MANDALA

# Harnessing AI in the court system

*Report commissioned by Microsoft and prepared by Mandala*

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Note: All dollar figures are Australian dollars unless indicated otherwise.

# Executive summary

**Australia's courts operate under diverse caseloads and resource constraints, but the operational challenges they face are shared.** This report identifies three court-side AI opportunities that cut across that diversity: AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support. These opportunities are designed to help courts manage existing workloads more efficiently, while reinforcing the integrity of court processes as litigants apply AI tools outside the courtroom.

## 1 Australia's courts face a structural capacity problem and have been slow to adopt AI tools that could address it

**The case backlog has grown 85 per cent** to 76,000 since 2016, now exceeding pre-pandemic levels

**A 9 per cent increase in court expenditure** over the last five years has not resolved the capacity problem

**AI tools are delivering 50 to 130 per cent productivity improvements** in legal work, but the Australian judiciary has been cautious to adopt

## 2 AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are three high-impact, low-risk entry points with measurable backlog and duration benefits

**Smart scheduling is projected to deliver 22,500 additional finalisations** per year by converting underutilised courtroom time into hearings

**AI-assisted document review and legal research are projected to deliver 51,000 and 22,000 additional finalisations** per year respectively, freeing almost 2 million hours of review and research time

Together, these tools would result in **68 per cent fewer backlogged cases** by 2030, **9-day shorter case durations,** and **$431 million in additional court output** per year

## 3 Maximising AI's impact requires investment in digital infrastructure, governance and workforce capability

Courts should **digitise records, establish nationally consistent governance, and build workforce capability**

**Courts should pilot the three use cases** in controlled settings before scaling, starting with **smart scheduling in a District Court and AI-assisted document review and legal research in a Superior Court**

**Further AI use cases, including transcript generation and guided submissions,** can target the remaining constraints courts face

# Executive summary

**Australia's court system is diverse, but faces common operational constraints.** At each level of the court hierarchy, and in each jurisdiction, each court operates under distinct caseloads and resource constraints. This report identifies three common areas of opportunity that cut across that diversity: smart scheduling, document review and legal research support. All are court-side operational tools, designed to help courts manage their existing workload more efficiently, while reinforcing the integrity of court processes as litigants increasingly apply AI tools outside the courtroom.

**The case backlog has grown 85 per cent to 76,000 since 2016, and rising expenditure has not reversed it.** Real court expenditure rose 9 per cent over five years, with full-time equivalent (FTE) staff per 1,000 finalisations up 34 per cent in Magistrates courts. Backlogs now exceed pre-pandemic levels. The persistence of delay through both fiscal expansion and temporary operational measures points to a structural gap that additional resourcing alone is unlikely to close.

**Australia's courts should look to international peers that are already capturing AI-driven efficiency gains.** AI tools are delivering 50 to 130 per cent improvements in quality-adjusted productivity across legal work. Jurisdictions like Singapore and the UK have moved beyond pilots to national deployment, backed by governance standards, structured training, and accountability frameworks that Australia has yet to establish. Closing this gap will allow us to realise similar benefits domestically.

**AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support could together deliver 95,500 additional case finalisations a year.** This is an 8 per cent uplift on the national caseload of around 1.25 million. While there are many potential AI use cases, this report focuses on these three high-impact, low-risk entry points for courts to reduce backlogs. Smart scheduling contributes 22,500 additional finalisations by converting underused courtroom time into hearings through predictive listing and allocation. District and County courts gain the most, where coordination failures cause lost hearing time. AI-assisted document review has the largest impact, contributing 51,000 additional finalisations and saving 1.4 million hours a year by cutting the time needed to review documents and locate information before, during and after trial. AI legal research contributes 22,000 additional finalisations, freeing an estimated 500,000 hours a year by compressing the time courts spend locating, verifying and synthesising precedent. For both document review and legal research, Superior courts see the largest proportional gain, where research time directly constrains case output.

**These gains improve three access to justice metrics.** There would be 68 per cent fewer backlogged cases by 2030 than without these interventions, as all courts shift from a growing to a shrinking caseload. Average case duration falls by roughly nine days. Courts resolve an additional $431 million worth of cases each year, equivalent to a 7 per cent reduction in the average cost per finalisation. Together, these tools let courts do more with the same resources and redirect spending toward unmet legal need.

**Digital infrastructure, governance, and workforce capability are three pillars of AI excellence in courts.** Courts should digitise records and scheduling systems, because AI tools perform best on structured, machine-readable data and many registries still process physical files. Courts should establish nationally consistent governance, because coordinated procurement standards, impact assessments, and disclosure protocols build the public trust that judicial AI adoption requires. Courts should invest in workforce capability, because the value of AI tools depends on whether judicial officers and staff can critically evaluate the outputs they produce.

**Courts should pilot these use cases in controlled settings before scaling.** Smart scheduling is best tested in a high-volume District or County Court, where scheduling waste is concentrated in over-listing and allocation mismatches. AI-assisted document review and legal research are best tested in a Superior Court, where large document volumes and research time constrains judgment turnaround. Pilots should follow a sequenced approach: assess, configure, pilot, then scale.

