

# PUBLIC INFORMATION

---

## The Bicentenary

In 2024, the Supreme Court will celebrate the bicentenary of its founding under the New South Wales Act 1823 and the Third Charter of Justice, in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office and the Legislative Council of NSW. The Court will publish an illustrated book, commission a gallery and interpretive history wall, host seminars and organise tours by legal studies students and members of the public. Together, these endeavours will situate the Court in the great social and political developments of the last two centuries, such as the Frontier Wars, the Gold Rush, federation, the Great Depression and two world wars. This will culminate in a livestreamed ceremonial sitting of the Court on 17 May 2024 and gala function at Government House. This outreach by the Supreme Court will be supported by the media unit through its dedicated bicentenary projects officer, as well as its website and social media accounts, and contacts in the mainstream media.

## Constant Guardian

The Court's bicentenary celebrations will be centred around an illustrated history, edited by the former president of the Court of Appeal, The Honourable Keith Mason AC KC and Larissa Reid, the Law Courts Library's Readers Services Manager. Commissioned in 2019 by the then chief justice, The Honourable Tom Bathurst AC, *Constant Guardian, Changing Times* promises to be a landmark in the study of Australian legal institutions and the chapters on Women and Indigenous Peoples in particular will be studied intently by legal historians.



## Instagram

The Supreme Court has long had Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) accounts, with more than 15,000 and 12,000 followers respectively. A third social media account, Instagram, was added in 2023 to provide a more visual portrayal of the blend of people, architecture, artefacts and historic events which constitute the institution of the Supreme Court. The Instagram handle is [\*\*nswsupremecourt\*\*](https://www.instagram.com/nswsupremecourt).

## History Wall

A key part of the Supreme Court's program of bicentennial celebrations is the history wall. Installed outside the Banco Court in December 2023, it is designed as an interpretive / educational centre for visiting legal studies students and members of the public and serves as a convenient starting point for both guided and self-guided tours. Two centuries of service as the constant guardian of the rule of law in NSW are encapsulated in five engaging sections with 66 panels comprising text and images.



## School tours

The Supreme Court is a vital civic institution and has a responsibility to organise public education programs. In 2023 the Court's support for both guided and self-guided tours, particularly those by HSC legal studies students, will be increased. Beginning in the Banco Court visitors on a guided tour can view a welcome video by the Chief Justice, view the history wall and continue their tour in the historic King Street Courts complex before taking the time to observe a court sitting.

## AIIA Conference

In September 2023, the Supreme Court hosted the Australian Academy of Law's conference, Enduring Courts, to mark the bicentenaries of the Supreme Court of NSW and the Supreme Court of Tasmania. Judges and academics from as far afield as New Zealand and Canada presented papers on courts, legal systems and Indigenous people, legal education and professional development and changes to criminal law across two centuries. The opening address was delivered by the then Chief Justice of the High Court, the Hon. Susan Kiefel AC, while Chief Justice Andrew Bell spoke at the Gala Conference Dinner.

## A new website

On 3 October 2023, the Supreme Court joined a cohort of other State courts, tribunals and agencies in launching a new website. More than 3000 files, including speeches, practice notes and forms migrated from the old site to the new. The functionality of the probate pages was enhanced, the historical content increased, and the directory structure changed so as to collate more practitioner-related information in a single landing page. The address of the site was also changed to [www.supremecourt.nsw.gov.au](http://www.supremecourt.nsw.gov.au)

## Open justice

A 2022 NSW Law Reform Commission report found that ‘... open justice is fundamental to the integrity of and public confidence in the justice system.’<sup>1</sup>

Courts have long recognised that members of the public cannot observe trials in person. Out of necessity, journalists are the eyes and ears of the public in an open court. That is why the core objective of the Supreme Court’s media unit is to facilitate fair and accurate reporting of the cases that come before it.

A critical risk is that prejudicial material can circulate rapidly online, in real time, and be accessible on a juror’s mobile phone. This is often present in complex criminal cases before the Supreme Court. Judges are concerned that a misstep by the media may prejudice the right of the accused to a fair trial, identify a protected witness or cause a jury to be discharged.

Professional journalists understand their obligations; however, they are occasionally uncertain about the operation of non-publication orders or whether they may access and publish exhibits and the contents of documents tendered in open court. In these circumstances, the role of the media unit is to assess and manage the risk that inaccurate reporting will impact upon the continuity of Supreme Court trials.

