

Communiqué

Meeting, Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity

The Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity (JCCD) met in Alice Springs on 23 September 2016. The meeting involved extensive discussion on two major publications being developed by the JCCD, in addition to matters raised at the previous meeting and the JCCD's future work plan.

The draft Standards on working with interpreters in courts and tribunals and the draft women's Framework were both endorsed by the JCCD, subject to a few minor amendments. The Standards and Framework are to be presented by Chief Justice Martin to the Council of Chief Justices (CCJ) at its meeting on 2 November. Subject to the CCJ's approval to publish both documents, Chief Justice Martin will write to the heads of jurisdiction and cultural diversity champions requesting adoption of the Standards and Framework. Chief Justice Martin will additionally inquire about the possibility of launching the Standards at the conference for Supreme and Federal Court Judges in Perth in January 2017, and members will consider the possibilities for a launch of the Framework. Ms Britton will seek endorsement of the Standards from COAT at its meeting in October. Sincere thanks were given by the JCCD to members of the interpreting and women's Sub-Committees and to the Secretariat for their commitment to the projects. Justice Perry was particularly acknowledged for chairing the interpreters Sub-Committee.

A scoping study has been conducted by the Secretariat into the availability of resources to assist judicial officers and the legal profession to communicate in plain English to non-English speaking court users. A small working group was established to oversee a project producing a simple and uniform guide to plain English for judicial officers, covering a range of words, phrases, and common explanations.

The meeting provided the opportunity to discuss the Council's representation. There had been a proposal to appoint a representative of the Children's Court to the Council. With it being noted that some members of the Council also sit on the Children's Court, Chief Justice Martin will write to Children's Courts to request the appointment of champions. Members also discussed reappointments to the JCCD. It was agreed that the current membership of the JCCD would be split into three tiers, with one tier's term concluding in one year's time, the next tier after two years, and the third tier after three years. Chief Justice Martin will put this proposal to the Council of Chief Justice's for their consideration.

The meeting additionally made note that:

- Within a short period of time, there has been tremendous progress on the Judicial Commission of NSW's online cultural diversity training module. The group is on track to present its latest version of the modules to the CCJ at its meeting on 2 November.
- Dr Ghena Krayem and Professor Tim Lindsey have been contacted by Judge Soulio and the Secretariat and expressed support for the development of a guidance note on coverings and dress in court settings. This will be developed by Judge Soulio and circulated out of session to the JCCD for their approval.

- It would be beneficial to monitor the progress and outcomes of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

The Council's work plan was considered. It was agreed for the Secretariat to commence work on court user surveys, the toolkit for community engagement and the RAP toolkit. It was agreed that future projects would be discussed at the JCCD's next meeting, and that, in the interim, members should give consideration to potential project ideas.

Members noted that this would be the last meeting attended by Ms Veronica Finn, who is leaving her position at the Migration Council of Australia to take up another position at the end of this year. Members expressed their very considerable appreciation to Ms Finn for her contribution to the work of the Council and wished her every success in her future endeavours.

The meeting took place following a program of speakers the previous day, and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to repeat this format. The next meeting of the JCCD will be held in Western Sydney on 9-10 March 2018.