

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.