

# Opening of new courts set to increase access to justice

Justice and Correctional Services Minister Michael Masutha has proclaimed two new courts to service their respective communities with effect from 1 March 2019.



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The proclamation of the two Magistrates Courts – Booyens in Gauteng and Plettenberg in the Western Cape – is part of efforts by the Justice Department to broaden access to justice for all.

“The new court [Booyens Magistrates Court] has been built in Oakdene in the south of Johannesburg and will make it more convenient for local communities to access justice services.

“The new court will also alleviate the demand for justice services at the Johannesburg Magistrates Court,” said the department.

Until now, communities were serviced by the Johannesburg Central Magistrates Court in the CBD, which required them to travel up to 13km to be assisted.

The facility was built at a cost of just over R242 million to reinstate the Booyens Branch Court that was moved to the

Johannesburg Magistrates Court due to inadequate facilities and increased matters on the court roll.

“With effect from 1 March 2019, the court will render a range of family law services; maintenance matters, domestic violence matters, Children’s Court and Harassment Court matters, civil law services, Small Claims Court services and criminal law services, including the services of two regional courts,” said the department.

## **Plettenberg Bay Magistrates Court**

Currently, court services for communities in Plettenberg are being rendered from Knysna Magistrates Court, which is about 30km away, with limited public transport available.

Over the past 20 years, a periodical court has serviced Plettenberg Bay twice a week at the municipal building premises.

The new court has been built at a cost of approximately R314 million at New Horizons, which is 3km from the Plettenberg Bay CBD.

“The Plettenberg Bay Court is served by the two police stations of Plettenberg Bay and Kwanokhutula and will incrementally bring service delivery relief to the communities of Plettenberg Bay, Kwanokhutula and surrounding areas,” said the department.

The Plettenberg Bay court will render services from Family Court Services, Civil Cases (including Small Claims Court matters), Sexual Offences Court, Regional Courts and District Courts.

The Plettenberg Bay Magistrates Office is expected to function from 1 June 2019.

## **Palm Ridge Magistrates Court**

In an effort to better accommodate the court roll of the Specialised Commercial Crimes (SCC) Court in Johannesburg, the department announced that the SCC will operate at the Palm Ridge Magistrates Court in Gauteng.

The recently appointed Special Investigating Unit Tribunal will also be operational from the SCC.

The tribunal will expedite the finalisation of matters the SIU refers for civil litigation following the conclusion of its investigations.

“Access to justice remains a key pillar to our constitutional democracy and the department will therefore continue with its mandate of bringing justice services closer to the people,” said the department.

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