

Court Technology Conference

eCourts on any budget

Findlay McRae, CEO Supreme Court of Victoria

eCourt Strategies for Courts in Victoria

Key Drivers

- Released in 2004, the Attorney General's Justice Statement identified modernising courts through electronic delivery of services as a priority objective giving rise to an 'Integrated Court Systems Project' incorporating eCourts (ICMS)
- Similarly, the Heads of Jurisdiction for each of the Victorian Court's and VCAT released a Courts Strategic Directions Statement seeking to identify best practice in eFiling, videoconferencing, transcript and electronic provision of evidence

**Attorney General's Justice Statement can be found at <http://home.justice.vic.gov.au>*

**The Courts Strategic Directions Statement can be found at <http://www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au>*

eCourt Strategies for Courts in Victoria

- In 2004, the Supreme Court of Victoria has embarked on a program of improved IT infrastructure to support electronic provision of evidence in both the criminal and civil jurisdictions at trial.
- More recently in October 2004, the Attorney General announced additional funding to support "the electronic presentation of evidence" for the hearing of major criminal trials in the Supreme and County Court complexes.
- There is a strong demand emanating from prosecuting agencies and civil litigants to present evidence in electronic form at trial.

What is an eCourt?

Smart Courts

- In Victoria the Integrated Court Systems Project' (ICMS) has identified standards of three star, two star and one star Courts,
- The Smart Courts focus on videoconferencing, transcript and document management and presentation.

Three Star Courts

A three star smart court will typically be used for the hearing and management of the more complex cases and will come fully fitted out with the required technology to support the following functions in the court room.

- Videoconference facilities with 42 inch plasma screen for enhanced display
- Electronic evidence presentation and sharing within the court room
- Electronic evidence presentation and sharing with remote sites (including protected witnesses)

Three Star Courts Continued

- Monitors for use of the prosecution, defence, witness, defendant, jury and Judge
- Audio playback facilities
- Centralised recording of evidence
- Use of Evidence/document management system (Especially in the Supreme Court)
- Access to case management system

Two Star Courts

- A two star smart court will have all the facilities of a three star court including cabling infrastructure. However, these facilities will not:
 - Be fitted out for use of evidence/document management system but can establish access to networked Ringtail server if required; or
 - come equipped with monitors for evidence presentation (portable equipment is to be shared between a number of court rooms and can be installed when required)

One Star Courts

A one star smart court will be fitted out with the following facilities:

- PC for access to case management system;
- Local recording facilities;
- Standard videoconference and audio visual facilities.

It should be noted that there will be still be a number of standard court rooms. These will typically be fitted out with PC access to the case management system and local evidence recording facilities. These courts will not be classified as smart courts.

Conclusion

- In Victoria, electronic presentation of evidence has become a major focus for modernising the justice system,
- There is a trend to electronic presentation of evidence as a means to significantly shorten the length of major trials in both the civil and criminal jurisdictions,
- Videoconferencing has become a standard in the Supreme, County and Magistrates' Courts in Victoria. In particular for witnesses, particularly where there are security issues.