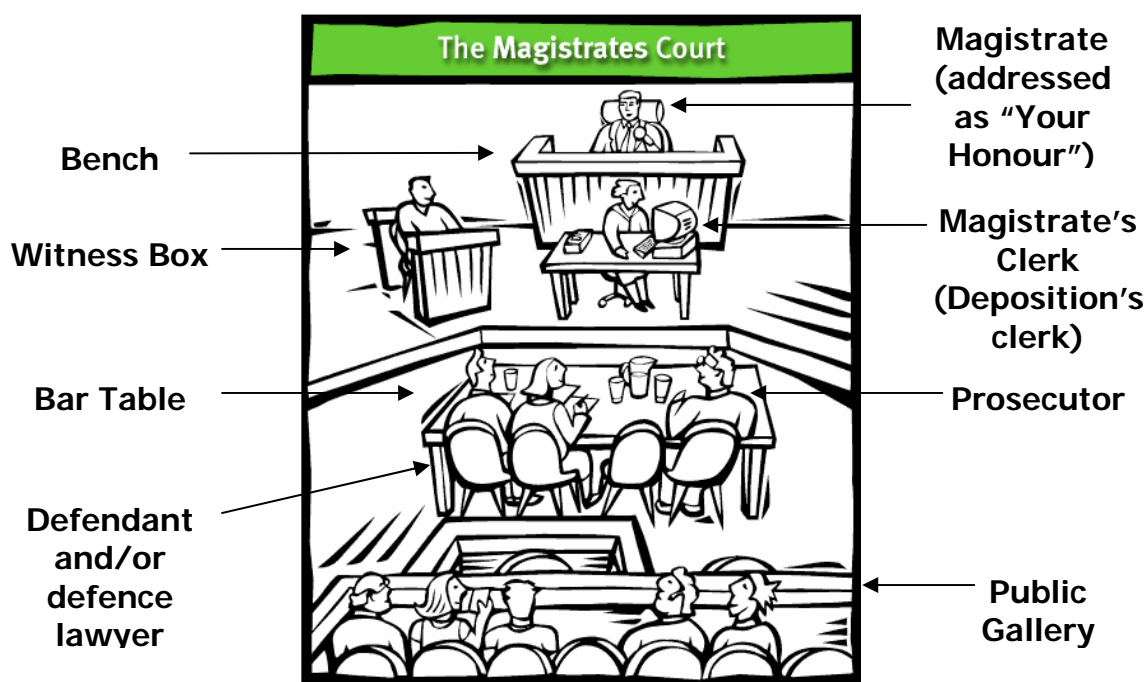
Recommendation 23

This sign include a simple graphical representation of the inside of the Court Room indicating who the relevant people are and where they sit (see **Figure 6** below).

Recommendation 24

A duplicate of the sign be produced on a laminated double-sided A4 card to be always located on the bar table in front of the defendant's seat.

Figure 6: Suggested sign indicating who the relevant people are in the court room and where they sit



There is also a paper sign inside the court (see picture 14 below), fixed to the front of the associates table so that it is in view of a defendant sitting at the bar table and facing the magistrate. While we recommend that this sign should remain in place, it alone is insufficient as it is unlikely that an apprehensive defendant will have the presence of mind to notice it.

Picture 14: Sign for addressing the magistrate inside Court 1



Recommendation 25

The current laminated A4 sign on the front of the clerk's table directing defendants to address the Magistrate as **'Your Honour'** should remain.

Recommendation 26

A similar system be implemented for Court 3, the traffic court.

Recommendation 27

The prosecution's position be clearly marked so that defendants can easily locate the prosecutor as required.

George Street: Improving the Signage System - Problems and Solutions

Change of Name for the George Street facility

The George Street facility is signed 'Brisbane Magistrates Court'. See picture 14 below. This is consistent with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General 'Map of Courts in Brisbane City' which also refers to it as 'Brisbane Magistrates Courts' (see **Figure 2** above).

