

Media Release



Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Resources

Tuesday, 10 August 2021

SIX NEW JUDGES APPOINTED TO THE COUNTY COURT

The Victorian Government has today announced six new appointments to the County Court of Victoria, bringing a wealth of expertise and diverse experience to the justice system.

Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes congratulated Stewart Bayles, Kellie Blair, Angela Ellis, Kate Hawkins, Daniel Holding and Nola Karapanagiotidis on their new roles, which start today.

These appointments include early replacements of four Judges as part of the Government's \$210 million investment to speed up the resolution of court matters and drive down backlogs.

Stewart Bayles has been a barrister for more than two decades and has regularly appeared in matters involving homicide, terrorism, major drug importation and commercial crime. He is a lead counsel in Victoria Legal Aid's Trial Development Program and has contributed to the training and development of young lawyers through volunteer work at Liberty Victoria's Rights Advocacy Project.

Kellie Blair is a senior criminal barrister in Gorman Chambers. In a career spanning three decades, Ms Blair worked for 11 years as a solicitor advocate before joining the bar. For the last 19 years she has appeared in criminal law matters across all Victorian jurisdictions, primarily as a trial advocate.

Angela Ellis has been a Crown Prosecutor since 2018, prosecuting serious indictable offences. This followed 13 years as a barrister during which she regularly appeared on behalf of the Office of Public Prosecutions, Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, WorkSafe Victoria and for defence in a wide variety of complex matters.

Kate Hawkins has been a Magistrate since 2001 and was an inaugural member of the Online Magistrates' Court, established to provide continued access to justice for the Victorian community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Hawkins led the Magistrates' Court's submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and implementation of its recommendations, including the establishment of Specialist Family Violence Courts across Victoria.

Daniel Holding signed the Bar Roll in 2003 and has since completed over 100 jury trials in the County and Supreme Courts. He has regularly acted on behalf of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions in highly complex federal cases, including on international drug trafficking, immigration fraud and forced labour offences.

Nola Karapanagiotidis has been a barrister for close to two decades, practising across the Magistrates', County and Supreme Courts and appearing in the Federal Court, High Court and coronial inquests. She previously worked at Victoria Legal Aid and as a solicitor advocate and has held a range of community based and volunteer legal positions.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"I'm excited to welcome six new, distinguished and deserving people as judges of the County Court, who bring with them a range of experience and expertise."

"Having such a variety of skills on the bench is an important part of our work to make justice more fair and accessible to Victorians."

"I thank retiring judicial officers, Judge Damian Murphy and Judge Paul Lacava as well as Judge John Smallwood, who will retire in September, for their significant service to the Court and the community."

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