



New South Wales Bar Association

Barristers in schools for Law Week

11 May 2009

Barristers will conduct mock trials with students from four Sydney primary schools this week as the first step in a program designed to bring the justice system to the community.

“The barristers in schools programme is designed to increase our children’s understanding of the law, the courts and the legal profession,” said the president of the Bar Association, Anna Katzmann SC.

“In collaboration with the Department of Education we have developed a series of two hour sessions for primary school students which fills a gap in the current school curriculum by teaching children about the way our courts operate before they are likely to appear there.”

Under the programme barristers will conduct an interactive session on the justice system and general legal principles, before leading students in a mock criminal trial. Students take the roles of prosecutors, defence counsel, police, the accused and jurors.

“This is one way the Bar can make an important contribution to the community” Ms Katzmann said.

“By targeting children early in their education, we hope to remove some of the mystique surrounding the courts and the justice system, so people who may come into contact with the system later in life, whether as parties, witnesses or victims, will have a better understanding of what goes on and why so that the courtroom will be a less daunting place than it would otherwise be.”

In the main, the sessions will be conducted by Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor Margaret Cunneen SC and barrister Karen Conte-Mills, a former primary school principal, who devised the initial programme.

“This is an excellent example of how the legal profession can use its experience and expertise to confer a very real, important and lasting benefit to the community,” Ms Katzmann said. “The service is provided at no cost to the schools or to the parents but as a voluntary contribution to the education of our children”.

The New South Wales Bar Association aims to expand the programme to other schools in conjunction with the Department of Education once the initial Law Week trials have been held.

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