



Gabrielle Upton
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW JUDGES TO EASE PRESSURE ON DISTRICT COURT

A \$20 million package of funding, including the appointment of two new judges, will deliver a total 256 sitting weeks for the District Court to address the criminal trial backlog, Attorney General Gabrielle Upton announced today.

This announcement is part of the NSW Government's \$20 million package to fund immediate measures to stem the growing backlog of criminal trials in the District Court over 18 months.

"Siobhan Herbert and John Pickering SC were appointed to enable the District Court to schedule 126 additional sitting weeks to provide much needed relief for courts experiencing delays in regional and metropolitan areas," Ms Upton said.

"The funding package also delivers 130 sitting weeks over an 18 month period, which will be allocated based on need."

Some of the locations to benefit from the increase in sitting weeks include:

- Parramatta – 20 weeks
- Goulburn – four weeks
- Albury – three weeks
- Bega – two weeks
- Griffith – two weeks
- Queanbeyan – two weeks

The NSW Government is working closely with the District Court to reduce the criminal caseload and deliver fast, fair and accessible justice across NSW.

The package will also fund a range of other initiatives such as targeted trial call-overs to bring parties together to resolve matters earlier, additional public defenders and initial plea discussions to identify early guilty pleas.

The NSW Government will track the benefit of these emergency measures and make sure the extra resources continue to be targeted appropriately to address pressures in the District Court.

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John Pickering SC

John Pickering SC provided 23 years of service to the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, including three years as Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions and short periods as Acting Director of Public Prosecutions.

He has prosecuted serious matters in the Supreme and District Courts, including proceedings arising out of a series of murders committed by Adnan Darwiche and his associates in 2003.

Mr Pickering worked on secondment for the Police Integrity Commission in 1998 and as a lawyer for the Department of Justice in Canada as part of an exchange program in 1999.

He was admitted as a solicitor in NSW in 1993 and as a barrister in 2001. Mr Pickering has been a Senior Counsel since 2012.

Siobhan Herbert

Siobhan Herbert has 31 years of legal experience, including 29 years at the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

She has appeared in hundreds of Supreme and District Court jury trials, including a significant number of complex cases involving allegations of sexual assault.

Since being appointed as a Crown Prosecutor in 2002, Ms Herbert has also appeared in appeals before the Court of Criminal Appeal.

Ms Herbert has co-authored publications on sentencing law, given a presentation on courtroom tactics at an international conference, assisted as an instructor with the Australian Advocacy Institute and contributed to workshops and panel discussions on a range of issues including sexual assault.