

JPBulletin

Issue 1: November 2013



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our first edition of the new e-publication—the *JPBulletin*.

As Registrar of Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations, I am committed to ensuring all our JPs and C.decs are well informed and empowered to provide high quality witnessing services. This bi-monthly publication is part of a new suite of initiatives aimed at achieving this.

You may be aware that there has been a lot of activity at the Justices of the Peace Branch over the past several months. Following letters sent out from the Attorney-General and myself, we have had literally thousands of enquiries via mail, email, phone and online from people updating their details.

This is a fantastic outcome which will assist us in keeping you up-to-date with all the latest developments at the JP Branch. In particular, email will be an important channel for us to disseminate information such as Technical Bulletins and updates of legislation, as well as this newsletter. Don't forget you can access information from your mobile device, with the [JP mobile website app](#) available on our website.

In this edition of the *JPBulletin*, there will be a strong focus on some of the initiatives aimed at revitalising the JP Branch on compliance and support for JPs and C.decs across the State.

I hope you enjoy reading the *JPBulletin* and more importantly enjoy your roles in serving the community.

Damien Mealey
Registrar and Manager
The Justices of the Peace Branch

The evolving role of the Justices of the Peace Branch



In light of the Queensland Government's commitment to revitalise front line services and deliver swift and fair justice, the Justices of the Peace Branch (JPB) is refocusing its services on greater compliance and support for JPs and C.decs.

The change will see JPB put a larger emphasis on improving the governance and operation of Queensland's JP system.

As the lead agency, JPB is responsible for all aspects related to the appointment and registration of JPs and C.decs, including the determination of eligibility and suitability of all prospective appointees. The authority to do this on behalf of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice rests with the *Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991*.

Furthermore, JPB provides practice direction to all existing JPs and C.decs. This includes managing all official publications such as the handbooks and Technical Bulletins as well as the Code of Conduct, which are binding on practice.

The JPB is based in South Brisbane but has recently appointed a senior officer in Townsville to provide greater professional support to JPs and C.decs in Far North Queensland.

Although some of our objectives may have changed, our status as lead agency remains unaffected. JPs and C.decs should always refer to JPB for all matters related to their duties of office.

The JP Advisory Council



The JP Advisory Council was recently re-established to provide advice and consultation to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in administering the [Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act 1991](#) 'the Act'.

All council members are appointed pursuant to Section (4.1) of the Act and the Attorney-General has personally appointed all members.

A broad selection of JPs from across the state, with varied backgrounds and significant experience in their roles are members of the Council and include:

- Mr Damien Mealey, Registrar, JP Branch (Chair)
- Mr Steven Blinkhorn, Brisbane (Deputy Chair)
- Ms Susie Warrington, Senior Registrar, Townsville Magistrates Court
- Mr Bob Pilkington, Vice President, Queensland Justices Association
- Mr Ric Wood, Gold Coast
- Mr Errol Neale, President, Association of Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations (FNQ)
- Mr Roger Fewster, Sunshine Coast
- Mr Bernard Burke, Brisbane
- Mr Rody Costigan, Toowoomba
- Ms Vanda Pertzelt, President, Justices of the Peace Society, Sunshine Coast
- Mr Brian O'Grady, North Brisbane
- Mr Kevan Wolfe, President Gold Coast Justices Association
- Mr Joel O'Mara, A/Senior Community Engagement Officer, JP Branch (Secretariat)

As representatives of the JP and C.dec community, the Council provides an opportunity to consult on strategic decisions pertaining to the direction of the roles for JPs and C.decs. Consulting with the Council ensures all strategic decisions are considered from the JPs and C.decs point of view.

Meeting bi-monthly on the second Monday of the month, the Council has

already convened four times and made important recommendations to the Attorney-General on a number of initiatives.

Professional development seminars



Caption: Member for Ashgrove, the Honourable Premier Campbell Newman and Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie presenting a 50-year long-service award to Alfred Stoddart from the Ashgrove electorate

The JPB facilitates professional development seminars at the request of local state Members of Parliament. These seminars differ from the normal JPB workshops in that they are by invitation only and attended by the local member.

Recently a seminar was held at the Premier's electorate of Ashgrove. More than 180 JPs and C.decs registered and attended. In addition to the Honourable Premier, the event was also attended by the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Jarrod Bleijie. Guest speaker

Kevin Martin, the Adult Guardian, spoke about the importance of capacity when witnessing Enduring Powers of Attorney and Advance Health Directives.

Numerous additional seminars are scheduled between now and the end of the year. Please check our [website](#) for more information and ensure you attend for your state electorate.

Upcoming professional development opportunities

For more information, please click on the link provided. To register, [email](#) or phone the JP Branch, providing your name, phone number, and the session name and date.

Location/date	Topic
South Brisbane 12 November 2013	General witnessing procedures
Coorparoo 14 November 2013	Professional development seminar - Local MP
South Brisbane 14 November 2013	Issuing a Justices Examination Order
Runaway Bay 28 November 2013	Professional development seminar - Local MP

The JP Branch also has seminars planned in the coming months for the following electorates: Lockyer, Moggill, Townsville, Thuringowa and Mundingburra.

Details will be listed on our [website](#) in due course.

Mentors share wealth of experience



The Justices of the Peace Branch Mentoring Program has been running for nearly five years and provides newly appointed JPs, or those wanting a re-fresher, the opportunity to work with an experienced JP to further develop their skills and knowledge.