However, the White Pages lists the court as 'Magistrates Court', and does not give an address for the George Street facility. Rather, it only gives an address for the 'Arrest Courts', being Courts 1 – 3, 240 Roma Street. This may be the case because the George St facility was only recently opened.

Picture 15: Signage for the George Street Magistrates Court facility



While this is the main Magistrates Court of Queensland housing the Chief Magistrate and Chief Clerk, it nonetheless has a distinct function in Brisbane City that should be recognised to distinguish it from the Roma Street Courts.

Recommendation 28

The listing in the White Pages and building and other signage should be updated so that it reads "Brisbane Magistrates Court", and that it include the address or the words "George Street Magistrates Court" or similar (see also **Figure 4**).

Introduction of an Orientation or 'You-Are-Here' Map for the George Street Magistrates Court Facility

Again, because there are currently two Magistrates Court facilities in Brisbane City, it is important for people to be sure they are attending the right building for their matter. Further, once people are satisfied they are at the right location, they need to be oriented to the general layout of the building, particularly when they will be looking for a particular Court room or person.

For the purposes of orienting defendants between the Roma Street and George Street facilities for initial criminal hearings, the important locations within the George Street facility are Courts 18 and 20 (for callover, committal and review hearings) and the criminal registry (for fine payments). It is important for people finding their way that they are oriented to the locations they need by reference to the location's purpose or function.

Courts 18 and 20 should be referred to as the 'Callover, Committal and Review Courts'. The registry should be clearly signed as the place to get information (see later).

Colour-coding will assist understanding of the information contained in the orientation sign. Graphics will also be useful in this regard. Plain language and simplicity in layout will be important in making the information accessible.

Recommendation 29

Two 'you-are-here' orientation signs be affixed to the existing pillars on the covered section of the George Street Magistrates Court building entrance steps, facing the street. (For example, see **figure 4**)

Improving the main directory sign at the George Street Magistrates Court facility

When you first enter the George Street facility, you see a main directory sign to the right and the entrance to the "Registry" in front.

The main directory sign (see **Picture 16**) has a number of video screens, listing the day's criminal matters in alphabetical order. We understand that currently, civil listings are not displayed. Each screen has a fixed alphabetical range, for example, the first screen displays matters beginning with the letters A – D, the second displays matters from E – G etc. If there are too many matters to display on the one screen, then the screen alternates between the top of the list and the bottom of the list. This is potentially confusing, particularly as there are no signs at the top of the screens which indicate the alphabetical range which each screen displays.

Picture 16: Main directory sign in the George Street foyer



Below the video screens is fixed signage indicating what is located on each floor. People need to be oriented to the locations they need by reference to the location function/purpose. For the purposes of orienting people involved in initial criminal hearings, the key locations are Courts 18 and 20 (the Callover, Committal and Review courts) and the registry for fine payments.

The sign clearly indicates that Fine Payments and State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) payments are both made on Level G and that SPER itself is located on Level 2 of the George Street facility.

However, it is not indicated that Court 18 is the “Committal and Review Court”, only that Court 18 is located on Level 5 (see **Picture 17** below).

Picture 17: Lower half of main directory sign in George Street foyer



People unfamiliar with the Court should approach the enquiries counter in the Registry which can be seen from the foyer (see **Picture 18** below). However, as far as possible, good signage should reduce the need to access busy registry staff.

Although there is a small free standing sign at the entrance to the Registry directing people to the enquiries counter, it is unclear when looking at the main directory sign or even when standing in the main foyer that this is where you should go first if you are unsure of where to go.

Picture 18: Entrance to Registry in George Street foyer



Recommendation 30

The main directory sign at the top of each video screen should display the alphabetical range that that particular screen covers. For example: "Matters A – D".

Recommendation 31

When there is a main directory display listing civil matters, there should be a clear delineation between criminal and civil listings, perhaps using colour coding.

Recommendation 32

A new free-standing sign be placed near the existing directory sign directing people to the directory to find their name and to Courts 18 and 20 and what they do, and to Fines and Other Payments, SPER and the enquiries counter using pictographs where possible.

