

Tasmanian's Mental Health Diversion Court

ABSTRACT: Tasmania's Mental Health Diversion List, a 'problem solving court' that refers eligible defendants to mental health and other welfare services to address the underlying issues of their criminal behaviour has been operating in the Magistrates Court for three years. Along with similar courts implemented in South Australia and more recently Victoria, Tasmania's specialised mental health court list aims to reduce re-offending and improve community safety. A 2009 evaluation found rates of offending and incidences of offences decreased in the six months following a person's participation in the program (7.7% re-offended) compared with the six months prior (82.7% had re-offended). It also found high levels of support for the program among health care and service providers. Due to the success of the program, the Court is investigating the viability of extending the problem-solving approach to young persons under 18 years of age and the presentation will also discuss the Court's strategies in this area.

SPEAKER: Chief Magistrate Michael Hill