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DISTRICT COURT CRISIS - TRIAL DELAYS BLOW OUT IN A BROKEN SYSTEM

The Baird Government is facing a crisis in the district court, with the NSW Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC) labelling the system 'broken' following trial delays of close to a year.

A report by the NSWLRC, [*Encouraging appropriate early guilty pleas*](#), recently tabled in Parliament has revealed the waiting list for criminal trials has blown out dramatically, with fewer judicial officers able to cope with the number of criminal trials pending.

In 2014, the average wait from committal to outcome in all NSW district court trials was almost a year, at 327.5 days – up from 288 days in 2013.

Delays are widespread in the state. In 2014:

- The average delay in the Sydney District Court was 290 days;
- The average delay is the worst in the state at Dubbo District Court – sitting at 403 days in 2014, up from 304 days in 2013; and
- In Lismore District Court, the average delay was 401 days – almost double the wait of 206 days in 2013.

The NSW Opposition is demanding urgent action to solve the district court crisis, starting with more funding for judicial officers to ease the backlog of cases.

The latest state budget offers no reprieve – with only one per cent more cases to be heard this year than last.

Quotes attributable to Shadow Attorney General Paul Lynch

“Justice delayed is justice denied – these delays are bad for victims, bad for witnesses, and bad for our justice system as a whole.”

“The longer the delay, the longer a victim waits for justice, and the less reliable the memory of a witness will be – compromising the quality of justice and bringing the system into disrepute.”

“The District Court is drowning in a flood of trials each year, more than it is able to finalise. That simply can't go on.”

“The Baird Government's response to district court delays has been paltry, offering nothing more than a band aid and hoping the problem will magically disappear.”

“The Baird Government is drowning in rivers of stamp duty gold yet can't find funds to employ more judicial officers to ease the backlog.”

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