

Scope and Design

The Scope

- 2.1 The proposed project comprises the construction of a purpose-built Commonwealth Law Courts Building in Adelaide to provide accommodation for the High Court, Federal Court, Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Service. The net area of the proposed building is 12,208 square metres,¹ compared to 7,714 square metres at present occupied by the Courts.²
- 2.2 According to the DoFA submission, the building design provides for flexibility in court operations and the increasing use of new technologies. All parts of the building will be accessible to the four jurisdictions: the High Court, the Federal Court, the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Service. This allows courtrooms to be shared as workload requirements and availability dictates.
- 2.3 The proposed accommodation will include the following elements:

High Court

- two judges Chambers; and
- District Registrar and general registry office accommodation.

1 Submissions Volume 1, p. 8.

2 Submissions Volume 1, p. 4.

Federal Court

- nine courtrooms;
- Chambers for the visiting Chief Justice of the Federal Court and accommodation for support staff;
- nine Chambers;
- District Registrar and general registry office accommodation;
- witness rooms;
- mediation facilities;
- conference facilities; and
- counsel rooms for the legal profession.

Family Court

- ten courtrooms;
- Chambers for the visiting Chief Justice of the Family Court;
- eight Chambers for use by resident judges and visiting judges;
- three Chambers for use by Judicial and Senior Executive registrars;
- offices for six Deputy Registrars;
- offices for the Director of Court Counselling and 15 other counsellors;
- Counselling assessment area which includes:
 - ⇒ specialist child assessment area;
 - ⇒ child minding facilities; and
 - ⇒ parents room;
- registry and office support facilities;
- interview rooms;
- conference and training facilities;
 - ⇒ including a room for Public Information Sessions;
- accommodation for the legal profession, including duty Solicitors;
- provision for the Australian Federal Police; and

- free child care facilities while parents are in the building for the purposes of Family Court activities.

Federal Magistrates Service

- three courtrooms;
- four Chambers for use by resident federal magistrates and visiting magistrates;
⇒ including visiting Chambers for the Chief Federal Magistrate; and
- mediation / conference facilities.

Shared Facilities

Library

- Library for judiciary, support staff and members of the legal profession.

Circulation

- separate circulation routes for judges, staff and members of the public.

Staff Amenities

- tea / coffee making facilities have been included throughout the building;
- Staff Activities room; and
- shower and change facilities.

Court Reporting Facilities

- A work area will be provided to enable the transcripts of court evidence to be processed by contractors and for the storage of recording equipment.

Car Parking

- secure parking for up to 40 cars will be provided in the basement; and

- parking for the public and staff working in the building is available nearby and the building is accessible to public transport.

2.4 The Committee questioned the adequacy of 40 car parking spaces, given that 500 people will be using the building each day. DoFA replied that the 40 car parks on site are secure parking for the occupants of the building. DoFA is of the view that ‘more than adequate’ public car parking is available in the ‘near vicinity’ of the building, primarily at the nearby market. Failing that, the site is well serviced by public transport.³

Secure Holding Facilities

- Police rooms and a holding room will be provided for custody of prisoners brought before the courts.

Café

- a café will be provided, with fitout limited to building services. Competitive tenders will be sought to lease the café, with the successful tenderer required to fitout the area.

Building Management

- office accommodation for the building manager will be provided together with facilities for security, cleaners, mail scanning, first aid, storage rooms, etc.

Building Security Control Room

- The security control room is located on the first floor and overlooks the ground floor public lobby.⁴

The Design Layout

2.5 Accommodation within the building is arranged as follows:

3 Mr Barry Jackson, Assistant Secretary, Property Group, Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA), Evidence, pp.18-19.

4 Submissions Volume 1, pp.9-11.

Basement Level

- shared use of common facilities including:
 - ⇒ secure car park for judges and senior staff;
 - ⇒ loading bay;
 - ⇒ storage;
 - ⇒ maintenance;
 - ⇒ waste collection / removal;
 - ⇒ medical centre;
 - ⇒ security control and prisoner transfer; and
 - ⇒ building engineering services, such as, hydraulic pumps, fire pump, main distribution frame, communications (PABX), transformer, switchboard and mechanical plant.

Level 1: Ground Floor

- public and staff access;
- security screening, general orientation upon arrival;
- Family Court and Federal Magistrates Service Registry.
(the Federal Magistrates Service provides services in both Family and Federal Court matters and as such it shares registry space with the Family Court at Level 1 and the Federal Court at Level 4.);
- the basement access ramp located away from the public entry with the Fire Control Room adjacent; and
- café tenancy is provided adjacent the main public entry with separate access from Angas Street in order to maintain security for the courts.