Recommendation 33

The new sign be worded as suggested in **Figure 7** below.

Figure 7: Suggested sign for George Street foyer

I - All Enquiries

Please see the Enquiries Counter in the Registry Level G↑

Criminal Matters

Please see the Directory for an alphabetical list of
defendants before the courts today. →

Courts 18 and 20, Callover, Committals and Review Courts
Level 5

Criminal Registry Level G↑

- Fine payments
- Bail
- SPER Payments
- Community Orders

State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) Level 2

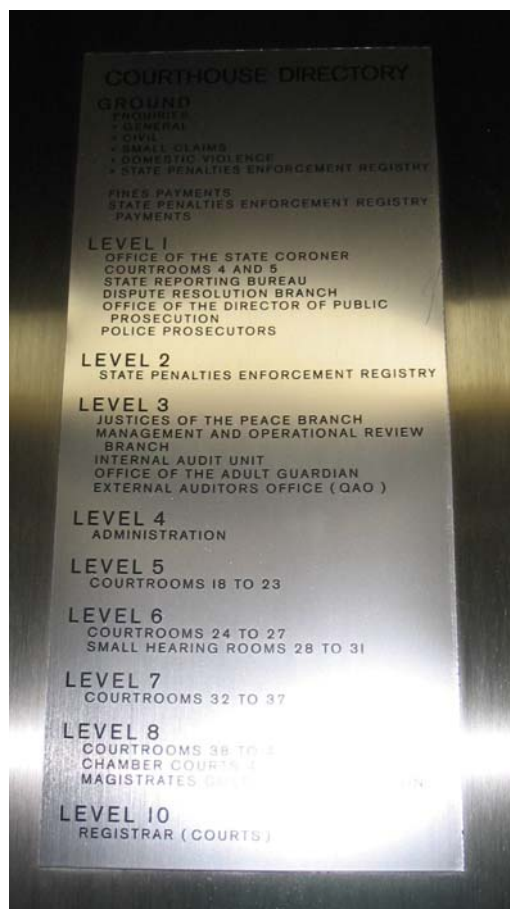
Elevator and level signage

Signs indicating what is located on each level are in each elevator (see **Picture 19** below).

There is also directory sign on each floor, again showing what is located on each level, and clearly indicating which floor you are on (see **Picture 20** below).

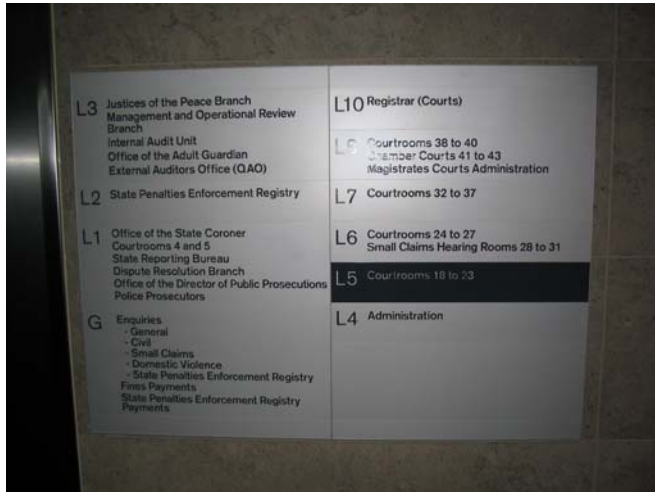
However, the directory signs on each floor are located towards the back of the lift bays, away from the main thoroughfare (see **Picture 21** and **Figure 8** for the location of the directory signs).

Picture 19: Signage inside each elevator



While most agencies are listed on levels 1 & 3, no reference is made to the locations of Legal Aid Queensland, the agency many defendants will be interested in locating.

