

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Attorney-General
Minister for Resources



Friday, 19 March 2021

CRIMINAL JURY TRIALS ON TRACK TO RESUME IN REGIONS

The Andrews Labor Government is boosting regional courtroom capacity, enabling criminal jury trials to resume – keeping the justice system moving while improving the safety of communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2020-21* provided nearly \$6 million to modify courtrooms across seven sites to better accommodate COVIDSafe conditions and increase capacity to hear more trials.

Following on from this announcement, criminal jury trials in the Supreme and County Courts will progressively resume in regional locations across Victoria in the coming months.

Works are already underway at Geelong, Ballarat, Shepparton, Morwell and Warrnambool, and will soon commence in Mildura and Wodonga.

This includes extending jury boxes, expanding jury rooms and relocating furniture to adapt our courts to a post coronavirus environment and to improve the experience of jurors.

Once upgrades are complete, the County Court will hear more criminal trials in regional locations than it did before coronavirus.

A new booking system will schedule Supreme Court trials more efficiently – ensuring use of the improved courtrooms is maximised and more trials heard.

Regional courts have remained open to local communities throughout the pandemic – with many Supreme and County Court hearings conducted remotely.

In-person hearings in non-jury criminal and civil matters have already recommenced in several regional court locations where Supreme and County Court matters are heard.

By safely resuming criminal jury trials in regional courts, this investment will help to avoid unnecessary delays and ensure greater access to justice for all Victorians.

Further information about commencement dates for each location will be provided in the coming weeks as works are completed.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

“We’re investing in measures to tackle the courts’ pending caseloads – supporting new and innovative ways to improve access to justice for all Victorians, regardless of their postcode.”

“Our first priority is always the safety of the community – that’s why we’re making the necessary changes to ensure our regional courts can operate in a safe and efficient manner.”

“This work reflects our justice system’s impressive ability to be flexible and adapt – continuing to deliver vital services for Victorians despite the challenges caused by coronavirus.”

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