**These three use cases are entry points, not endpoints.** Each type of court retains distinct constraints that these three interventions do not fully address, from evidence volume in complex trials to deficient filings from self-represented litigants. Further AI use cases, such as transcript generation and guided submissions, can target these gaps directly.

1 **Australia's courts face a structural capacity problem and have been slow to adopt the AI tools that could address it**

2 AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are three high-impact, low-risk entry points for courts

3 Maximising AI's impact requires investment in digital infrastructure, governance and workforce capability

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# The case backlog has grown 85 per cent since 2016, delaying resolution for those awaiting a court outcome

**Cases pending over 12 months have risen 85 per cent since 2016, reaching 76,000 in 2025.**[1] This backlog represents 15 per cent of all pending cases and is primarily concentrated in Magistrates courts, which carry the highest volumes. National benchmarks set a ceiling of 10 per cent of cases exceeding age limits, with no lodgements pending beyond 12 or 24 months depending on court type.[2]

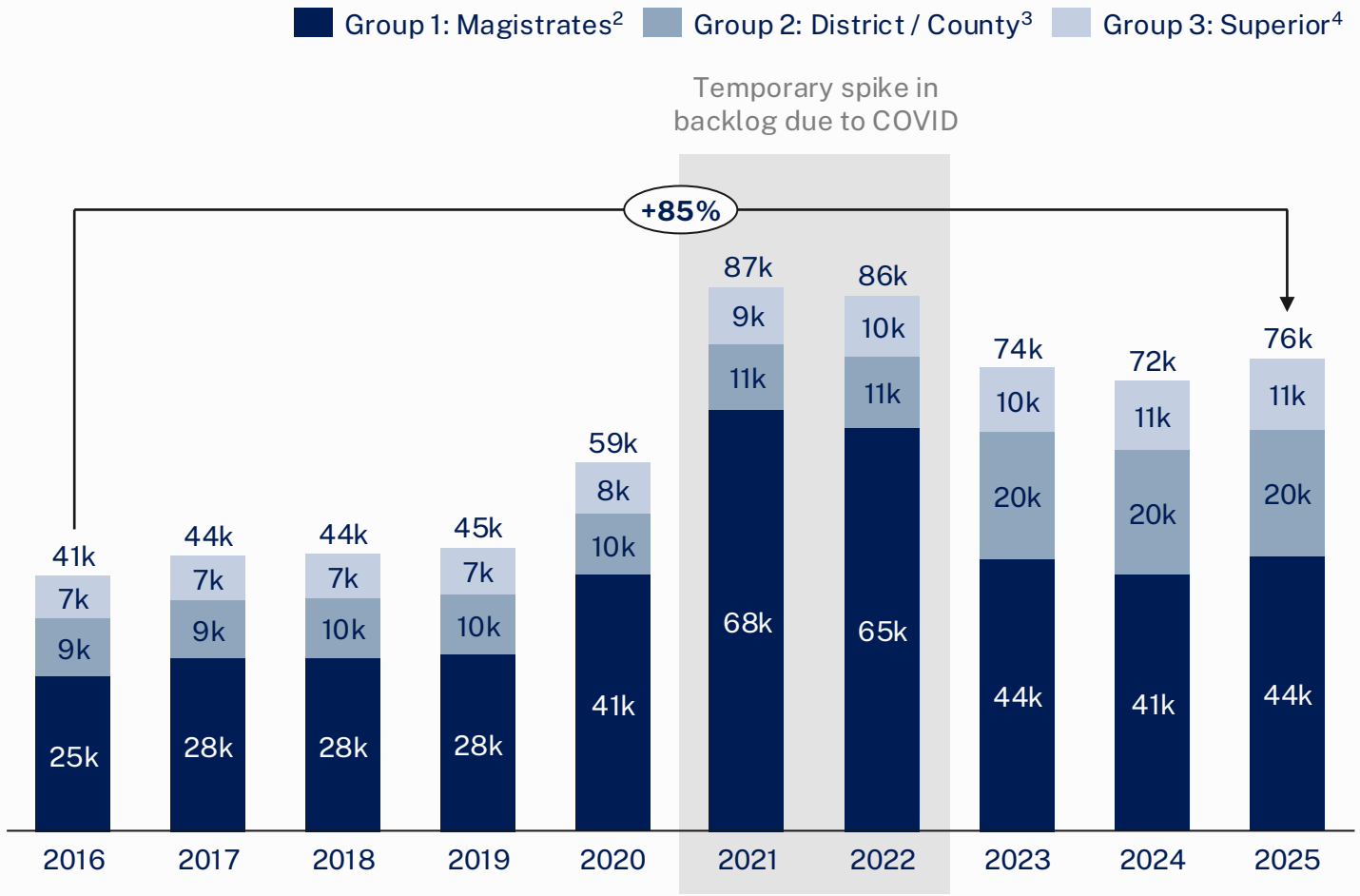
**COVID-19 accelerated the backlog, but temporary measures have not reversed it.** Courts responded to the 2021–22 spike with judge-only trials and special hearings.[3] By 2025, backlogs had exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

**Persistent backlogs point to a structural capacity gap.** Some delays fall outside courts' control: adjournment requests, referral timing, and legislative complexity all lengthen timelines. But backlogs that consistently breach national benchmarks indicate a deeper mismatch between demand and capacity that requires targeted action.

