



District Court New South Wales

17 September 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW District Court to resume jury trials

The District Court of NSW (“the District Court”) has announced its plan to resume jury trials in Greater Sydney, Newcastle, Gosford and Wollongong from 25 October 2021.

The District Court is the largest criminal trial court in the country and around 200 trials have been vacated since the suspension of new jury trials from 28 June 2021. Jury trials have recently resumed in some regions that have come out of lockdown but remain suspended in most of NSW.

Chief Judge of the District Court, Justice Derek Price AO, says the resumption of jury trials is the next step in managing a COVID-19 backlog.

“The Court has done everything possible during the lockdown to keep matters progressing, with Judges continuing to hear Judge Alone trials, sentencing hearings, local court appeals, pre-trial issues and civil trials remotely by the use of virtual courtrooms,” said Justice Price.

“I am pleased to outline the steps that will be taken to enable the return of jury trials in a way that is in the interests of the health and wellbeing of all court participants.”

The Chief Judge said those steps will build on the measures implemented last year which included the enlargement of jury rooms, the hiring of external facilities for jury deliberation and empanelment, 4m² physical distancing, juries in the round, individualised meals for jurors and mandatory face mask wearing.

"All jurors will be required to be fully vaccinated. Court participants will be required to undergo rapid antigen testing at least twice-weekly. All other matters will continue to be heard remotely, for the time being, for a safer return to jury trials," said Justice Price.

The Chief Judge thanks the Sheriff of NSW for working with the District Court to implement the return of jury trials.

Accordingly, the COVID-19 safety precautions to be adopted when the temporary suspension of jury trials is lifted on 25 October 2021 will be a combination of pre-existing measures from last year and new enhanced measures in response to the Delta strain, including:

- fully vaccinated jurors;
 - routine rapid antigen testing;
 - 4m² capacity rule in courtrooms;
 - social distancing of jurors in the courtroom;
 - enlarged jury deliberation rooms and empanelment areas;
 - individualised jury meals; and,
 - mandatory face mask wearing.
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