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MEDIA RELEASE

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SEVEN EXTRA JUDGES TO EASE DISTRICT COURT BURDEN

The NSW Government will appoint seven extra District Court judges as part of a package of almost \$150 million to deliver swifter justice and reduce pressure on the judiciary and court users, Attorney General Mark Speakman announced today.

“The District Court will soon have 75 permanent judges, the highest number on record, enabling increased sittings, particularly in regional areas,” Mr Speakman said.

“Crime has generally been falling or stable across major categories in NSW. However the Government’s strengthening of the NSW Police Force, tough new powers and more sophisticated crime fighting technology have increased the number of people charged with serious offences.”

Today’s announcement recognises the vital role played by our courts in holding offenders to account.

“Investing in measures to reduce trial delays will minimise trauma for victims and witnesses. The extra resources come at a critical time for the District Court, when caseloads are significant and may further increase following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.”

The four year package will fund:

- \$63 million for new judges, sheriff’s officers, court staff, jury costs and security upgrades to courthouses;
- \$45 million for additional Crown Prosecutors, lawyers and Witness Assistance Service officers at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and improvements to regional offices;
- \$34.5 million for new senior lawyers at Legal Aid NSW, and more grants for private practitioners representing legally aided clients, and improvements to regional offices; and
- \$5.4 million for court prisoner transfers.

Two extra magistrates will be appointed as part of a \$4.1 million dollar package to deal with a rise in the number of criminal matters in Local Court after the Royal Commission.

The funding is on top of the \$86 million the Government has invested in additional resources for the criminal justice system since 2016 including for the previous appointment of five extra District Court judges.

Other measures that have helped stabilise the District Court backlog over the past 18 months include table offence reforms, extra sitting weeks, Special Call Overs and the Rolling List Court. New laws to encourage early appropriate guilty pleas are also expected to accelerate the justice process.

“There’s no silver bullet to fix District Court bottlenecks. That’s why we’re delivering wide-ranging solutions including more resources at the bench and bar table, court upgrades, innovative case management and law reform,” Mr Speakman said.

The Chief Judge of the District Court, Hon Justice Derek Price AM, will determine where the new judges will be located. Further information about this funding package is available at: <https://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Media%20Releases/2018/seven-extra-dc-judges-factsheet.pdf>

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