Note: 1. These figures refer to the Courts included in Groups 1-3. 2. Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services*. 3. Premier of Victoria (2022) *Keeping the Justice System Moving through COVID-19.*

**Case backlog in Australia's Courts** (cases pending for over 12 months)

Number of pending cases >12 months, 2016–2025[1]




Note: 1. Years refer to financial years. 2. Group 1 includes Magistrates (criminal and civil) and Children's Courts. 3. Group 2 includes District and County Courts (criminal and civil), Family Courts (incl. FCWA and family matters in FCFCOA Div 1 and 2). 4. Group 3 includes Supreme Courts (criminal and civil) and the Federal Court of Australia. The Coroners Courts and FCFCOA Div 2 (non-family) are excluded from this report.
Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts*; Mandala analysis.

# Rising court expenditure has not resolved the capacity problem, indicating a need for structural efficiency gains

**Real court expenditure rose 9 per cent over five years, yet backlogs have continued to grow.** Spending increased fastest in Magistrates courts (+14 per cent), with more modest growth across District and County (+6 per cent) and Superior courts (+2 per cent).

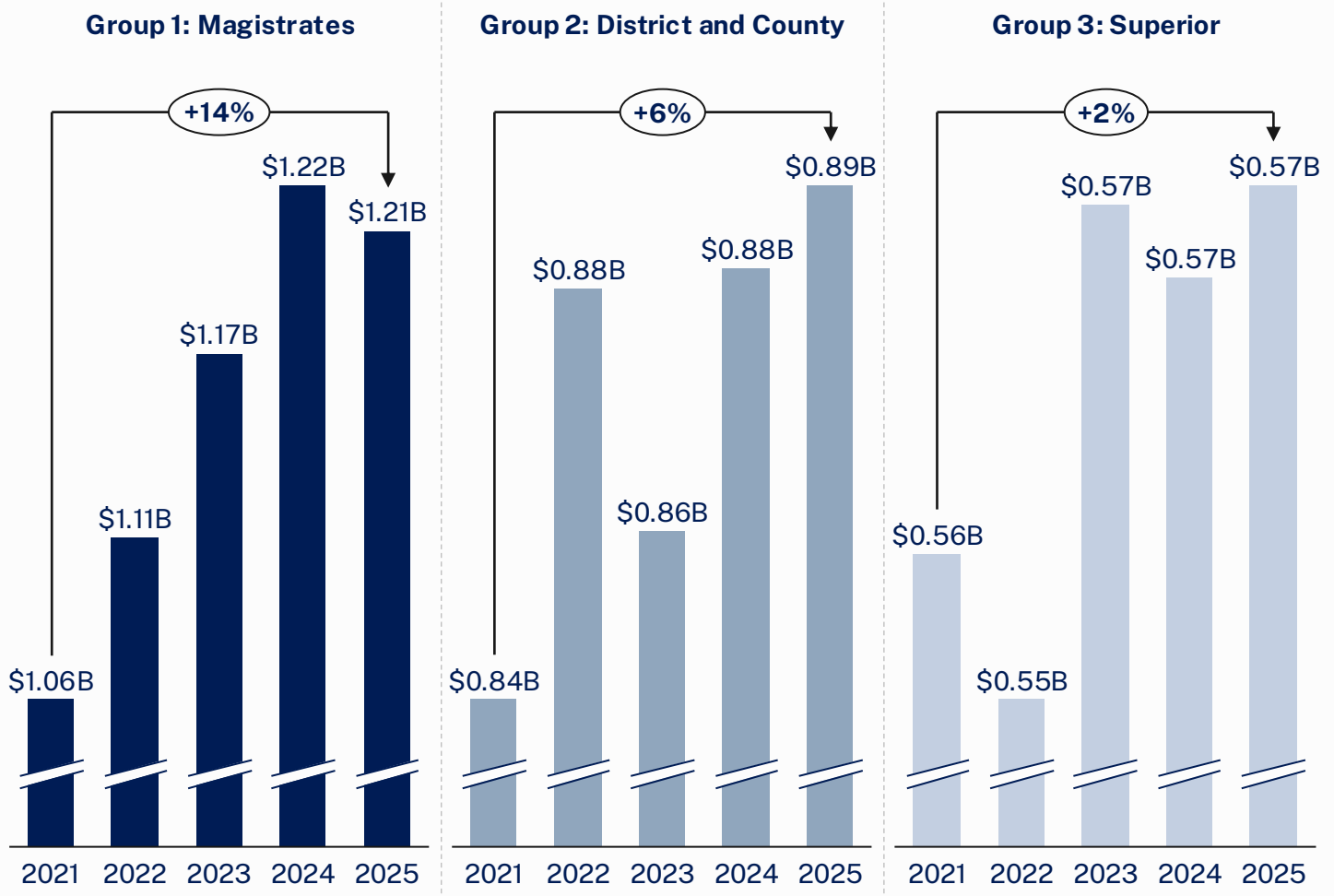
**Higher spending translated into more staff, but not fewer backlogs.** FTE staff per 1,000 finalisations in Magistrates courts rose 34 per cent over nine years. Cases pending over 12 months have nonetheless exceeded pre-pandemic levels, suggesting additional resourcing alone cannot close the capacity gap.

