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Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID-19: SAFETY PARAMOUNT AS DISTRICT COURT JURY TRIALS RESUME

Strict measures to ensure juror safety underpin today's decision by the Chief Judge of the District Court to resume jury trials at selected locations from Monday, 15 June.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had necessarily delayed jury trials as the justice system adapted to the social distancing we need to beat the coronavirus.

"Jury service is one of the most important rights and responsibilities that we have as members of the community and is central to ensuring fair trials. I encourage all potential jurors to answer their summonses so they can play their part," Mr Speakman said.

"Justice Derek Price's decision to resume some jury trials marks a welcome return towards normality in the District Court, which has worked with NSW Health and the Sheriff of NSW Tracey Hall to implement measures to keep jurors safe."

Ms Hall said her office will today resume posting summonses to potential jurors who should be confident their health will be safeguarded.

"A fact sheet for potential jurors will accompany the summons, detailing what steps my officers and the District Court will take to ensure appropriate hygiene and social distancing," Ms Hall said.

"On arrival at court, jurors may have their temperature taken and will be asked a series of screening questions to reduce the risk that people with cold or flu like symptoms will be present in court. Jurors will also have space to spread out in the courtroom and elsewhere to keep an appropriate distance.

"Ample provision of hand sanitiser, readily available wash stations, increased commercial cleaning and individualised meals will also help prevent contamination. Selection of jurors and appearance of other parties in the case will be by audio visual link and a strict cap will be applied to the numbers of people permitted in the courtroom."

For the time being and subject to advice from NSW Health, jury trials will only be held at the Sydney Downing Centre complex and Parramatta and Newcastle courthouses.

Ensuring juror safety during COVID-19 Factsheet

In consultation with NSW Health, the Office of the Sheriff has implemented measures to reduce COVID-19 risk to ensure jury service is safer, which may include:

- Thermal scanning
- Social distancing
- The provision of hand sanitiser and wash stations
- Individualised jury meals (to prevent contamination)
- Releasing from jury service persons most at risk
- Additional commercial cleaning
- Limited access to courts to allow for social distancing
- Additional screening measures.



What to Expect at Court

On the day of your summons, you will arrive to your court complex and be divided into small groups to ensure that you have enough space for social distance practices. A Court or Sheriff Officer may take your temperature and will ask you some relevant screening questions and then check your availability to serve.

All of our court room spaces and courts have been carefully selected to ensure they meet social distancing standards. These spaces are also frequently cleaned by specialised commercial cleaners. Hand sanitiser or wash stations are readily available.

To enhance social distancing, public access to the courtroom will be limited so you'll have room to spread out. Many of the court participants will be appearing by Audio Visual Link technology.

Your safety is our first priority. We have been working with NSW Health to ensure we are all able to participate in the justice system in a safe manner.

For more information about COVID-19 and on how you can help protect yourself and others please visit:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

To learn more about measures to introduce social distancing for jury service please visit:

<https://www.juror.nsw.gov.au/home>