As part of the role, the Mentoring Officer has been developing workshops with the aim of providing mentors with the information and resources to better enable them to provide guidance to the JPs and C.decs they are mentoring.

This will also standardise the mentoring provided to further the high calibre of JPs and C.decs in Queensland. Participants of the workshop are recognised for their attendance and participation in the program.

The first workshops have been very well received with feedback from attendees used to enhance the program's deliverables.

If you would like any more information on any of the upcoming workshops about how to become a mentor, please contact (07) 3013 5458.

Get to know your Registrar



Hello, I'm Damien Mealey. I have been in the Justices of the Peace Branch over 13 years and Registrar for more than seven years.

Why did you become a JP?

I became a JP in 1989 and later transitioned to JP(Mag Crt). My father was an officer in the Queensland Police Service, so law and justice has always been a big

part of my family background. Becoming a JP came very naturally, and was part of my service as a Clerk at various Court Registries.

What do you enjoy about being a JP?

The role of Justices of the Peace has been around for centuries and is still vital in the community. We provide the checks and balances in some of the most important decisions people make such as enduring powers of attorney, advance health directives and land title documents. Being a part of that is a great privilege and I enjoy helping others.

How often do you volunteer in the community?

Probably not as much as I'd like, but I try to do at least a couple of hours every month at my local shopping centre. If all our JPs and C.decs did just one hour per month, the Queensland community and justice system would have all the witnessing services they need. I've also presented myself at my local police station so that they can contact me at any time if they need a JP for warrants or interviews. Making yourself available is probably just as important as volunteering at our witnessing sites.

How has your role changed in the 13 years you've been with the Branch?

There has always been a lot of change at the JPB, but nothing compares to the last 12 months. We have now transitioned out of training for new JPs and C.decs.

This means that the JPB is able to focus more on providing our JPs and C.decs with ongoing professional development opportunities. Queensland is a big state and we've recently based an officer in Townsville to provide more

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professional development opportunities in North Queensland and significantly increase our number of workshops.

We also recently introduced mandatory training requirements to now also include Commissioners for Declarations, so that all new appointees are properly trained in providing witnessing services.

Another great initiative was the re-establishment of the JP Advisory Council. The Council meets bi-monthly and is already proving to be very helpful providing recommendations to the Attorney in many of the initiatives we are currently rolling out.

The most significant change, however, is the consolidation of two of our existing JP categories. There is confusion in the community about the different types of JPs we have. The Justice of the Peace (Commissioner for Declarations) and Commissioner for Declarations categories have exactly the same powers. The only difference (apart from the title) is that C.decs have a seal of office and a registration number. By consolidating these two categories we will remove some of the confusion and provide a more consistent witnessing service. It's free for all JP(C.dec) to transfer to become a C.dec and means that they will receive a seal of office to use when witnessing documents.

The JP community has responded positively to these changes to date and I thank them for their co-operation.

Tell us something we don't know about you.

Outside the JP environment, I am a cricket umpire and was appointed to the Cricket Australia National Umpire Panel last year. This is another great privilege and has provided some special opportunities.

Any parting words?

Let's work together to build an even greater JP system and provide the finest witnessing service to the people of Queensland.

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JPs in the community signing sites pass the 170 mark



Recently, the JPs in the Community program reached, then quickly passed, the milestone of 170 signing centres across Queensland. Congratulations to all involved!

We now have 177 active community signing sites, ranging from Mossman in FNQ,

Mt Isa in the West and Coolangatta on the Gold Coast. The JPs in the Community Program offers an important service coverage across the State.

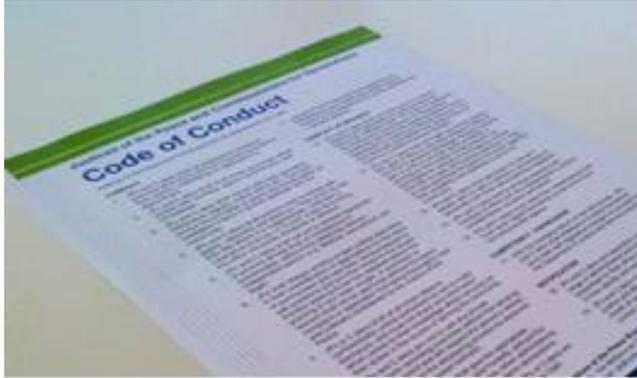
Recently, the JP Advisory Council reviewed the Principles of Operation for Volunteer Program document and updated this to reflect the continual development of the Program. All volunteers in the JPs in the Community Program should review this document which is now available on our [website](#).

This year, the JPs in the Community Program celebrates its 10th anniversary in providing Queenslanders with access to vital witnessing services. On behalf of the Queensland Government and the JPB, congratulations to all participating volunteers (past and present). Signing centres can be found at various venues including:

- major shopping centres
- libraries
- court houses
- universities
- hospitals.

Get involved now! Find out more about the program and how to participate. Email jpsinthecommunity@justice.qld.gov.au or call (07) 3013 5455 or (07) 3013 5456.

Updated code of conduct



The Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Code of Conduct outlines the responsibilities and expected behaviour of JPs and C.decs when acting in their roles.

A review of the Code of Conduct has recently been

undertaken and some amendments have been made including the addition of two points relating to maintaining your contact details.

When appointed as a JP or C.dec, all appointees acknowledge and undertake to abide by the current Code of Conduct administered by JPB. It is strongly recommended that all JPs and C.decs re-familiarise themselves with the Code.

The new Code of Conduct replaces the old code and can be found [here on our website](#)