**The evidence points to a need for structural efficiency gains.** Incremental expenditure increases are unlikely to resolve a backlog that has persisted through both fiscal expansion and temporary operational measures. Productivity-enhancing technologies offer a path to doing more within existing resource envelopes.

Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services;* Mandala analysis.

**Real recurrent expenditure on court services[1]**

$ billions (FY25 dollars), 2021–25[2]




Note: 1. Real recurrent expenditure includes depreciation and excludes payroll tax and user cost of capital.
2. Years refer to financial years.
Source: Productivity Commission (2026) Report on Government Services; Mandala analysis.

# AI tools are already delivering efficiency gains in legal work...

**AI efficiency gains in legal tasks**

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACCURACY** | **9 to 19 per cent improvement in accuracy scores on research-intensive legal tasks.** AI tools produce more complete first drafts, reducing review time. Verification remains necessary as AI systems can generate incorrect outputs, but average accuracy improves relative to unassisted research. |
| **SPEED** | **20 to 32 per cent reduction in time to complete legal tasks.** AI tools accelerate research, drafting, and analysis, freeing lawyers for higher-value work. Gains are largest on replicable tasks, such as citation verification and multi-jurisdiction searches, where speed compounds with volume. |
| **PRODUCTIVITY** | **50 to 130 per cent improvement in quality-adjusted productivity across legal task types.** Productivity gains vary based on task complexity: gains are smallest on legal questions requiring novel judgment, and largest on structured, multi-source research tasks where speed and accuracy improvements compound. |

Source: Schwarcz et al. (2025) *AI-Powered Lawyering: AI Reasoning Models, Retrieval Augmented Generation, and the Future of Legal Practice*; Choi et al. (2024) *Lawyering in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*; Wolters Kluwer (2026) *Future Ready Lawyer Survey;* Thomson Reuters (2025) *Future of Professionals Report.*

# ...with over a third of lawyers using them in their practice

**Of the more than one in three lawyers who use AI, the most used tools are...[1]**

| AI tool | Legal use case | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| **General Purpose AI** | Drafting, research, and document summaries | 65% |
| **Microsoft Copilot 365** | Research, compliance checking, and client engagement | 34% |
| **Custom Software** | Firm-specific task automation | 13% |
| **LEAP** | Research, matter analysis, and drafting | 13% |
| **Lexis+ AI** | Research, drafting, reasoning, and document management | 12% |
| **JADE Professional** | Case law search, annotation, and citation checking | 9% |
| **Westlaw Precision** | Research, document analysis, and authority verification | 5% |
| **CICERO AI** | Document summaries, chronologies, and data extraction | 2% |
| **Image GenAI** | Visual presentation creation | 2% |
| **Other[2]** | General and legal-specific AI tools | 12% |

Note: 1. Surveyed 1,887 practising certificate holders. Multiple selections were permitted. 2. Including Harvey.AI, Archie.AI, Lawpath AI, Relativity, Nuix, Josef Legal
Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals Report;* Victorian Legal Services Board (2025) *The 2025 Victorian Census Technical Report.*

# Australia's courts should emulate the AI readiness of international peers to capture productivity gains already emerging across legal practice

## AI readiness across international judicial systems[1]

**Key:** ✗ Not implemented ✓ Partially implemented ✓ Fully implemented

| AI readiness assessment criteria | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Governance** | National framework or policy for the use of AI in courts | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| **Risk management** | Processes for assessing and mitigating AI risks | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Integration** | Use in the judiciary system | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |
| **Capability** | Structured training programs available | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |
| **Accountability** | Defined consequences for AI misuse | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |

**Level of readiness for AI adoption:** ← **Higher** — **Lower** →

## Sentiment around AI adoption in the Australian judiciary

> *"**AI is not presently used for decision making** nor used to develop or prepare reasons for decision because it does not engage in a reasoning process nor a process specific to the circumstance before the court."*
>
> – Supreme Court of Victoria

> *"While I have a somewhat vested interest, **I am of the view that the 'watch and learn' approach of the Federal Court of Australia has much to commend it."***
>
> – Justice Needham

> *"Like any other technology, **the key is in how [AI] is used**, not the fact that it is used."*
>
> – Chief Justice Mortimer

