

COURTS STRUGGLES AS SOUTH-WESTERN SYDNEY POPULATION SOARS

NSW and Federal Governments need to ensure that court resources in the area around the second Sydney airport are updated urgently to meet the needs of Australia's fastest growing region.

NSW Law Society President, Elizabeth Espinosa says current court facilities in Sydney's south west are out-dated, under-resourced, unsafe and failing to meet present community needs.

The Law Society of NSW has launched a community backed campaign for a new multi-purpose justice precinct in south-western Sydney that will meet the demand for court services now and well into the future.

By the time the newly named "Western Sydney International Nancy Bird-Walton Airport" is open in 2026 the population south of the airport is expected to have grown to nearly 900,000 and by 2036, it is expected to reach 1.1 million people.

"The inadequacy of court resources in south-western Sydney has reached a tipping point," Ms Espinosa said.

"Three courts in the region, Camden, Campbelltown and Picton, are either at capacity or not equipped to manage the current backlogs in criminal and civil cases.

"Sitting times at Camden are restricted to just two days per month.

"Victims of crime and people seeking resolutions to business disputes and family law disputes are being forced to wait inordinate lengths of time for justice or travel into the Sydney CBD to have their matters heard.

"Of real concern is the lack of security at the ailing Camden and Picton Courts, where cases relating to family violence and involving Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) are being heard.

"Another concern is that south-western Sydney doesn't have a Federal Circuit Court to deal with family law matters, which means residents and court users must travel to Wollongong, Parramatta or the Sydney CBD to resolve family disputes.

"This is impractical, inconvenient and unfair and places additional time and financial burdens on some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

"One victim of family violence that required an AVO for protection had to wait 18 months for the matter to be finalised because of the lack of sitting days and the sheer volume of matters the Magistrate had to deal with when the Court did sit.

"This mum of five from Sydney' south west, who was running her own small business, had to take the equivalent of 30 weeks annual leave over three years to travel to courts in Parramatta and Sydney for family law and criminal proceedings.

“These delays in justice are unacceptable and will only compound as the population south of the new Nancy-Bird Walton International Airport grows.

“We need the State and Federal Government to urgently commit the funds needed to build a new multi-purpose justice precinct in south western Sydney.

“This purpose-built complex needs to house court rooms for the Local Court, District Court, Land & Environment Court, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and civil tribunals as well alternative dispute resolution facilities, police and other justice services.

“Building a ‘one stop justice precinct’ in south-western Sydney should be a major government priority to ensure access to justice for people living in this area, now and in the future.”

The “We Support South-Western Sydney Justice Precinct” campaign is supported by the Macarthur Regional Law Society, Liverpool Fairfield Regional Law Society, NSW Bar Association, Campbelltown City Council, Liverpool City Council, Camden Council, Wollondilly Shire Council, Western Sydney Chamber of Businesses, NSW Police Association, Camden Region Economic Taskforce, NCOSS and the Greater Sydney Commission led by District Commissioner Liz Dibbs.

The campaign website is justiceprecinct.org for more information.

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