



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 241

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Attorney-General, Hon Marie-Clare Boothby MLA:

Court Backlog

1. For each of 2023–24, 2024–25 and 2025–26, and for each of the Local Court and the Supreme Court, what was the median and the 90th percentile elapsed time from first appearance to finalisation in criminal matters?
 - a. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026–27 reports a lower courts criminal matters clearance rate of 100 per cent against a target of at least 95 per cent for 2025–26. Does the clearance rate measure the time a person waits for their matter to be heard and, if not, which published measure does?
 - b. If elapsed-time figures are not compiled in that form, in which system are they recorded and in what format?
2. What was the longest period a person waited for their matter to be heard in 2025–26?
 - a. If this is not recorded, what is the longest elapsed time from first appearance to finalisation recorded in the courts' case management system for a matter finalised in 2025–26?
3. What effect has mandatory sentencing had on the volume of matters before the courts and on the time taken to finalise them?
 - a. What assessment has the Government made of that effect?
 - b. If no assessment has been made, has one been sought or commissioned, and by whom?
 - c. What change has been recorded in the number of matters lodged, the number finalised, and the elapsed time to finalisation, since each mandatory sentencing provision commenced?

4. Are current delays being driven by courtroom and judicial availability, or by lawyer availability?
 - a. How has this changed since the Supreme Court decision concerning stays for unrepresented defendants?
5. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026–27 lists two permanent local court judges as a new initiative at \$1.4 million, and local court demand pressures as a key existing initiative at \$5.3 million in each of 2025–26 and 2026–27.
 - a. On what date will each of the two local court judges be appointed, and by what date will each be sitting?
 - b. By how many sitting days is the Local Court's capacity expected to increase in 2026–27 as a result?
 - c. What reduction in elapsed time to finalisation is expected from that increase, and by when will it be measurable?
 - d. In real terms, has the appropriation for the Local Court increased or decreased between 2024–25 and 2026–27, and by how much?