

# ACTCT

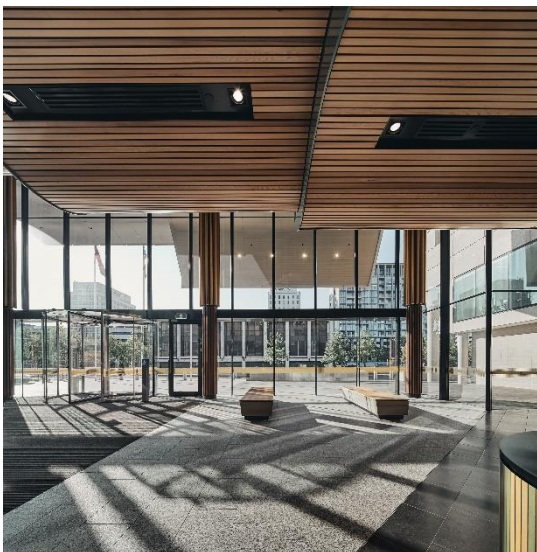
## Highlights from the 2022 Court Users and Legal Practitioners Satisfaction Surveys

### Introduction

The ACT Courts and Tribunal (ACTCT) values feedback from Court and Tribunal users to be able to identify and prioritise improvements in customer service, facilities and court processes.

The ACT Courts sought feedback from court users and legal practitioners through satisfaction surveys between 28 March until 15 June 2022. Survey responses were anonymous. The courts used a variety of methods to promote the 2022 survey including text message, email, automatic email responses from Court mailboxes and direct mail.

The ACT Courts received 533 responses for the 2022 Court Users Satisfaction Survey and 113 responses for the 2022 Legal Practitioners Satisfaction Survey. The surveys received a total of 646 responses which was a pleasing result.



### Overview

The surveys provided valuable feedback on where we could improve our services.

The Survey specifically asked, *what improvements should the Courts make to improve our Services?* Survey respondents were provided with the opportunity indicate their support for a range of potential options as well as provide their views.

The feedback suggested the priority areas for improvement being:

- delivering more **efficient and timely court processes**;
- designing better court processes through the use of **digital technology**;
- building public confidence in the justice system potentially by **explaining court processes** to court users in plain English so they can better participate and understand proceedings;
- **improving** court users and legal practitioners **access to information** via our websites and by telephone; and
- **improving customer service** and **'access to justice'** for persons with specific needs.



## **Customer Service and Access to Information**

90% of court users were satisfied with their customer service experience, however, one in ten court users were not satisfied, with similar results for enquiries made to the courts registry by telephone and via the enquiry counter.

Noting the Legal Practitioners survey had a much smaller sample size, 75% of legal practitioners indicated that they were happy with their customer service experience, however there were a significant number of legal practitioners that suggested the Court Registry needed to improve the capability of staff to deliver quality customer service.

One of the difficult aspects of a registry officer's role is not to provide court users or legal practitioners with legal advice as they are not legally trained. Registry officers can provide general information regarding court procedures and processes and will often explain to court users and legal practitioners that they are not qualified to provide advice in relation as to what steps they should take. The need for registry officers to be at arms length from the decisions of court users and legal practitioners makes their role difficult and can lead to frustration on the part of stakeholders. The ACT Courts appreciates ongoing work is required to improve access to information for court users and legal practitioners and improve the customer service experience and to ensure that staff are

appropriately trained in providing quality customer service.

## **Jury Service**

Approximately 112 persons involved with jury service responded to the Court Users satisfaction survey. The overwhelming majority of persons participating in jury service were satisfied with their experience. There were some comments about the need to improve information on our website, such as providing information about public transport and what to bring or not to bring to Court. The 'Coming to Court' video on the Court website explains some of this information and a new video on Jury Service is planned to be developed in 2022/23 which will further assist persons being summonsed for jury service. The new Jury Management portal has significantly improved the administration surrounding juror participation.