Note: 'Partially implemented' ratings reflect gaps in national coverage rather than absence of activity. In Governance, no comprehensive national framework exists, though consultation on one is underway (see: Federal Court of Australia). In Risk Management, formal AI risk assessment tools are absent, but risk management guidelines exist. In Integration, AI use remains limited to pilots or single use cases, contrasting with Singapore's widespread adoption.
Source: Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice (2025) *AI Atlas - United Kingdom;* Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice (2025) *AI Atlas - United States;* Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice (2025) *AI Atlas – Singapore;* Legg, M and Bell, F (2020) *Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession;* UK Government Cabinet Office (2025) *The Mitigating 'Hidden' AI Risks Toolkit;* Government of Canada (2026) *Algorithmic Impact Assessment tool;* New Zealand Government (n.d.) *Algorithm Impact Assessment toolkit;* Courts of New Zealand (2023) *Guidelines for use of generative artificial intelligence in courts and tribunals;* Canadian Judicial Council (2024) *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts;* Needham, J (2025) *AI and the Courts in 2025;* Supreme Court of Victoria (2024) *Guidelines for litigants: Responsible use of artificial intelligence in litigation;* Federal Court of Australia (2025) *Notice to the Profession Artificial intelligence use in the Federal Court of Australia.*

# Courts that identify and address AI risks early are best placed to capture the full efficiency gains from adoption

| Major risks *(non-exhaustive)* | Description | Mitigation strategies |
|---|---|---|
| **Inaccurate outputs** | **AI hallucination** could create material risks of incorrect citations and flawed legal reasoning. | **Qualified personnel must verify critical AI outputs before use in proceedings.** Tools should draw only from court-approved datasets, limiting outputs to pre-vetted legal sources. |
| **Perpetuating bias** | Models trained on historical legal decisions **may embed systemic biases**, producing discriminatory outcomes for marginalised groups. | **Regular bias audits and mandatory human review of all recommendations.** Configure tools to surface source summaries and structured fact lists, making reasoning visible and reviewable. Monitor demographic patterns in AI-assisted decisions to detect and correct disparate outcomes over time. |
| **Data breaches and misuse** | Court proceedings contain **highly sensitive personal information**. LLM misuse of this data could compromise cases, expose vulnerable parties, or erode public trust. | **Strict data governance using isolated, secure systems that cannot train external models.** Prohibit public LLMs for identifiable case data, party information, and unpublished proceedings. Enforce encryption, access controls, and regular security audits. |
| **Lack of transparency** | **Opaque AI reasoning** undermines judicial principles of transparency and reasoned decision-making and may compromise the right to appeal.[1] | **Require explainable AI systems for all judicial functions.** Mandate disclosure of AI tool usage in decisions. Require independent audits for proprietary systems used in high-stakes matters. |
| **Deskilling and hollowing the 'core of law'** | Overreliance on AI risks **atrophying the research and analytical capabilities** of judges, associates, and court staff over time. | **Deploy AI to handle routine tasks while ensuring judges perform tasks that are the 'core of law'.** The 'core of law' includes exercising legal and ethical judgment. Design tools that augment rather than replace professional skills. |

Note: 1. Justice Needham (2025) *Speech on AI and the Courts in 2025.*
Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *AI in Courts and Tribunals; UNSW Centre for the Future of the Legal Profession (2025) GenAI, Fake Law & Fallout: A review of the misuse of generative artificial intelligence in legal proceedings;* Bell et al. (2022) *AI Decision-Making and the Courts A guide for Judges, Tribunal Members and Court Administrators;* Legg and Bell (2020) *Artificial intelligence and the legal profession;* expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

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4 Appendix

# There are seven major challenges that span different stages of the court process, and across different court types

| | Case initiation and case management | Pre-trial proceedings | Hearings / investigations | Decisions and appeals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 **Scheduling complexity:** Coordinating judges, counsel, and courtrooms is time-intensive and can extend case timelines to 12–24 months | **All courts.** Judicial officers and courtrooms must be allocated across initial hearings, pre-trial proceedings, interlocutory applications, and appeals | | | |
| 2 **Document and deadline management:** Parties lack a centralised platform to track deadlines, requests, and extensions | | **All courts.** Parties track document production and discovery deadlines | | |
| 3 **Evidence volume:** Judicial officers manually categorise, summarise, and cross-reference large volumes of evidence | **Tribunal/specialist courts.** Staff assess case viability from submissions | **All courts.** Judicial officers manage high evidence volumes, including technical and traumatic material. | | |
| 4 **Remote proceedings:** Ageing technology burdening identity verification, session recording, and materials management | | **All courts.** Remote proceedings are required across alternative dispute resolution (ADR), trials, and hearings | | |
| 5 **Transcription and translation:** Stenographer shortages and limited translation services reduce accessibility and constrain real-time record-keeping | | **All courts.** Real-time transcription and translation are required across ADR, trials, and hearings.[1] | | |
| 6 **Legal research burden:** Identifying relevant case law and legislation is time-intensive, particularly where parties are self-represented | | | **Tribunal/specialist courts.** Particularly for inquisitorial proceedings | **All courts.** Judicial officers research relevant law prior to decisions |
| 7 **Decision timeline variability:** Deliberation times vary across judicial officers, extending resolution and increasing uncertainty for parties | **Criminal courts.** Applies at bail and remand decisions | | | **All courts.** Deliberation times vary across judicial officers |

