

News releases - John Rau

Magistrate's bench expands with focus on domestic violence

John Rau

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An extra magistrate's position has been created in South Australia specifically to attend to the growing volume of cases involving family violence matters.

The position will focus on hearing applications for intervention orders and related criminal charges such as alleged breaches of orders.

Dedicated Family Violence Lists are run in the Adelaide Magistrates Courts as well as suburban courts in Elizabeth, Christies Beach and Port Adelaide.

The government allocated additional funding for the position as part of the Mid Year Budget Review.

John Cardale Wells has been appointed as magistrate to fill the vacancy. Currently a senior solicitor in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and with 23 years experience since being admitted as a practitioner in the Supreme Court, he will become the 40th member of the magistracy in SA.

Mr Wells will be available for any magistracy duties to enhance the capacity of the Family Violence Courts. His appointment begins on 12 December.

In addition to creating the extra magistrate position, the Mid-Year Budget Review allocates an extra \$353,000 a year, indexed, to expand the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service.

The moves complement other recent Government initiatives to address domestic violence, including the launch of the new domestic violence service, Women's Safety Services South Australia.

Background

In 2015, there were 8417 reported occasions of domestic violence in South Australia. The incidence of reports has been increasing as awareness around the issue continues to grow.

Since the *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009* took effect in late 2011, the number of police issued intervention orders and applications for orders increased from fewer than 200 in December 2011 to more than 400 in December 2015.

SA Police reports of breaches have increased from 878 in 2011-12 to 3756 in 2014-15.

Acknowledging the trend, SA Police will dedicate more officers to deal with family violence as part of an organisational review announced this week.

Recent reforms to intervention orders took effect in December 2015, including giving courts the sentencing power to require perpetrators of domestic violence to bear the costs of an intervention program if convicted of breaching an order and requiring courts to inquire about any other relevant orders under the Family Law Act or Children's Protection Act.

John Wells

John Cardale Wells, 46, is a senior solicitor in the DPP, managing a group of solicitors. He is in charge of the Early Resolution Court in Adelaide Magistrate's Court.

Among several prior roles, he worked in the Adelaide Committal Unit with conduct of complex and serious files including murder, large drug offences and historical sex abuse.

He has worked in the Attorney-General's Department, in private practice with Michael Dadds and Associates and for the Legal Services Commission.

He is a graduate of the University of Adelaide.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General John Rau

Family violence is a blight on the community and the Government is determined to use its resources to tackle the problem.

It is good that victims are increasingly gaining the confidence to report it and do not feel obliged to suffer in silence.

The Government has stepped up to the mark to help by making sure the justice system is as accessible, supportive and efficient as possible.

Having an extra position in the magistracy to enhance the management of Family Violence Lists is a significant step forward.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate John Wells on his appointment and wish him every success.