

23 December 2025

Our ref: LP:DAN:ED

The Honourable Deb Frecklington MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and
Minister for Integrity
1 William Street Brisbane QLD 4000

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Attorney

Accessibility in the Courts

Queensland Law Society (QLS) is committed to promoting the principles and practices of diversity, accessibility and inclusion in the Queensland legal profession and in the community more broadly.

QLS has recently written to the Honourable Chief Justice Bowskill, to assist the court in considering ways to enhance accessibility in courtroom settings.

This submission has been compiled with input from the QLS Disability and Accessibility Network, members of the QLS Equity and Diversity Committee and QLS members with expertise and lived experience in these areas.

It seeks to provide a preliminary overview of the considerations which might arise for legal practitioners with disability and/or other inclusion needs in Queensland courts.

We preface our submission with the caveat that the Queensland legal profession is diverse, as are the needs of our individual practitioners. In addition, there may be intersecting attributes and requirements which can have a compounding impact.

Whilst it seeks to reflect the experience of the members who informed it, we acknowledge there may be issues or barriers that we have inadvertently overlooked.

We recognise accessibility is essential for all persons with disability who use court facilities and community members requirements may differ from those for legal practitioners.

Accessibility in the Courts

QLS recommends further consultation with legal practitioners, the courts and court users with lived experience and other peak bodies¹ and community organisations at the earliest stages of building design and refurbishment.

We also note many of the accessibility issues identified in this submission mirror issues examined by the Disability Royal Commission and underpin Recommendation 8.11, which calls for clear, practical guidance on adjustments and supports for people with disability in the criminal justice system.²

To assist in identifying accessibility issues, the Disability and Accessibility Network compiled the **attached** overview (**Attachment A**) of potential issues and suggestions for improvement.³ Steps to address these issues would meaningfully enhance accessibility in the courts for our members, and we anticipate, would be of similar benefit to all court users.

We raise the following matters for consideration:

1. Funding to support accessible court infrastructure across Queensland

Acknowledging existing demand on Queensland courts across the State, where the suggestions below (and **attached**) are likely to have an increased resource or budgetary impact, QLS strongly advocates for the provision of these additional resources and funding to support implementation.

This is in line with our 2026—2027 State Budget submission, which called for continued funding for projects to deliver safe courts with modern infrastructure and digitised document management systems.

2. Resource sharing from other departments

All government departments are required to develop a Disability Service Plan under the *Disability Services Act 2006* (Qld).

For example, the Department of Health has published its Disability Service Plan 2025-2028 which outlines barriers experienced by people with disability when attempting to access health care. These include systemic barriers, communication barriers, physical and financial barriers. The plan lists key actions for accessibility and those divisions who are responsible for implementation.

The Department of Justice's Disability Service Plan 2022-25 is due for review. It may therefore be timely to consider how court accessibility will form part of the new plan and should be underpinned by a co-design process with people living with disability who access the courts.

We would be pleased to offer any assistance required.

¹ E.g. Vision Australia who support people who are blind or have low vision.

² Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report, Volume 8: Criminal Justice and People with Disability (2023) rec 8.11
<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au>

³ Which has also had input from members of some of our QLS policy committees.

Accessibility in the Courts

3. Queensland Courts website

QLS supports the Disability and Accessibility Network's call for easily accessible information and improved awareness about existing accessibility arrangements to support all court users.⁴ We understand existing accommodation options may not be widely known.

The Queensland Courts website should detail who to contact (e.g. a centralised accessibility liaison as discussed below), with accessibility queries and requests for reasonable adjustments. Clear processes for these requests will enhance accessibility and inclusion.

Network members have emphasised the information should be published in an accessible format suitable for screen readers (or similar technology) and identify any unavoidable restrictions or limitations to enable practitioners to plan in advance when attending court. The information should be regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy.

We note accessibility information will need to be available in other formats (e.g. hard copies) to support members of the community who may not have access or adequate access to the internet or an online device.

4. Central contact point – accessibility liaison

QLS notes the Disability and Accessibility Network has previously proposed the option of an 'accessibility liaison' at courthouses.⁵

QLS also supports a central contact point for practitioners at their respective courthouse to speak to regarding accessibility concerns.

This role could be supported by training (delivered by experts especially those with lived experience) for all court staff about disability awareness, accessibility and reasonable accommodations (in line with Recommendation 8.11 of the DRC above).

5. Regional practitioners and court users

The availability of online hearings allows lawyers (and clients) to participate in proceedings in a way that reduces costs, travel times and impacts on other commitments. Importantly, appearing remotely can assist practitioners with disabilities or other needs to access the courts, particularly if they are located far away from the courthouse. However, it is important that both technological and physical infrastructure is accessible and functional to remove barriers to participation and inclusion.

Some of our members have also highlighted that geography can impact accessibility for practitioners and clients based in the regions. For example, members have reported:

- Cost barriers where clients are required to fund attendance in Brisbane for a Land Court review or Court managed expert evidence conferences. Where practitioners are instructing counsel remotely, Webex is not always available and we understand there is sometimes limited capability to dial out to practitioners directly. Sound quality can also vary between court rooms.

⁴ [Disability amplifies court nerves – Proctor.](#)

⁵ [Disability amplifies court nerves – Proctor.](#)

Accessibility in the Courts

- Increased costs in requiring a town agent to attend with counsel to overcome technology issues/unreliability.
- Delays and associated costs in receiving transcripts can be a barrier.
- A need for improved court security for practitioners, particularly in regional courts.

