

SPEECH NOTES

**The Honourable Kerry Shine MP
Attorney-General
and Minister for Justice
and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western
Queensland**

to

**Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House
Self-Representation Civil Law Service volunteers**

**Wednesday, 10 September 2008
(Function: 5.30 pm — 7.30pm)**

**Parliament House
Cnr of George and Alice Streets
Brisbane, QLD, 4000**

Acknowledgments

I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this event is taking place.

I'd also like to acknowledge:

- Chief Justice Paul de Jersey
- The Honourable Martin Moynihan AC SC
- Other members of the judiciary.

The volunteers from the following participating law firms deserve a special mention:

- Allens Arthur Robinson
- Blake Dawson
- Brian Bartley and Associates
- Clayton Utz
- Cooper Grace Ward
- Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- Deacons
- DLA Phillips Fox
- Mallesons Stephen Jaques
- McCullough Robertson
- Minter Ellison, and
- Murphy Schmidt.

Good evening all to you all.

I have great pleasure in being here with you tonight to celebrate the achievements of the first year of the Self-Representation Civil Law Service.

As you know I am enthusiastic about this service and it's an area in which I know the Chief Justice also takes a particular interest.

The Government is committed to improving access to justice in Queensland, including providing support for people who elect to represent themselves in litigation before the courts.

I have been following the activities of the service closely over the past 12 months and I have been encouraged to see the increasing number of participating law firms volunteering their services.

Originally five Brisbane law firms officially committed to providing pro bono legal services for the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (Q-PILCH). As I have acknowledged there are now twelve high-profile law firms participating in the service.

It appears the past few months have been highly productive for Q-PILCH solicitors and volunteers, providing professional legal advice to self-represented litigants in a number of civil matters in the Supreme Court and District Court.

The majority of cases have involved property disputes, including property de facto adjustments, while other cases have involved negligence, personal injuries,

insurance, debt and contractual claims — all which can be highly involved and at times an arduous.

The service has assisted self-represented litigants with a range of services from drafting pleadings and drafting correspondence to the other party, to performing disclosure, complying with court orders and understanding court processes.

Since its inception, QPILCH solicitors and volunteers have assisted over 120 litigants with more than 100 cases.

New applications are being received weekly, and it is tremendous to see the increasing level of support and assistance to deal with these requests.

The Queensland Government is proud to support AccessCourts and this initiative, which is an integral part of the programme, plays an important role in supporting self-represented litigants.

AccessCourts encompass three separate programs; the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (QPILCH), the Court Network for Humanity and the Litigants in Person Scheme.

In broad-brush terms, these programs provide varying levels of support for self-represented litigants as they navigate through the Supreme and District Courts in Brisbane.

In July this year I launched the Going to Court resources which is marketed essentially to first time court users and in particular self-represented litigants.

Like the service offered by Q-PILCH volunteers, simply knowing how the court system works enables court users to enter a court with a clearer understanding of what to expect.

It is essential for litigants to understand the role the Queensland courts play, and the processes of the courts. This is necessary both to ensure self-represented litigants have effective access to Justice, and to ensure efficient use of the resources of the courts.

As many of you may be aware, the QPILCH program is based on a similar successful scheme to support self-represented litigants in the Royal Courts in England.

The objective of QPILCH in the Queensland Supreme and District Courts is to provide legal advice for people who commence civil proceedings in the courts.

The 140 QPILCH volunteers including both solicitors and barristers play an important role in providing impartial and confidential legal advice.

This includes the highly regarded work of 18 QPILCH barristers who volunteer their time and expertise, providing advice to the litigants in complex cases as well as offering free representation in meritorious cases.

At the same time, the work of coordinating the volunteers is essential to the mechanisms of the service and I would like to thank both solicitor Judith Douglas and paralegal Allira Thompson for their time and effort.

Lastly, to all the volunteers, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your commitment to QPILCH's pro bono work and highly commend the law firms who are an integral part of your participation.

May the next six months ahead be just as productive and rewarding.