



Gabrielle Upton
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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MAJOR DISTRICT COURT FUNDING BOOST

Attorney General Gabrielle Upton today announced a comprehensive \$20 million package to slash the NSW District Court backlog by more than 600 criminal trials over the next two years.

Ms Upton said the package will provide immediate relief to the justice system including extra sitting weeks, new judges and more public defenders to ensure people, particularly vulnerable victims of crime, get access to justice faster.

“The NSW Government is working to ensure the justice system is fast, fair and accessible. Delays put victims through undue stress, make it harder for witnesses to recall key details and strain the resources of the justice system,” Ms Upton said.

“This is going to make a real difference to our justice system and more importantly to people’s lives.”

The package includes:

- **Additional sittings for NSW District Court:** Extra criminal sitting weeks to be held in regional areas and Western Sydney through to June 2016.
- **Targeted Trial Call-Over Courts:** This will identify matters that can be resolved faster by an early guilty plea, allowing defended trials to be heard sooner.
- **Pre-trial conferencing for long trials that last 20 days or more:** Prosecution and defence meeting prior to trial to ensure early resolution of criminal trials.
- **Appointment of acting judges:** Appointing judges to hear more matters awaiting trial.
- **Appointment of additional public defenders:** Appointing public defenders to ensure defended matters are dealt with faster.

As at September 2015, the NSW District Court had a backlog of 2,055 criminal cases. In 2014, it took on average 358 days for a matter to be finalized in the District Court where the accused was on bail, this is 28 per cent higher than in 2007.

Ms Upton added “The package will alleviate the pressure in the District Court in the short term, allowing the NSW Government to work with key stakeholders on systemic reform.”

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