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MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW BUDGET: NEW SYDNEY COURTS TO REDUCE TRIAL BACKLOG

Two new state-of-the-art courtrooms will be funded in the upcoming NSW Budget to help deliver justice faster and reduce the District Court backlog, Treasurer Dominic Perrottet and Attorney General Mark Speakman announced today.

The 2017-18 Budget will deliver \$8.5 million for two new trial courts at the Downing Centre in Sydney's CBD, and for a new State Parole Authority hearing room at the Sydney West Trial Courts in Parramatta, which will make an existing courtroom available for trials there.

"We're investing in more courtrooms and better, state-of-the-art facilities because we know they bring quicker access to justice and stronger protections for our community," Mr Perrottet said.

"This funding will get the wheels of justice moving that little bit faster here in NSW."

Mr Speakman said "The new courtrooms will allow District Court trials to be listed sooner, reducing stress for victims and ensuring witnesses can give evidence sooner,"

"The largest of the new courtrooms will have space for up to 12 accused and 15 jurors, allowing it to host long and complex trials."

Docks in two courtrooms will have a toughened glass partition to help prevent potential violent incidents between accused persons.

The new high-tech courts will also feature:

- High-definition video screens to allow witnesses to give evidence remotely, and prisoners to appear from custodial facilities
- Airliner-style screens to allow jurors to view evidence in intricate detail

The \$8.5 million in this year's Budget builds on \$4.9 million of expenditure in 2016-17 for the early stages of the project, which included a recently-completed Downing Centre trial court.

Today's announcement follows the NSW Government's \$59 million investment in measures to reduce District Court delays, including appointing five new judges and four additional public defenders (adding 130 sitting weeks to the court calendar each year).

"While these initiatives have slowed the growth of the District Court backlog, the new court

facilities and recently-announced law reforms to encourage early guilty pleas will help the system move even faster,” Mr Speakman said.

Construction of the new justice facilities is due for completion in November 2017.