

Question on Notice

No. 699

Asked on Tuesday, 15 October 2013

MR HOLSWICH asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (MR BLEIJIE)–

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General advise what steps the government is taking to support Justices of the Peace in the Pine Rivers Electorate?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pine Rivers for his question.

This Government is committed to ensuring all Justices of the Peace (JPs) and Commissioners for Declarations (C.decs) throughout the State provide Queenslanders with a consistent, accurate and high quality witnessing services.

To achieve this, this Government has introduced a number of initiatives including:

- refocussing the Justices of the Peace Branch (JP Branch) on compliance and support and revitalising the JP system State-wide;
- ensuring that the JP Branch provides ongoing professional development to existing JPs and C.decs. A series of professional development workshops have been conducted by officers of the JP Branch in Queensland electorates including a workshop conducted in the Pine Rivers Electorate on 13 June 2013. 124 registered JPs and C.decs of the Pine Rivers Electorate attended the workshop;
- maintaining ongoing support and guidance to the community signing site in the Pine Rivers Electorate. This site is based in the Pine Rivers Courthouse; and
- conducting regular free workshops at the JP Branch offices in South Brisbane to which all registered JPs and C.decs from the Pine Rivers Electorate are welcome to attend.

Further, this Government's commitment to "*Pilot the use of Justices of the Peace in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT)*" aims to recognise and expand the role of JPs in delivering justice services. This is currently being trialled with a pool of JPs and legal practitioners hearing certain minor civil disputes valued at less than \$5,000. The QCAT JP Pilot aims to meet the scheduling needs of QCAT, represent our diverse community and recognise the important role of legal practitioners and JPs in delivering justice services in Queensland. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has recently completed the second round of appointments for the QCAT JP Pilot.

Details of the QCAT JP Pilot:

- a. each matter will be heard by two JPs, one of whom will be legally qualified (with no requirement for post admission experience);
- b. both JPs will be paid \$100 per sitting day;
- c. JPs will adjudicate on minor civil dispute matters under \$5,000;
- d. The pilot commenced 3 June 2013 at four sites (Ipswich, Brisbane, Maroochydore, Southport with Townsville starting in October); and
- e. Applicants have undertaken a rigorous free training course from QCAT to enable them to understand and appreciate the types of issues they are presiding over.