Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT)
2017 Registrar and Executive Officer Conference

Hackathon Hotspot

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About hackathons

Hackathons are innovation events that involve subject matter experts and visionaries from a range of fields (eg IT, business development, law, social welfare) who conceptualise and develop solutions to help resolve an issue.

This year in Australia hackathons have been, or will be, used to help create solutions for homelessness, local transport issues and city planning, develop technology solutions for the resources industry and launch all-female start-ups.

They are a cost effective method for leveraging multidisciplinary expertise.

From a broad array of specialist knowledge, hackathons efficiently develop viable solutions for significant, complex issues or can help kickstart business ideas and corporate improvement projects.

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) intends to apply this approach to neighbourhood dispute resolution.

Hackathon benefits

While running a hackathon is a fun event, that can generate incredible innovation that encourages better and faster ways of delivering an end to end products, solutions or processes. Outcomes can be exciting and they can filter right through an organisation, energising teams involved and individual staff members.

The benefits of running a specific justice and law related hackathon includes:

- Cost effective and agile approach to identifying innovative ideas and developing prototypes.
- Partnering with and influencing external innovative capabilities to get them thinking about the justice issues from the department's perspective.
- Fostering a consultative approach and engage with our stakeholders and customers; and to work collaboratively to deliver seamless and connected services to consumers, customers and clients.
- Involvement by a broader and more innovative set of participants in trying to solve government challenges.
- Outsiders can bring more innovative and contemporary solutions and fresh perspectives
- Potential for solutions that reduce the demand on the justice system which will improve access to justice.

Disrupting Law 2017 - hackathon overview

Queensland's Disrupting Law 2017 annual hackathon was held on the weekend of 4 August 2017, and was a great experience for all involved. The organisers, The Legal Forecast and QUT Starters are not–for–profit organisations run by early career legal professionals who are passionate about disruptive thinking and access to justice.

The Disrupting Law 2017 hackathon attracted hundreds of students from a range of faculties and universities and lawyers from a number of private sector firms, who worked together over a weekend to search for the next best idea to advance legal practice in a novel way.

Throughout the weekend the teams spread out at QUT Gardens Point, determined to crack the difficult task at hand, rehashed and revised their ideas.

QCAT and Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Digital Transformation Team participated in the hackathon as roaming mentors for the weekend.

The winning team, mentored by QCAT and Digital Transformation, developed a working mobile application prototype called '*Rent Aware*' designed to assist landlords and tenants with managing rental properties. The mobile application proposes end-to-end service from the time the parties sign a rental agreement through to vacating the property. It has a built in Chatbot answering questions, negotiating disputes and proposes to link to QCAT's residential tenancy application form.

After the hackathon, resulting from QCAT's involvement and mentoring, the team has approached QCAT to start a conversation about developing the '*Rent Aware*' mobile application into production.

About QCAT's proposed neighbourhood dispute hackathon

QCAT selected the hackathon topic of neighbourhood disputes for a number of reasons:

- The volume of neighbourhood dispute enquiries received across agencies is high, which results in a significant demand on the civil justice system
- *Shared Services Queensland* answer phone enquiries about neighbourhood disputes, mostly about dividing fences and trees
- QCAT and Dispute Resolution Branch also supports telephone enquiries for neighbourhood disputes
- Other organisations supporting neighbourhood disputes include Magistrates Courts, local councils, community legal centres, the Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management, real estate agents, Legal Aid Queensland and private law firms
- Neighbourhood disputes cover multiple topics ranging from barking dogs, noisy neighbours, fences (pools/boundaries/retaining walls), trees (branches/shade/blocking views), personal harassment, through to general community safety issues
- While very serious and important to parties involved, mostly low complexity legal queries.

The neighbourhood dispute resolution hackathon will include mentors from the tribunal and Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The event will be managed through early career lawyer membership association, The Legal Forecast.

Together with established subject matter experts, participants will be university students who will use their academic knowledge and tech-based intuition to critically assess current information on neighbourhood dispute resolution and develop new tools to help people resolve issues.

The split among fields of study is expected to be:

- 50% law
- 25% technology
- 25% business and arts.

Participating teams will pitch their proposals and concepts to a panel for prizes.

For more information, please contact:

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