Note: 1. Experts identified the availability of reliable real-time transcription services as a major access to justice challenge for migration matters in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Division 2).
Source: Expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

# AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are high-impact, low-risk entry points to address challenges and reduce court backlogs

**Opportunities for AI in the court system** Focus of this report **Rating:** Low High

Closer to judicial decision-making

| Challenges | Opportunities for AI | Potential impact |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Scheduling complexity | A **Smart scheduling:** Optimises staff and resource allocation, and supports case management including disputes, settlements, and deadline compliance | |
| 2 Document and deadline management | **Filing automation:** Validates and structures applications at lodgement, catching errors before they require registry rework | |
| | **Guided submission assistant**: Helps self-represented litigants produce a coherent submission through structured questions | |
| 3 Evidence volume | B **Document summarisation and review:** Assists with document review, document organisation, and prepares document summaries for judges | |
| 4 Remote proceedings | **Online dispute resolution:** Guides individuals through structured questions to identify legal issues and provide tailored information, particularly for small claims, traffic, and housing | |
| 5 Transcription and translation | **Transcript generation:** Produces searchable, redacted transcripts for media and court records | |
| | **Accessibility aids:** Supports translation, transcription, and real-time captioning | |
| 6 Legal research burden | C **Legal research support:** Assists with research across legislation, case law, and sentencing precedents | |
| | **Sentencing comparators:** Provides precedent-based comparator sentencing | |
| 7 Decision timeline variability | **Bail risk assessment:** Assists judges in assessing risk at bail decisions | |
| | **Bias detection:** Reviews judicial decisions for potential unconscious bias | |
| | **Judgment preparation:** Prepares draft notes to support judgments in lower-risk cases | |

While there are many promising potential applications of AI to improve access to justice in courts, this report focuses on three high-impact, low-risk opportunities: smart scheduling, document summarisation and review, and legal research support. There are other opportunities where future study would be particularly valuable.

The closer the use case is to judicial decision-making, the more care is needed to ensure its application does not hollow the 'core of law'. Thoughtfully designed AI tools that empower judges to more effectively contribute their irreplaceable legal and ethical judgment can be particularly effective.

Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *AI in Courts and Tribunals;* Justice Speakers Institute (2025) *Part One: AI in the Courtroom: Opportunities and Risks;* British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal (n.d.) *The CRT Process*; Coroners Court of Victoria (n.d.) *Technology at the* Court; Legg and Bell (2020) *Artificial intelligence and the legal profession*; expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

# AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support could deliver 95,500 additional finalisations per year

**Together, AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are projected to deliver 95,500 additional case finalisations per year.** This represents an 8 per cent uplift on the current national caseload of around 1.25 million.

**As the court that hears the most matters, Magistrates courts see the largest number of additional finalisations.** Magistrates courts currently finalise over one million cases per year, roughly five times the combined volume of Superior, District and County courts. Even modest proportional gains at this level produce large absolute numbers.

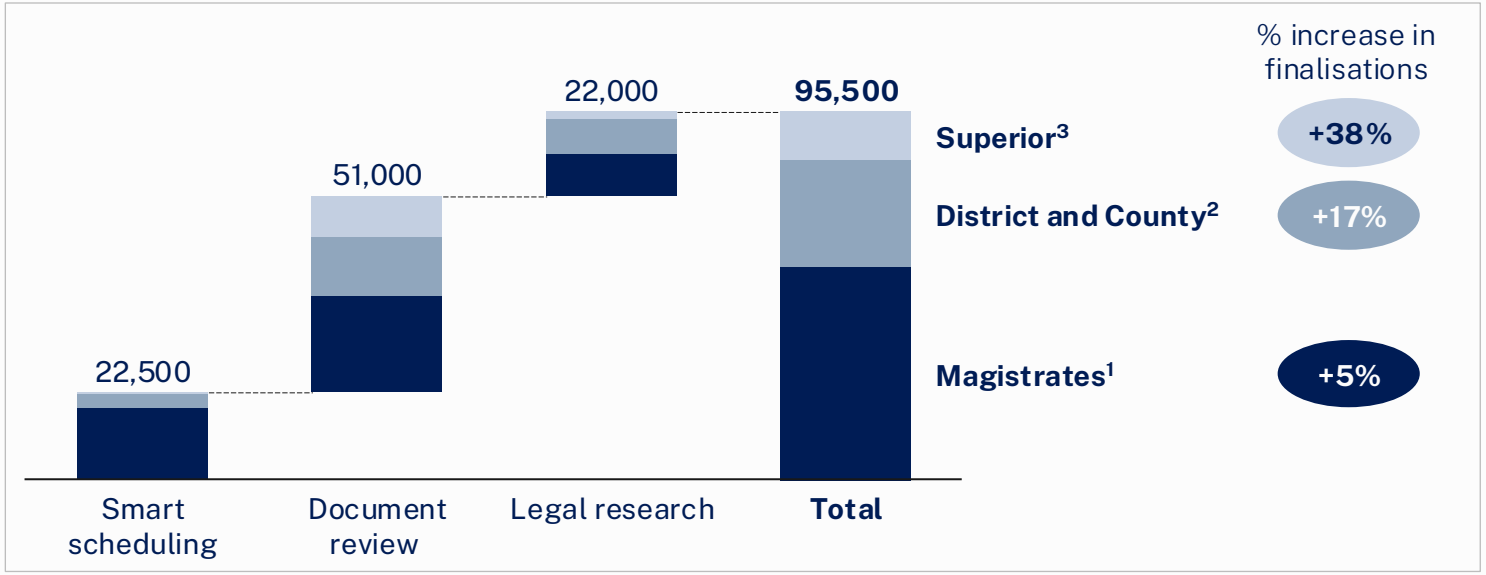
**In proportional terms, these tools have the greatest impact on Superior and District and County courts**, increasing finalisations by 38 and 17 per cent, respectively. This disproportionate impact largely reflects the higher volume of documents and complex legal matters in these courts, which could be made more efficient with AI-powered legal research and document review tools.