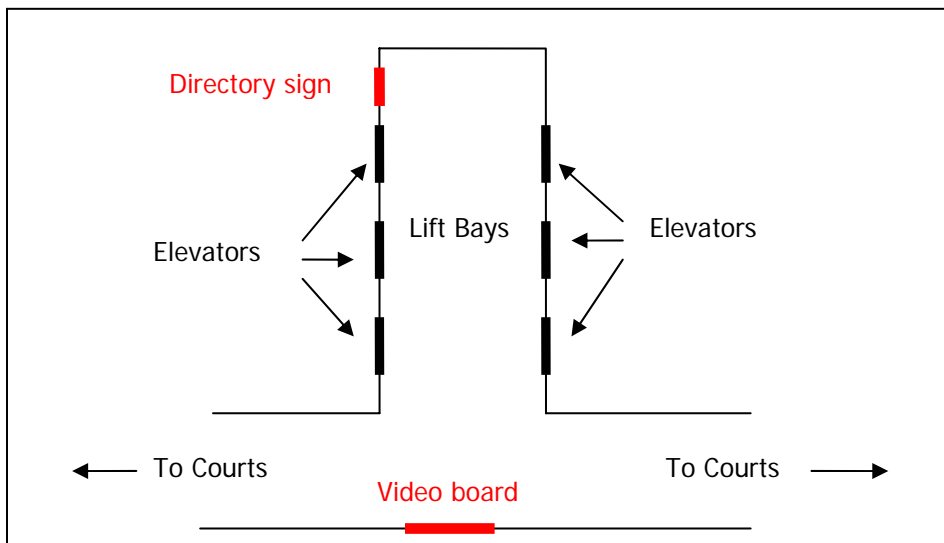
Picture 20: Directory sign on each floor



Picture 21: Location of directory sign



Figure 8: General floor plan for level 5



Recommendation 34

The directory signs on each floor of the George Street facility be moved to a more visible position.

Signing Court Rooms 18 and 20 at the George Street Magistrates Court facility

As you step out of the lift on Level 5, to the left you see a video board which lists all the matters which are being heard on that level, the court room number and the time of hearing. The video board also provides which direction the court room is located. See Figure 8 above for the location of the video board and Picture 22 below. The writing is small and the video board is positioned fairly high up on the wall.

Picture 22: Video Board on Level 5



The signage for each courtroom is in large writing above the door of each court room and is reasonably visible from a distance away (see **Picture 23**).

Picture 23: View of courtroom 20 and the small duty lawyer sign from the video board



It is not apparent what happens in these courts.

Court 20 operates from Monday to Friday as the callover court. The magistrate in Court 20 farms out matters for pleas of guilty, summary hearings and committals. On Tuesdays at 2.15, this court operates the summary review callover.

Court 18 is the committal callover court, operating only on Mondays to oversee matters working towards committal.

On a Monday in particular, there is the potential for confusion. In any event, the activities of these courts should be clearly signed.

Recommendation 35

There be a sign below the video board on Level 5 of the George Street facility with the words "Courts 18 and 20, Callover, Committals and Review Courts" and an arrow pointing to the direction of the Courts, with more information about what happens in these courts.

Signage for Duty Lawyer service and Community Corrections at the George Street court facility

People seeking a duty lawyer have to locate the door upon which there is a paper sign that reads “Court 20, Duty Lawyer” (see **Picture 24** below). There is no other information or signs regarding how people can get the assistance of a duty lawyer.

Picture 24: Signage on duty lawyer office door on Level 5



Similarly, on another door, there is a paper sign which reads “Community Corrections” and a telephone number to call if the room is unattended. There is no other information or signs regarding Community Corrections (see **Picture 25**).

Picture 25: Signage on Community Corrections office door on Level 5



Recommendation 36

There be a free standing sign next to the video board on Level 5 of the George Street facility (possibly the same sign referred to in recommendation 35) with the words "Duty Lawyer" and "Community Corrections" and an arrow pointing to the direction of those services.

Recommendation 37

The signs for the Duty Lawyer and Community Corrections on Level 5 of the George Street facility should provide more detailed information about the process to access those services.

