

Head of Court Sgt Rebecca Wyse, VWCCS Inc Education Coordinator Maggie Weiley, Area Prosecutions Coordinator Snr Sgt Alan Baghurst, and a VWCCS reception and information volunteer



VWCCS President, Founder and Director Pieta Thornton

Court offers more **MORE SUPPORT**

Police witnesses now have a designated area where they can be accommodated and supported before encountering the unfamiliar courtroom environment.

The Victim & Witnesses of Crime Court Support (VWCCS) group recently celebrated the opening of their new Police Witness Assembly Area at the Downing Centre Local Court.

VWCCS have provided the safe area for witnesses to be accommodated on level 1 near the lifts.

Commander Police Prosecutors, Supt Tony Trichter said it was important for victims and witnesses not to be intimidated by the court process.

"As police officers, we all remember our first day at court and perhaps how anxious and nervous we were prior to giving evidence for the first time," Supt Trichter said.

"Considering they have not received any training on giving evidence and are asked to recall an incident in minute detail in an intimidating public forum under the ever present gaze of the perpetrator of their crime, one can better appreciate what a victim and witness of crime goes through."

At the opening Director of Prosecutors Operations Supt Jeff Philippi said the additional support provided to witnesses should result in more successful prosecutions.

"By providing greater support for victims and witnesses at court and better preparing them for giving evidence, not

About the new Police Witness Assembly Area

- ▶ Located on level 1 near the lifts, there is direct telephone contact from levels 4 and 5 at The Downing Centre for operational police to request the witness to be taken to court. Alternatively you can phone VWCCS on 9287 7671 or 0459 494 798.
- ▶ Magistrates are aware of the services and the short delay in having witnesses attend levels 4 and 5 is not an issue.
- ▶ There is also a dedicated safe room for vulnerable witnesses.
- ▶ It is intended that the VWCCS procedures in place at the Downing Centre Local Court be rolled out statewide.



STATE PLAN

Customer focused

VWCCS Witness Assembly Area, Level 1 Downing Centre



Police prosecutors Sgt Kirsty Heyward, Snr Sgt Lisa Sykes, Sgt at the opening

only will we be providing better customer service, but we will also improve their performance in court, which will invariably result in more successful prosecutions," he said.

"VWCCS is committed to improving court outcomes by empowering victims and witnesses, and demystifying the court procedures. These volunteers are highly skilled professionals."

WHAT IS THE VWCCS GROUP?

The Victim & Witnesses of Crime Court Support (VWCCS) group was established to inform, support and familiarise victims and witnesses of crime with the unfamiliar environment of the court. <http://www.vwccs.org.au>

When a matter is set for hearing at the Downing Centre Local Court, operational police are sent the VWCCS brochure to provide to the victim and encourage contact.

VWCCS provides support at other court houses throughout the metropolitan area including:

- ▶ Level 2, Parramatta Local Court
- ▶ Level 2, Parramatta Children's Court
- ▶ Manly Local Court
- ▶ Bidura Children's Court.

VWCCS also provides support by appointment at other courts, including District and Supreme Courts.