

**PETITION No 68: Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Submission**

**Role**

The Royal Association of Justices of Western Australia (RAJWA) assists the State's Justices of the Peace in the performance of their important and highly regarded voluntary community service. This is achieved by the provision of ongoing education and professional development through multi-faceted delivery modes and support at individual, local and collegiate levels. RAJWA is perceived in the community as the State's peak representative body with national and international affiliations.

**Membership**

Membership of the RAJWA is voluntary, reflecting the strong commitment to community service by those who offer themselves for appointment as a Justice of the Peace.

The majority of Justices rely on their Association for professional development, peer support and networking.

It is this latter cohort that is most at risk of losing an important support network if the activities of the Association have to be curtailed.

**Education and Professional Development**

The Association has supported Member education at a number of levels. It continues to identify ongoing professional development needs and works with the Department's Court and Tribunal Services staff on the delivery of various training modules. RAJWA at the same time provides Members with year-round training up-dates and educational support.

The Association has embraced a multi-modal pathway to delivering education that provides for the different ways in which people learn. This is most notable within the adult population where intergenerational issues exist around the adoption of technology to access information relevant to an individual's needs. The RAJWA therefore delivers education online for those Members comfortable with internet learning; through a regular easy to digest Journal for the very many Members who prefer paper based learning; a telephone help-desk line; branch meetings; one-off seminars; site visits and a formal annual meeting. The association also works with Court and Tribunal Services staff on providing appropriately targeted training through the Department.

The RAJWA's role in delivering activity based learning is particularly important. However, that is at risk of being lost as a direct consequence of the cut in the Department's funding support of the Association. The Association acknowledges the resources at [www.dotag.gov.au](http://www.dotag.gov.au) but as outlined above fulfilling educational needs involves a commitment to a broader range of learning tools and teaching assets.

The Association has therefore been committed to, and seeks to continue, its work in the area of education and leadership. However, delivering a multi-modal pathway for ongoing education of Justices of the Peace rests heavily on the Association's annual income returning to the 2012/13 level of a \$50,000 Department cash contribution towards RAJWA activities this translates to a co-contribution of less than \$0.60 for every dollar of cash contributed voluntarily by our Membership. This is before recognition of the additional value associated with in-kind services provided to the Association by its Members.

**Support Network**

Similarly to education and Professional Development, the Association delivers valuable Member support in a number of ways. The Association also fulfils an important role in promoting community recognition of all Justices of the Peace through its affiliation with peer bodies at a national and international level.

It is the sense of belonging that helps the Association build and entrench a commitment to the voluntary work of Justices, without which the community is at risk of losing an important service.

Whilst many people offer themselves for appointment as a Justice of the Peace in response to a community need, without the RAJWA they would lack an important peer support network.

Through Membership of the RAJWA, a Justice of the Peace can gain support at a regional level through one of 17 RAJWA branches extending from the Pilbara to the Great Southern, as well as through the Association's Perth office.

## Royal Association of Justices of WA Inc.

One of three Royal Associations for JPs in Australia, the RAJWA is affiliated with the 15 member Australasian Council of Justices Associations.

### **Community / Social Dividend**

The community dividend delivered through the State-wide Signing Centres resourced by volunteer Justices is impressive on any measurement criteria as demonstrated by the following examples:

Signing Centres: 50 Centres from the Pilbara to the Great Southern

Signing Sessions: an impressive 130 sessions per week

Operating hours: a massive total of 449.25 hours per week

At the minimum casual hourly rate of \$21.03 for award free adult workers in WA (Source: [www.commerce.wa.gov.au](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au)) the operating hours equate to a wages bill of >\$472,000 for 50 weeks.

At the full-time adult average weekly ordinary time earnings for WA of \$1,641.20 (Source: ABS Cat 6302.0 May 2014) the 50 week salary bill would exceed \$970,000.

On these figures alone, maintaining the RAJWA's services through annual co-funding involving a Department outlay of \$50,000 represents a return multiple of 9.48 and 19.4 respectively.

When quantifying the economic value contributed by volunteers it is normal to include travel time. Based on one Justice attending each of the 130 weekly signing sessions that translates into an additional 97.5 to 130 hours of community service per week based on a round trip of between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

In addition to services provided through the Signing Centre network, Justices make themselves available throughout the year on an individual basis as their local community needs dictate.

The Association also generates a community dividend in its own right. The in-kind value of work performed by members who fill honorary RAJWA branch and Council positions, is considerable. The RAJWA office is also staffed at salary levels well below the value its dedicated and professional executive staff contribute to the Association's Member focused activities. The RAJWA will host the Australasian Council of Justices Associations Conference in 2016 attracting delegates from the central and eastern coast States and Territories as well as New Zealand. This will generate economic gain to the State from inbound tourism. A well-functioning and appropriately resourced Association will contribute greatly to visitor numbers; the duration of their stay and the tourism spend in WA, which represents a one-off near-term bonus dividend to the State from supporting the RAJW.

### **Funding**

As a not-for-profit entity providing professional and peer support to WA Justices of the Peace, the Association has been reliant on two sources of income to maintain its service levels.

With a strong *esprit de corps* existing throughout its 98 year history, the Association has been fortunate that Members have not only volunteered their time and energy as a JP, they have also contributed through annual subscriptions, the majority of the cash that funds the work of the Association.

However, with a policy of maintaining only modest reserves and annual CPI increases, the ability of the Association to maintain, let alone broaden, its level of service into the future is now less certain.

The 80 drop in the Department's cash contribution towards the RAJWA annual costs has put at risk the Association's ability to function to an acceptable professional standard and has shifted the Department / Member funding ratio from 35:65 in 2012/13 to an unacceptable 10:90 in 2013/14.

### **Forward Planning 2014-2017**

The Association needs financial certainty in terms of its strategic direction and future service offerings. A return to at least the income structure of 2012/13 is considered critical for the Association to maintain an adequate level of Member support and training in a number of areas, including the adoption of new technology. As host of the Australasian Council of Justices Associations Conference in the RAJWA's 100<sup>th</sup> year, the State also needs to be seen as progressive and supportive of its Justices of the Peace.