We note some of these issues are likely to impact metropolitan practitioners and should be considered in those locations, too. However, as with many issues, the brunt of the impact can be more acutely felt in regional areas. It may be that a specific review is needed into enhancing accessibility in regional courthouses to determine access to justice and barriers including adequate technology.

QLS would be pleased to undertake further enquiries with our members in this regard. Lastly, we take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing willingness to receive the Society's feedback and suggestions for improving access to justice and inclusion for all Queenslanders.

QLS looks forward to continuing discussions about these important matters in 2026.

If you have any queries regarding the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact our Legal Policy team via policy@qls.com.au or by phone on (07) 3842 5930.


Yours faithfully



Genevieve Dee
President

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AND

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Attachment A:

People with physical mobility constraints

- Inclusion of universal design principles in new buildings or when existing buildings are being refurbished.
- Accessible parking and/or safe, accessible drop-off zones.
- Modification to existing buildings to include:
 - step-free access to all locations suitable for users of mobility aids, including walking frames, wheelchairs or mobility scooters
 - access to all locations sufficiently wide and/or unrestricted to accommodate mobility aids, including walking frames, wheelchairs or mobility scooters
 - accessible toilets (which could include the availability of 'over the toilet' chairs)
 - accessible toilet with Changing Places facilities
 - sitting areas for people who walk short distances with rest stops
- Access for legal practitioners to all parts of the building required for them to perform their work, suitable for users of mobility aids, including walking frames, wheelchairs or mobility scooters. Members report that some wheelchairs may not fit under the bar table and suggest that height adjustable tables could be utilised.
- Appropriate accessible exit routes for evacuation, suitable for users of mobility aids, including walking frames, wheelchairs or mobility scooters.
- No parts of the building prohibited to users of mobility aids, including walking frames, wheelchairs or mobility scooters.
- Publish information about any unavoidable restrictions on access, narrow doorways or corridors, etc.

People who are blind or with low vision

- Accessible parking and/or safe, accessible drop-off zones.
- Access to adequate technology which supports use of accessibility tools in all court rooms.⁶
- A blind or visually impaired person may wish to notify the judicial officer and request audio communication cues in advance, as they may be unable to pick up on facial expressions and body language.
- Appropriate accessible exit routes for evacuation.
- Information available online, in accessible format suitable for users of screen readers or similar technology.
- Publish information to include any unavoidable restrictions or limitations (i.e. not just what is available, but what is not available).
- Clear signage – especially outside each court room, ideally avoiding poor colour contrasts and small print, with braille options best practice.
- Any court brochures to be accessibly available in larger print.
- Avoid any obstacles around the doorway and poor carpet colour contrasting within the court room.
- Accessible lift options (noting for example, the difficulty of calling lifts that nominate a lift number to find).
- Clear markings on any steps in a courthouse.
- Ensure any information desk/registry is easy to find at the front of the courthouse to clarify accessibility or request directions to a specific location.
- Ensure court staff are aware of legislative requirements with respect to guide and hearing dogs in all court buildings and courtrooms.

⁶ Such as audio describers.

Accessibility in the Courts

- Consultation with relevant community organisations (e.g., Vision Australia) during policy development and building design.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Ensure court staff are aware of legislative requirements with respect to guide and hearing dogs in all court buildings and courtrooms.
- Provide designated relief areas for service animals near court facilities.
- Qualified AUSLAN interpreters should be available for all court proceedings, including pre-trial meetings and legal consultations.
- Real-time captioning services should be offered during hearings and trials.
- Assistive listening systems (e.g., hearing loops, FM systems) should be installed in all courtrooms and public areas.
- Remote participation options (e.g., video conferencing with captioning and interpreter support) should be available for those unable to attend in person.
- Training for court staff and legal practitioners on communicating effectively with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
- Install visual emergency alerts (e.g., flashing lights) in all areas, including restrooms and waiting rooms.
- Ensure emergency procedures are communicated in visual formats and available in AUSLAN videos.
- Ensure court websites provides AUSLAN video guides explaining court processes and rights.
- Court signage should include visual symbols and be easy to understand for people with varying levels of literacy or language proficiency.
- Publish information on all the above online, in accessible format suitable for users of screen readers or similar technology.
- Feedback mechanisms for Deaf and hard of hearing users to report accessibility issues or suggest improvements.
- Consultation with Deaf community organisations (e.g., Deaf Australia) during policy development and building design.

People who are neurodivergent

- Safe/low stimulation spaces for practitioners or information as to where quiet rooms or rest areas are available to access.
- Incorporate subtitles or written communication wherever feasible to complement verbal exchanges. Members have reported that neurodiverse individuals may experience challenges in processing verbal information and written formats can be more effective for understanding and retention. In the courtroom setting, these difficulties can be amplified, making accessible written communication an essential support.
- Consider colour use of templates to support those with dyslexia (e.g. off-white not white).⁷
- Allow additional time and other adjustments to support participation in both virtual and in person proceedings and allow verbal directions to be provided where an inability to understand visual cues or body language is an issue.
- Consider courtroom acoustics where these may interfere with sensory or neurodivergent difference.⁸

⁷ [Contrasting advice – what colours are best for accessibility? | Dyslexia Scotland - Dyslexia Scotland.](#)

⁸ [Disability amplifies court nerves – Proctor.](#)