Procedural information for Courts 18 and 20 at the George Street Magistrates Court facility

Once people have found the right court building and the right court room within that facility, they need to be oriented to relevant procedures.

Outside each courtroom is a clearly visible sign about some basic court etiquette, including: obey the instructions given by the Magistrate, sit quietly, no eating and drinking (see **Picture 26** below).

On a side wall, away from the entrance to Court 18, there is a paper sign (see **Picture 27** below) which says:

ALERT
COMMITTAL CALLOVER
CHANGE OF PROCEDURE
PLEASE REPORT TO DPP CLERK IN INTERVIEW ROOM
IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE COURT 18 FOR ALL CALLOVER
MATTERS.

There are no other procedural signs outside or inside Courts 18 or 20.

For traffic matters, there is a paper procedural sign stuck to the wall beside the entrance to Court 19 (see **Picture 28** below).

Another example of a procedural sign is for chamber civil matters, which was located on a notice board on one of the court levels (see **Picture 29** below).

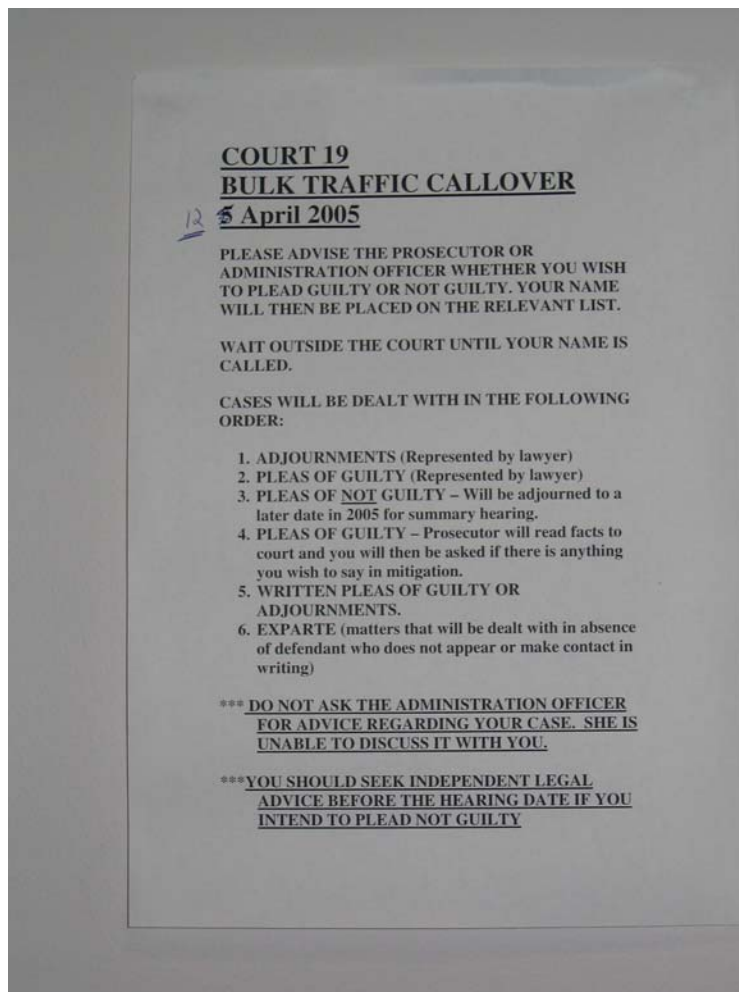
Picture 26: Sign outside Courtroom 20



Picture 27: Procedural sign - Callovers



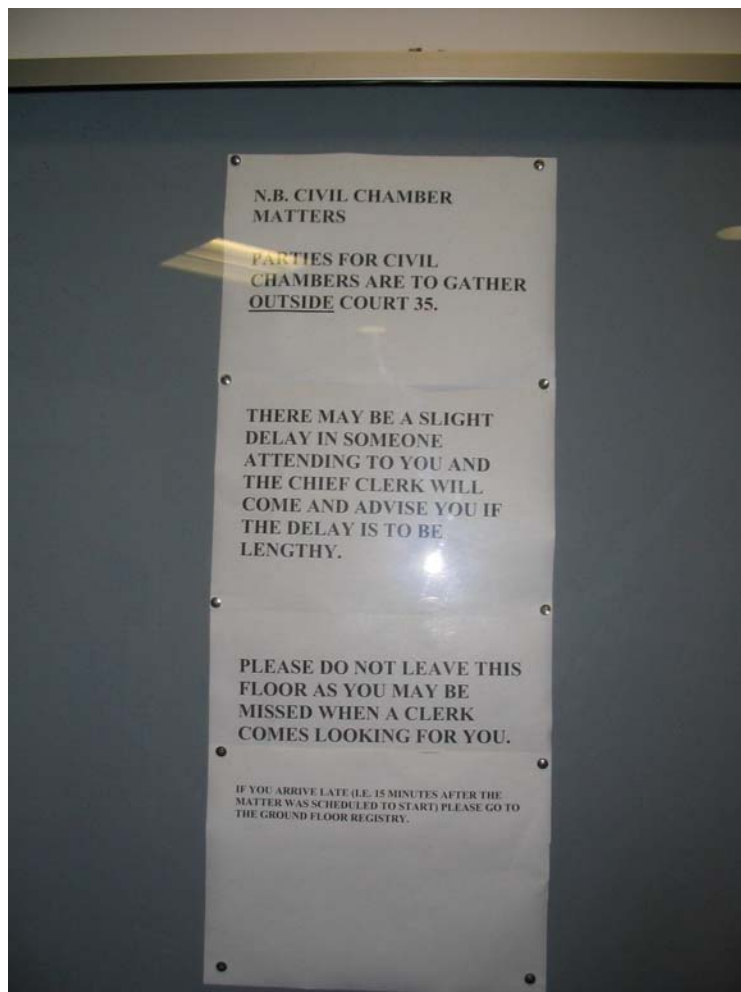
Picture 28: Procedural sign outside Court 19 – Bulk Traffic Callover



Recommendation 38

Signs for the procedures in Courts 18, 19 and 20 in the George Street facility should be fully developed. These signs should be rewritten in simple English with more explanation about what happens inside each court. The Court 19 sign for example should not say "...you will then be asked if there is anything you want to say in mitigation", but rather something that clearly outlines the process and what can be said to lessen the penalty if possible. It should also