

MEDIA RELEASE



Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Citizenship
Minister for Regulatory Reform

Hon. Jodi McKay MP
Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister for Women

\$94 million for state-of-the-art Newcastle Court

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Attorney General John Hatzistergos and the Minister for the Hunter Jodi McKay today announced that the Keneally Government will build a new \$94 million court complex which will become the centrepiece of a modern Justice Precinct in the heart of Newcastle.

“The Keneally Government is delivering a record investment in justice to build a better future for Newcastle families,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“With \$4.7 million to be invested this year to secure a site, the Keneally Government is moving forward with its plan to deliver a new courthouse for Newcastle and bring together justice agencies at the one precinct.

“The new Justice Precinct is set to become the state’s largest court complex outside Sydney, with the new courthouse to be at least 20 per cent larger than Newcastle’s existing courthouse.

“The new modern complex will have a floor area in excess of 10,000 square metres, include at least 10 modern courtrooms with videoconferencing technology and be fully accessible to people with a disability.”

Mr Hatzistergos said the Minister for the Hunter and Member for Newcastle, Jodi McKay, had worked hard to secure the funding.

“Since she was elected Jodi has worked very hard to ensure this important project became a reality,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

Ms McKay said funding the new court complex for the Justice Precinct delivered on one of key catalyst projects from the Hunter Development Corporation’s CBD Renewal Report.

“The NSW Government is continuing to invest in the revitalisation of Newcastle’s CBD and the Hunter’s justice needs,” Ms McKay said.

“I am very pleased that the University of Newcastle had indicated it will relocate its Law School to the new precinct in the coming years.

“The location of the precinct also creates an opportunity for other justice agencies to occupy locations surrounding the site creating a justice precinct.”

Ms McKay said the new courthouse will be located at the Burwood Wedge site on Hunter Street in the heart of Newcastle’s civic precinct.

“One of the courtrooms will be large enough to accommodate trials involving up to ten defendants and a jury panel of up to 15 members,” Ms McKay said.

“Having a courtroom of this size will allow Newcastle to hold trials of a similar size to the large terrorist trial held in Sydney.

“The new courthouse will feature airport-style perimeter security and a 24-hour cell complex as well as a range of facilities for victims, support services, justice agencies and the legal profession.

“Community Justice Centres, which help settle disputes through mediation, will also move into the new precinct, and be able to use rooms allocated for Alternative Dispute Resolution.”

Planning of the Newcastle Courthouse will be completed in 2011-12, with construction to begin the following year with the \$94 million complex expected to open in 2014-15.

Ms McKay said the Keneally Government will also invest \$200,000 to fit out an additional courtroom at Broadmeadow Children's Court.

"The NSW Budget also provides \$200,000 to upgrade Toronto Courthouse, which will include a new registry and computer facilities," Ms McKay said.

"We will also invest \$1 million for a Graffiti hotspot program that will focus on 10 locations in NSW, including Newcastle.

"The program will improve environmental design, such as better lighting and vegetation barriers, at Newcastle's graffiti hotspots to make them more resistant to vandalism."