## **Coroners Court**

A small number of comments were made about the Coroners Court. Funding was recently provided by the ACT Government for a dedicated Coroner which is expected to improve service delivery. In addition, the number of coronial matters has increased and the team has had staff shortages throughout the pandemic which has significantly impacted on the small team of staff. Videos explaining the Coronial process were made available on the Courts website [www.courts.act.gov.au/coroners](http://www.courts.act.gov.au/coroners) in August 2022.

## **Applicants for a Protection Order**

Approximately 47 applicants for a protection order responded to the survey. Caution needs to be taken given the small sample size.

One in five respondents (12 persons) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that *'the conferencing officer*

*dealing with my protection order listened to me, was courteous, respectful, and fair*’.

38% or 18 persons responding to the survey disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that *‘my matter was dealt with in a timely and efficient manner’*.

One in four persons (11) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that *‘I felt safe in the Court building’* and *‘It was easy to get the information I needed’*.

Comments were made by some applicants that they had to wait in the same area as respondents which caused them stress, fear and anxiety. In April/May 2022 additional space was allocated in the Courts building to both Legal Aid ACT and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) so applicants for protection orders could feel safe, away from public areas of the building. Fifteen persons responding to the survey were respondents to protection orders and given the small sample size, no themes could be highlighted from their responses.

### **Confidence in the Justice System**

A number of questions related to the public’s confidence in the justice system. Persons directly involved with matters, such as defendants, applicants, respondents and plaintiffs were invited to rank a series of questions relating to their experience.

Approximately 55% of the 113 court users *agreed or strongly agreed that ‘The judicial officer or Registrar hearing my case listened to me and was courteous, respectful, and fair’*. Approximately 30% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Fifty-two out of 130 parties to a matter (40%) agreed or strongly agreed that *‘The matter or business I had was handled in a timely and efficient manner’*. Fifty percent or 66 of 130 survey respondents either disagreed (15%) or strongly disagreed (35%) with the statement.

Fifty-three out of 132 parties to a matter (40%) agreed or strongly agreed that *‘Overall, I think the Courts perform effectively’*. Sixty-four of 132 of parties (48%) of either disagreed (11%) or strongly disagreed (33%) with the statement.

It should be acknowledged that COVID has had, and continues to have, an impact on the timeliness of the courts to hear matters.

### **Warrants**

A number of police officers provided feedback about the need to improve the provision of warrants by the court. Given population growth, and police numbers are likely to increase, there will be increasing numbers of warrants sought from the ACT Courts. It may be timely to review the processes surrounding the provision of warrants by the Court.



### **Timeliness**

The feedback provided by court users, points to the need to improve the timeliness of matters proceeding through the court system, however, procedural fairness for all parties requires adequate time be provided to parties for them to prepare their matters for hearing.

### **Support to People with Disability**

Fifty survey respondents indicated they had a disability. The ACT Courts and Tribunal has a

# ACTCT

Disability Action Plan in development under the umbrella of the ACT Disability Justice Strategy. Coupled with our Disability Liaison Officer, the Courts action plan seeks to build the competency of staff to assist people with disability coming to the ACT Courts and Tribunal.

## Facilities

A range of suggestions were made regarding improvements to Court facilities. This included suggestions like having seating in waiting areas for persons who had difficulty with low seating to having a map available upon entrance to the courts to show how to get to various parts of the Courts building.

## Conclusion

The ACT Courts will examine the themes arising from the surveys and incorporate these themes into our corporate planning so we can focus on implementing improvements.

The ACT Courts would like to thank the significant numbers of court users and legal practitioners that have taken the time to fill in the surveys, and provide the ACT Courts with valuable feedback that will underpin our strategic direction.

## Further information

For further information, please contact the ACT Courts and Tribunal Governance Team on [governance@courts.act.gov.au](mailto:governance@courts.act.gov.au)