read "ask the Administration officer for information not advice" (assuming you can get information from the administration officer who we understand is the depositions clerk), and the role of the administration officer (depositions clerk: if relevant to the public) should be specified. Standard information pictographs should be used where appropriate.

Picture 29: Procedural sign - Civil Chamber matters



Recommendation 39

Procedural signs, which existed in the old North Quay complex, should be reinstated in the new George Street facility but should be expanded, similar to the signage recommended for the Roma Street Courts. For example,

Outside the Court Door

- Procedure on Callovers: "To ensure consistency of procedure, Magistrates will deal with adjournments first, then other matters in order of seniority of lawyers, and then unrepresented persons.
- Appearances: "To all legal representatives and unrepresented defendants, on your arrival please approach the Depositions Clerk as soon as possible to give your appearance".

Inside the court, on the wall in good view of the bar table and on the bar table

- The same signs as above
- On the bar table only - "Defendant, if you do not have a lawyer, please stand when talking to the Magistrate. You should address the Magistrate as: `Your Honour'."

Recommendation 40

A diagram of the interior layout of the courts, which would be useful in assisting court users in orienting themselves inside the court room, should be included with the procedural directions posted outside.

Recommendation 41

When appropriate, all signs recommended in this paper should be similarly applied for the civil courts and procedures.

Reaching individual users

In designing and implementing signage systems for public spaces, certain legislative requirements must be satisfied.

Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability in providing access to or use of premises that the public can enter or use. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has published the 'Advisory Notes on Access to Premises' (June 1997) to assist people in complying with the Act in the construction of new buildings. The Advisory Notes are also useful for ensuring existing buildings are compliant with the Act. Section 5.15 of the Advisory Notes stipulates that "signs and symbols should inform all users" and refer to the 'Australian Standard 1428.2 (1992) Design for Access and Mobility'. The Advisory Notes are available on the Internet.⁸

Clauses 16 and 17 of the 'Australian Standard 1428.2 (1992)' refer to the use of symbols and signs and stipulate the height of letters in signs, the illumination of signs, and the location of signs. The Standard can be purchased from Standards Australia at their website.⁹

Recommendation 42

Any signs that are to be introduced to the Magistrates Courts should be compliant with Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) and with the 'Australian Standard 1428.2 (1992) Design for Access and Mobility'.

For the recommended signs to be of any real assistance to court users, particularly to those users who are disadvantaged in some way, they must be, for example:

- Durable
- Located at appropriate eye-level
- Non-reflective
- Tactile
- Colour-coded (For example, like the headings used in this publication, all criminal matters could be marked blue, with a yellow strip for Roma Street and a red strip for George Street)
- In pictograph form
- Consistent
- Easy to understand

Recommendation 43

Signs must be in simple English (not bureaucratese or legalese) and easy to read and understand (such as 'You are here' and 'What do I have to do' and 'Where do I go/do now').

⁸ http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/Access_to_premises/premises_advisory.html

⁹ <http://www.standards.com.au/catalogue/script/Details.asp?DocN=stds000006011>

Provision must be made for languages other than English, for people who are illiterate and for people who are vision or hearing impaired. As such, proper implementation of the recommended signs will require professional input for design, production and installation.

Recommendation 44

Signs should be provided in Braille.

Recommendation 45

Defendants should have access to a touch-screen kiosk in the Roma Street facility and the ground level and level 5 of the George Street facility which duplicates all signage and speaks to defendants who are unable to read. There should also be screens for different languages.

Recommendation 46

Information should be provided in brochures, available at the courts and elsewhere, in English and other languages as outlined on page 10 of this submission.

A number of forms are issued to people to inform them when and where to appear before the courts such as:

- Complaints – sworn and Summons (Form 3 *Justices Act 1886*)
- Notice to Appear (Forms 1 and 1a *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000*)
- Summons to a witness (Form 10 *Justices Act 1886*)
- Release from custody (Form DV11 *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989*)
- Various bail forms under the *Bail Act 1990*.

The Acts require what information should be recorded on the forms. Section 215 of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000* for example stipulates that the Notice to Appear requires a person to appear before a court at a stated time and place. All forms specify the court's "full street address", often as part of a long screed of information.

Recommendation 47

The Department of Justice work with the other agencies, such as the Queensland Police Service, to standardise the forms so that a clear "Where and When" box appears on all forms directing people to the appropriate court and that as far as possible, a map be attached or a link to the court's website be shown for the location of the courts.

Currently, a number of courts and tribunals have their own websites. The Supreme and District Courts are located at www.courts.qld.gov.au while the Magistrates Court site is at www.justice.qld.go.au. There are also tribunals such as the Small Claims Tribunal and the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal which should be brought together with the courts to provide, as far as possible, a consistent approach

regarding content, layout and accessibility, such as – ‘how do I get there?’, ‘what do I have to do?’, ‘where are the relevant forms?’ etc.

Recommendation 48

The Queensland Government create a State courts and tribunals website which provides location, general information, procedures, rules, guidelines and practice directions, judgments (where appropriate), an e-filing facility (which takes the party through forms in a way which explains what is required to reduce error), fees, fact sheets on areas of law and legal issues, links to useful information, case information, listings and timetables and a search capacity for access to all Queensland courts and tribunals.

Evaluation of the Signage System

With a view to implementing similar signage systems in Magistrates Courts throughout Queensland, an evaluation of any signage that is implemented in the Brisbane City Magistrates Courts as a result of this project should be undertaken.

It should also be noted that to successfully implement the signage system recommended by this project, appropriate funding will be required.

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Queensland Interpreting and Translation Services

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