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Mr Tony Sievers  
Chair  
Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee  
GPO Box 3721  
Darwin NT 0801

Via email: [SPSC@nt.gov.au](mailto:SPSC@nt.gov.au)

Dear Mr Sievers

Please find attached the response to the Question on Notice raised by the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee at the public hearing on the Courts Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

Don't hesitate to contact my office on 89365610 if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Natasha".

NATASHA FYLES

- 7 NOV 2019

**ECONOMIC POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**RESPONSE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL**  
**AND JUSTICE**  
**TO QUESTION ON NOTICE FROM THE COMMITTEE**  
**COURTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019**

**Question on Notice:**

*What, if any, provision will Project Odyssey make to cater for individuals who are unable to, or do not wish to, use electronic methods for the filing and service of documents. This could include people who are not confident using such technology or people in remote areas where reception is erratic.*

**AGD Response:**

The courts and Project Odyssey are distinctly split between civil and criminal jurisdictions. Over 80% of all lodgements in the Northern Territory are in the criminal jurisdiction. For the purposes of Project Odyssey, it is worth noting that matters under the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* are considered to fall within the criminal jurisdiction.

In the civil jurisdiction, client interaction only currently occurs in the Supreme Court registries in Alice Springs and Darwin, and the five main Local Court registries in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek, usually for the purpose of filing documents over the counter. Under Project Odyssey, documents historically filed over the counter at the registries will be required to be filed electronically, with court Rules providing for this mandatory process.

The registries will all have public kiosks installed for court users who do not have ready access to technology and court staff are currently being trained on how to assist others in using the system. The court registries will still be able to accept documents over the counter for those unable to use the electronic system, and staff will scan documents into the system on their behalf.

Court users will also have access to a portal to view their electronic file, which can be viewed on any device that has a web browser and internet access. Documents can be filed from anywhere in the world and at any time – court users will not have to wait for a court registry to open.

Courts are intending to conduct paperless matters in remote centres, with documents passing electronically between the bench and the bar table, and for documents to be scanned into the system from inside the court room. It is rare for a party to be unrepresented at a remote centre, but in the event that occurs, a tablet will be provided to that party and assistance to manage the file on it given by court staff.

As part of the Project Odyssey implementation, discussions are taking place with police to also place kiosks into police stations in remote centres.

The requirement for documents that commence a matter to be served personally will remain unchanged. This avoids the difficulty of requiring a defendant to consent to being served electronically at or before the commencement of an action. Once the defendant has been served, it or they would then consent to e-filing by responding to the service and providing an e-mail address to the Court. That process will allow future service of all court documents to be via electronic means. If electronic means should prove impossible or impracticable, alternative means will be preserved under the new court Rules.