

Seven extra judges for the District Court

Factsheet – October 2018

The NSW Government will invest an extra \$148 million over four years into the District Court and the criminal justice system to address increasing demand and reduce delays.



Seven extra judges will be appointed to the District Court.

This brings the total number of permanent District Court judges to 75, the highest number on record.

The funding builds on the NSW Government's initiatives to reduce time to justice for victims and court users.

Even though crime is generally stable or falling, time to justice (from arrest to finalisation) in NSW has increased to almost 700 days. Initiatives already implemented have helped to stabilise that delay. In the five years to 2018, trial registrations grew 6.5 per cent a year as a result of the increased number of criminal matters coming before the District Court.

This is due to a number of factors, including:

- increased police resourcing;
- investment in technological advances in police investigative capacity; and
- increasing complexity of cases, such as historical child sexual assault matters.

What does the new package include?

It is critical to ensure that we fund not just the new District Court judges themselves, but the wider justice system. For this reason the funding package includes all costs associated with the District Court judges and the costs of running courts. These include staff to support operations in the courtroom and registries, jury and Sheriff's officers, court monitoring and transcription staff and staff to manage audio visual link appearances.

More judges means more cases are brought to trial faster, so the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid NSW will be funded for more senior lawyers. Additional Witness Assistance Service officers are also being funded.

Funding is also being allocated to upgrade regional courthouses so they are suitable for District Court trials and sentence hearings.

What else has the Government done to tackle the District Court backlog?

Measures that have helped stabilise the District Court backlog include the Rolling List Court and a previous package which funded five extra judges from 2016. The Local Court has also been given jurisdiction over more offences.

New laws which started in April are designed to encourage offenders to enter early appropriate guilty pleas. These include strict time-based sentence discounts. These laws are expected to place further downward pressure on the backlog.

The seven extra judges in this package will build on the momentum of previous investment and legislative reform intended to reduce demand, improve productivity and bring the District Court backlog under control.

For more information

Visit the website at www.justice.nsw.gov.au