

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Justice without prejudice

Professor David Tait and Dr Meredith Rossner of the Justice Research Group, together with Professor Rick Sarre of the University of South Australia, Dr Blake McKimmie of the University of Queensland, Dr Emma Rowden of the University of Technology Sydney and Associate Professor Mary Rose of the University of Texas as well as Industry Partners* are investigating how courtroom design influences the chances of getting a fair trial. This project is funded by the industry partners and the Australian Research Council through its Linkage Projects grant scheme.

'The right to a fair trial is a fundamental human right,' says Professor Tait. 'Placing the accused in a dock or increasingly, a glass cage may suggest to the jury he or she is dangerous or threatening. This practice potentially undermines the presumption of innocence. The project, for the first time, tests this important claim under experimental conditions. If glass-fronted docks can be shown to threaten the fairness of trials, their presence needs to be re-considered. The findings of the study are likely to have major consequences for the design of courtrooms around the world.'

More generally the project examines how flexible courtroom configurations – where presiding judges may choose the level of security required for each trial – also meet a range of other court needs. By bringing together court executives, architects and researchers, the project examines how flexible courtrooms can meet both security requirements and human rights standards.



Glass dock in the *Kammergericht*, Berlin, photograph copyright Emma Rowden, 2011

Taking advantage of new wireless technologies that permit flexible furniture arrangements and customised security measures, it is possible for designers to ensure that human rights compliant courtrooms are developed.

Project Title: Just Spaces: security without prejudice in the wireless courtroom
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