**These interventions meaningfully improve access to justice across three outcome metrics.** Additional finalisations translate into 68 per cent fewer backlogged cases by 2030 than without AI, a roughly nine-day reduction in average case duration, and the equivalent of a $431 million increase in annual court output.

Source: Mandala analysis.

**Combined impact of AI smart scheduling, assisted document review and legal research, by court tier**

Additional case finalisations per year




**Outcomes for access to justice**

1

**68%**
fewer backlogged cases by 2030 than without AI

2

**~9 day**
reduction in average ~16 week case duration

3

**$431M**
in additional court output annually

Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts;* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) *Criminal Courts, Australia 2023-24;* Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals;* expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

# AI smart scheduling can shift courts from manual calendar management to data-driven sitting and resource planning

**How AI smart scheduling can increase courts' capacity to hear cases**

Australian courts lose significant hearing capacity to scheduling inefficiencies, with only around 30 per cent of listed criminal trials proceeding as scheduled. AI smart scheduling tools convert this underutilised time into additional cases heard, increasing throughput without requiring new judges or courtrooms. Performance improves as the system learns from scheduling outcomes, refining its predictions based on the success of prior assumptions.

**22,500** additional cases heard

**Illustrative current vs AI-powered approach to judicial scheduling**

| | Building daily court list | Allocating judicial officers and courtrooms | Sending hearing reminders | Filling vacated courtroom slots |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current approach | Court staff build daily lists from fixed calendars, typically **at two to three times capacity** to compensate for matters that settle, plead out or adjourn. | Court staff allocate judges to lists using **tacit knowledge and informal coordination**, with some decisions made close to or **on the hearing date.** | Parties receive a **single formal notice** of their hearing date (served by post or in person), with **limited systematic reminders** as the date approaches. | Court staff manually find replacements through **phone calls and informal coordination**, often leaving freed **courtroom time unfilled.** |
| AI-powered approach | System uses historical case data to predict which listed matters will proceed, building **precision lists that maximise courtroom utilisation** without over- or under-listing. | System matches cases to judges based on **specialisation, workload and case complexity**, balancing allocation across the bench transparently. | System sends **automated, targeted digital reminders** before each hearing and **identifies highest-risk cases** for additional intervention such as remote attendance options. | System detects when a matter resolves and instantly **identifies ready cases** to bring forward, proposing reallocation options **within minutes.** |

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology (2007) *Criminal trial delays in Australia: trial listing outcomes*; BOCSAR (2015) *The NSW Rolling List Court Evaluation: Final Report*; UK Ministry of Justice (2026) *J-AI listing assistant*; Dinh et al. (2024) *End-to-End Optimization and Learning of Fair Court Schedules*; Wallace et al. (2014) *Work Allocation in Australian Courts*; Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *AI in Courts and Tribunals;* UK Ministry of Justice (2026) *Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings*; AO Shaolin et al. (2021) *ML-based case assignment in Chinese courts;* Chohlas-Wood et al. (2025) *Automated reminders reduce incarceration for missed court dates;* UK Ministry of Justice (2025) *AI Action Plan for Justice.*

# AI smart scheduling delivers the largest proportional gains where courtroom availability is the primary constraint

**AI smart scheduling is projected to deliver 22,500 additional finalisations per year.** Smart scheduling increases effective courtroom utilisation by 12.8 per cent, meaning more people can access the court system.

**District and County courts see the largest proportional gain.** This is not because their scheduling is simpler; Magistrates courts manage far higher hearing volumes and more demanding listing environments. The difference is in which inefficiencies AI can address. At the Magistrates level, a significant share of lost courtroom time stems from factors outside the scheduling system: parties unready to proceed, self-represented litigants, and high rates of non-hearing appearances. Smart scheduling recovers capacity lost to listing and coordination failures, not case readiness failures. District and County courts have more of their inefficiency in the former category. Superior courts see the smallest effect, where reserved judgment time rather than courtroom availability is the binding constraint.

