

**Remarks of the Hon. the Chief Justice on the Opening
of the Supreme Court Mediation Centre on 4 March
2008, upon its launch by the Hon. Rob Hulls, Deputy
Premier and Attorney-General for Victoria**

The Supreme Court judges and masters welcome the investment by Government in the Court's important role in Alternative Dispute Resolution.

The Victorian Supreme Court has led the way in the use of mediation as a litigation tool for over 20 years. Nowadays virtually no civil case goes to trial in the Supreme Court without one round of mediation. Currently, as a national leader we have regular mediations in appeals, introduced by the President of the Court of Appeal in January 2007.

The Court has always seen the Victorian Bar and the profession as the primary source for mediators and their services. The main function of our masters is hearing and managing cases. However, there are special times when

court annexed mediation is essential: when the parties cannot afford a private mediator; when a trial is running and the judge thinks an urgent mediation may help the parties; and other special cases.

The Court introduced court annexed mediation on a pilot basis in October 2005. It has been extraordinarily successful due to the skills of Masters King, Efthim, Wood, Lansdowne and Daly. The parties have been assisted in some very difficult trials and appeals. Importantly, judges have been freed up to hear other cases.

Mediation is an entrenched part of the administration of justice in the Supreme Court.

Until now the masters have managed in a few rooms in the main court building, or, at a long distance, at VCAT. On the clever idea of our CEO, Michael McGarvie, a superb designated mediation facility has been achieved. The power

of the built court environment in assisting parties to settle their litigation cannot be underestimated. We now have an outstanding facility that I am sure will expand the effectiveness of court based mediation in the Supreme Court.

The Court welcomes the investment in our infrastructure by the Government. We thank the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General for supporting and launching the Supreme Court Mediation Centre. We look forward to even greater success with our mediations.

We also thank and congratulate the architects Bower Architecture (Anna Dutton and staff), the builders (Mark Potter) and the Court CEO and his staff, especially Graeme Spurr, for achieving a perfect outcome.