

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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HELPING MORE REGIONAL VICTORIANS OVERCOME DRUG USE

More regional Victorians recovering from drug and alcohol dependency now have specialised court services and support closer to home with the opening of a dedicated new Drug Court in Ballarat.

Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes today attended the official launch of the new Ballarat Drug Court – the second Drug Court to open in regional Victoria as part of a \$35 million expansion of this successful program.

The Ballarat Drug Court will provide people on Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders the opportunity to access vital support and reconnect with the community.

Participants must undertake alcohol and drug counselling, comply with drug testing and regularly attend court review hearings, case management and clinical advisor appointments to ensure they stay on track.

The Drug Court program addresses the underlying factors that contribute to offending and provides participants with an opportunity to stay drug and crime-free, break the cycle and get on the path to recovery.

Research has shown that by addressing the underlying causes of crime the Drug Courts program has reduced reoffending, increased community safety, and decreased the burden on the courts and corrections system.

Evaluations have shown a 70 per cent reduction in prison time for participants on a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order. They have also shown a 32 per cent reduction in unemployment and a 23 per cent reduction in reoffending rates over the first 12 months after program completion.

The new Ballarat Drug Court Therapeutic Recovery Centre, which provides access to critical services to help participants to reduce alcohol and drug use, will operate near the Magistrates' Court.

It is also located nearby important community services including the Community Legal Centre, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victoria Legal Aid, and employment agencies, giving participants easier access to these services.

The Ballarat Drug Court has already started receiving clients and will be able to support up to 35 people on Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders each year.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"We're investing in drug courts because we know they work. By supporting people to reduce alcohol and drug use instead of just punishing them, they're more likely to get their lives back on track and less likely to reoffend."

"Expanding the Drug Court program to regional Victoria is about making these important services available outside of Melbourne – helping people get help closer to home and stay connected to their community."

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

"The Drug Court program helps to break the cycle of dependency and reoffending – it's good news for our community that this is officially open and helping Ballarat locals get a fresh start."

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