Level 2

- first courtroom floor shared by the Family Court and Federal Magistrates Service;
- the Family Court registrars adjacent to the courtrooms in the southern 'office' block;
- the security office to provide overview and support to the Ground Floor public lobby areas; and
- the Australian Federal Police room.

Level 2A

- accommodation for the Family Court counsellors;
- and mediation rooms of the Family Court.
- shared facilities of Level 2A include:
 - ⇒ staff amenities;
 - ⇒ transcription services; and
 - ⇒ court officers' room.

Level 3

- the second courtroom floor occupied by the Family Court.

Level 3A

- accommodation for the Family Court;
- counselling;
- child assessment;
- vulnerable witness facilities; and
- the main reception / waiting area for the counselling services. (The functions of these two floors are segregated from the court levels).

Level 4

- the third courtroom floor;
- the Federal Court. (The court areas link directly to the Federal Court and Federal Magistrates Service Registry in the so-called southern office block; and
- the Building Manager.

Level 5

- the fourth and upper most courtroom floor used by both the Federal and High Courts.

Level 6

- the first Chambers level shared by the Family Court and Federal Magistrates;
- shared library facilities;
- conference; and
- common room areas.

Level 7

- the main Chambers level of the Family Court providing accommodation for judges and their support staff.

Levels 6 and 7

- linked by an open void and central stair providing ready access to the library and research facilities.

Level 8

- provides the main support facilities shared by the Federal and High Courts including:
 - ⇒ library
 - ⇒ research facilities;
 - ⇒ conference room;
 - ⇒ common room; and
 - ⇒ staff area.

Level 9

- accommodation for the Federal Court judges and their support staff.

Level 10

- shared accommodation for the Federal and High Court judges and their support staff.

Level 11

- plant area and roof plan.⁵

Occupancy of Building

- 2.6 The DoFA submission stated that approximately 107 were expected to occupy the building. This would increase by 15 people when the High Court was on circuit in Adelaide.⁶

At the public hearing, DoFA noted that it was probable that 119 staff, including judges, would occupy the proposed complex. DoFA further noted that about 500 people would occupy the building on a daily basis. These will include judges, staff, barristers, witnesses, litigants, security staff and other visitors. DoFA argues that:

it is therefore somewhat misleading to view the total building area as available to accommodate 120 or so staff. After the courtrooms, hearing rooms and conference rooms are deducted, the area occupied by staff is equivalent to most other buildings occupied by Commonwealth staff.⁷

- 2.7 It was also suggested to the Committee that the accommodation should have the capacity to cope with the expected long future of the proposed building.⁸

Design Principles

- 2.8 According to DoFA the design principles were developed in consultations with the various jurisdictions and the Attorney-General's Department over a two-day Value Management Workshop. The design principles include:

- the concept of egalitarianism;
- the creation of an appropriate public symbol;
- efficiency in design, for future maintenance purposes;

5 Submissions Volume 1, pp.20-21

6 Submissions Volume 1, p. 9.

7 Mr Barry Jackson, Evidence, p. 6.

8 Mr Timothy Shannon, Managing Director, Hassel Pty Ltd, Evidence, pp.10-11.

- conveying a perception of openness and accessibility;
- ensuring safety and friendliness to users;
- creating a warm friendly environment through the use of colour, texture, light, water and gardens;
- simplicity;
- using appropriate landscaping, having regard for security; and
- hiding the adjoining buildings to the south and west.⁹

Equal Access

2.9 DoFA noted that access for people with disabilities has been integrated into the design from its conception and include the following facilities:

- car parking in the basement;
- ground floor entrances;
- lift access to upper floors;
- door widths;
- toilets;
- continuous accessible pathway concepts;
- egress and evacuation; and
- hearing augmentation and other issues relating to sensory impairment.¹⁰

Security

2.10 DoFA advised that the building architecture will physically separate the public areas from the judiciary and the supporting administration. Electronic security measures will be provided for access control, alarm monitoring, close circuit television and recording with access magnetometer detection systems to screen public entering the public.¹¹

9 Submissions Volume 1, pp.18-19.

10 Submissions Volume 1, p. 21.

11 Submissions Volume 1, p. 25.

Public Transport

- 2.11 The site is close to public transport, including buses and the Glenelg tram which terminates in Victoria Square.¹²

¹² Submissions Volume 1, p. 17.