

Independent Constitutional Court blog launched

A new blog dedicated to impartially reporting on the Constitutional Court, its decisions and its judges was recently launched.

ConCourtBlog first went live on 2 February 2013. Its editor, Duncan Wild, who is an associate at a Johannesburg law firm, told *De Rebus* that his team had aimed to have the blog operational in time for the start of the Constitutional Court's first term in 2013. 'The site is still very new and we are working out a few issues and hope to add much more to it as we go, including information on the judges, statistical information and some more in-depth analysis of decisions and cases before the court,' he said.

The blog will report on all cases the Constitutional Court sets down for hearing. It will provide previews of these cases and analyses of some of the court's more recent decisions will be provided.

Mr Wild said that the blog was started in an attempt to provide an accessible resource on what is happening at the court and to inform people about its cases and to help start conversations about how the court operates.

'Generally, when a high profile case goes to the court ... there is some attention and information in the media about the case, but I also wanted information about the cases that are less high profile [in order] to give a better picture of how the Constitutional Court operates,' he said.

Mr Wild said that the blog differed from the official Constitutional Court website in that the latter 'has a lot of raw information' on it, such as the parties' applications and heads of argument and the lower court judgments.

'This is very useful, but for non-lawyers, or even lawyers who do not have the time to go through these detailed papers, the ConCourtBlog tries to put all this information in an easily accessible and hopefully understandable way,' he said.

The team plans to update the blog as new information arises relating to the court; for example, when it decides to hear a case or when it delivers a judgment.

Mr Wild said that 'in the near future' the blog will provide a statistical analysis of the court's decisions, the voting patterns and work output of its judges, as well as a few aspects of the cases the blog's contributors find interesting. He added that they had started the process of gathering this information but, as it involved going through all the cases the Constitutional Court had decided, he said that this process was expected to take some time. 'We hope to begin putting some limited information on the site within the next couple of months (probably before the start of the court's second term),' he said.

In addition, the blog has a calendar that contains details of the court's activity, including hearings, decisions and the court's terms.

The blog's editors and contributors work as lawyers or legal researchers. They occasionally work on a case at the Constitutional Court that is reported on the site. When this occurs, and they are not prevented from doing so for confidentiality reasons, they will disclose such an interest.

The ConCourtBlog team consists of:

- The editor, Mr Wild, who holds a BSocSc and an LLB from the University of Cape Town, as well as an LLM in international business regulation, litigation and arbitration from New York University.

- The assistant editor, Greg Palmer, who has a BCom and an LLB from the University of Cape Town. He is an associate at a Johannesburg law firm.

Contributors:

- Michael Dafel, who holds a BCom (Hons) and an LLB from the University of Pretoria and an LLM, specialising in international and constitutional law, from New York University. He clerked at the Constitutional Court for Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng and is a researcher at the South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public, Human Rights and International Law at the University of Johannesburg.
- Mzukisi Kota, who has an LLB from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and an LLM in public international law from Leiden University in the Netherlands. He is a senior associate at a Johannesburg law firm.
- Jonathan Swanepoel, who holds a BCom and an LLB from the University of Pretoria and a Bachelor of Common Law from the University of Oxford in England. He is an associate at a Johannesburg law firm.
- Ben Winks, who holds an LLB from the University of Johannesburg and an LLM in public international law from Leiden University. He has lectured at the University of Johannesburg and clerked at the Constitutional Court for Justice Thembile Skweyiya and then acting Justice Kenneth Mthiyane. He is a candidate attorney at a Johannesburg law firm.

The blog also has a Twitter account, @concourtblog. The blog can be found at www.concourtblog.com/ConCourtBlog.html and the contributors can be reached at concourtblog@gmail.com.

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