

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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SUPPORTING MORE VICTORIANS TO TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND

More Victorians will be given the chance to break the cycle of drug and alcohol dependency and reoffending thanks to the expansion of the Labor Government's innovative and successful drug court program.

Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes officially launched the County Court's Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court pilot in Melbourne today.

The new pilot builds on the achievements of the Dandenong and Melbourne Magistrates' Drug Courts, which have led to significant drops in reoffending by participants.

As with the Magistrates' Court program, the County Court Drug Court will deliver specialised treatment and support. The program addresses the underlying factors that contribute to offending such as unemployment and isolation and helps people to stay drug and crime free.

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 – giving them the best chance to overcome their dependency.

It's a model that's been proven to work, with an evaluation of the Dandenong Drug Court showing a 29 per cent reduction in reoffending two years after completing a Drug Treatment Order.

Serious offending was also lower, with a 90 per cent reduction in trafficking offences and a more than 50 per cent drop in weapons violence.

By breaking the cycle of reoffending, the program benefits not only its participants but the broader community – improving safety and reducing the burden on the courts and corrections system.

The County Court pilot will accommodate up to 70 participants and is part of the Andrews Labor Government's \$40 million expansion of the Drug Court program, which is also seeing the program rolled out to regional Victoria at Shepparton and Ballarat.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"We're investing in more drug courts because we know that they work – reducing recidivism, supporting rehabilitation and improving community safety."

"We're working to drive down crime by tackling the underlying causes of offending – providing people with the specialist support and treatment they need to get their lives back on track."