



**Bendigo Law Courts Opening
Address of the Hon. Chief Justice Ferguson
Friday, 24 February 2023**

I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand, the Dja Dja Wurrung people and I celebrate their connection to this land, to Country, to culture, knowledge and stories.

I pay my respects to their Elders, knowledge holders and leaders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people present today.

I also acknowledge the Premier of Victoria, Deputy Premier, the Attorney General and Member for Bendigo West Marie Edwards.

I also acknowledge the Elders and Respected Persons of Dja Dja Wurrung, people who played such an important part in today's event. You have all seen how they have been an enormous part of today and that's what we want to see.

In particular, I want to call out Trent Nelson for conducting the smoking ceremony; we have heard a lot about Racquel Kerr but everyone is blown away, not by your work only but by you as a person as well; and finally Rodney Carter, your words were inspiring, what you said about the Courts and this place is inspiring.

I would also like to acknowledge Members of the community and of the legal profession.

To my colleagues from the Courts and the staff of the courts and tribunal, I acknowledge you too.

When we open the court each day, we make a promise that people will be heard. This court has been designed as a modern court should be; by listening to and looking through the eyes of the users; with systems that work together; without the silos that we so often see; and in an environment that fosters the best outcomes that justice can deliver.

Many different people will come through these doors in the decades to come.

The new operating model means that regardless of which court or tribunal they're attending, they will have access to services in spaces that are calm, secure, and comfortable.

That's the environment in which justice should be delivered.

Importantly, this building is anchored in Bendigo's heritage, and the culture of Dja Dja Wurrung.

The striking design provided the opportunity for Court Services Victoria and the project partners to acknowledge, promote and respect Dja Dja Wurrung's continuing culture.

This new Court complex reflects their connection to land, to community and culture which has remained unbroken for so very, very long.

The entire community can be immensely proud of this new regional landmark. It is an extraordinary achievement.

But the importance of this building is how it functions for the community it serves and shapes their experience of the justice system.

Our courts and tribunal will continue to evolve so that we can serve the community to the very best of our ability.

I'd like to warmly congratulate and thank every single person who was involved in this project. What you have done has created a spectacular place for the courts and tribunal to evolve in the way that they should.

Thank you.

The Hon. Chief Justice Anne Ferguson
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Victoria
24 February 2023