



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
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Courtroom win for regional centres as part of 2010-11 NSW budget

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Residents across regional NSW are set to benefit from newly improved justice facilities as the Keneally Government invests in building and refurbishing courthouses and improving services across the State, NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Mr Hatzistergos said regional centres such as Armidale, Taree, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan and Lismore will benefit from building and refurbishments being undertaken as part of the Keneally Government's commitment to delivering frontline services with many other areas also gaining access to the innovative Forum Sentencing program.

"A new courthouse is to be built in Armidale as the Keneally Government upgrades justice facilities around regional NSW," Mr Richard Torbay, member for Northern Tablelands said.

"Armidale will get a new \$15-million facility to be used instead of the existing, cramped heritage courthouse," he said.

"Armidale deserves first-class court facilities to accommodate the city's growth," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"The new courthouse will include room for other justice agencies, preparation space for the legal profession and modern remote witness and jury facilities and larger public waiting areas. "

Mr Hatzistergos said the development is to be completed by early 2013, with the NSW Government allocating \$1 million in this year's budget for project design and planning.

"Design of the new court complex will reflect the NSW Government's policy of protecting vulnerable people who need to attend court and increased public accessibility to the law," he said.

As part of the \$57.1 million in capital expenditure in 2010/11, capital works are slated for courts around regional NSW including at Taree, Port Macquarie and Queanbeyan.

In Taree, \$5 million will be spent demolishing the small and outdated 1980s additions to the city's courthouse and constructing a new registry, courtroom and judicial chambers.

"The changes will significantly increase the size of the courthouse and create a single entry point, which will improve security," Mr Hatzistergos said.

The heritage section of Taree Courthouse will be refurbished, providing new jury assembly and conference rooms and dedicated rooms for Legal Aid, Police Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Aboriginal Legal Service, domestic violence support and Crown Prosecutors.

The project, which receives \$2 million in this year's Budget, will be completed in late 2012.

A six-month, \$1 million refurbishment of Lismore's courthouse begins in June to provide better access for people with disabilities and contemporary public areas with online terminals and meeting spaces.

Port Macquarie Courthouse will receive a \$1 million renovation, which will include the installation of a high security dock in the local courtroom, a new registry and accessibility improvements to enable people with a disability to serve on juries.

Queanbeyan Courthouse will undergo a \$900,000 makeover to provide disabled access for jurors, improved toilet facilities for staff and jurors, and modernisation of the court registry.

The NSW Budget also provides \$5.5 million to the innovative Forum Sentencing program, which makes offenders more accountable for their crimes and gives victims a say in sentencing.

Forum Sentencing, which currently operates at 13 courts, will be rolled out to an additional 25 courts over the next 12 months, including Toronto, Gosford, Wyong, Lismore, Ballina, Casino, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, and Grafton.