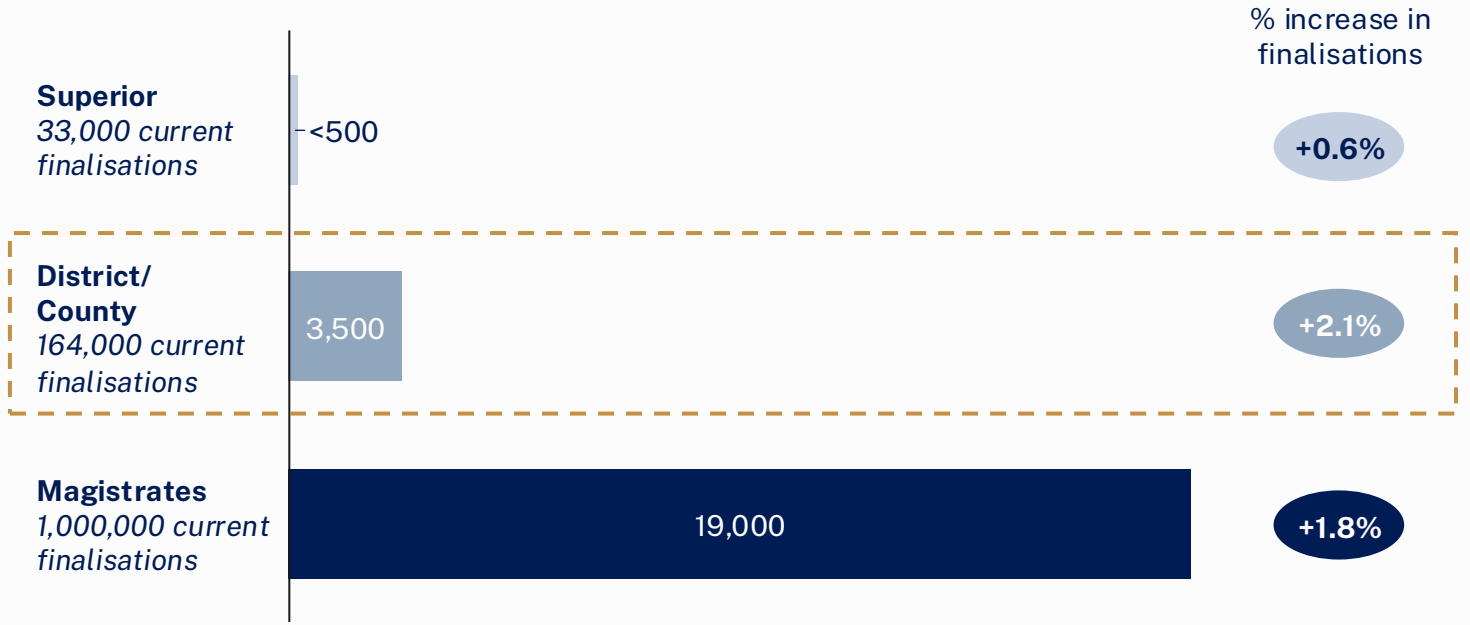
Source: Mandala analysis.

**Estimated increase in annual finalisations from smart scheduling, by court tier**

Additional case finalisations per year

**12.8%** Increase in **effective courtroom utilisation**

**22,500** **Additional case finalisations** using the same court resources




**District and County courts record the largest proportional gain in finalisations.** AI scheduling tools are most effective here because their dominant inefficiency (coordinating specialist judges across longer, more variable matters) is a binding constraint that scheduling optimisation directly resolves.

Note: Additional court finalisations do not add to the total due to rounding.
Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts;* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) *Criminal Courts, Australia 2023-24;* Payne (2007) *Criminal trial delays in Australia*; Weatherburn et al. (2000) *Factors Affecting Trial Delay in the NSW District Criminal Court*; UK Ministry of Justice (2024) *Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly*; Chohlas-Wood et al. (2025) *Automated reminders reduce incarceration for missed court dates*; Mandala analysis.

# The UK is implementing its AI smart scheduling rollout in two stages: digitise, then automate

## Context

The UK's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has taken a sequenced approach to scheduling reform, **first replacing paper-based systems** with a national digital platform, then **layering AI intelligence** on top of it.

| | Digitise with 'ListAssist' | Automate with 'J-AI' |
|---|---|---|
| **Overview** | A **national digital scheduling platform** replacing paper diaries and spreadsheets across civil, family, and Magistrates courts in England and Wales | An **AI-assisted listing tool for judges**, modelled on NHS technology originally built to manage patient waiting lists and reduce elective care delays |
| **Function** | Automates routine hearing listings, gives listing officers **real-time visibility of courtroom and judicial availability**, and extends planning beyond the previous six-month horizon | Analyses case-level data to **proactively flag matters at risk of delay** and recommends scheduling actions, shifting listing from a reactive to an anticipatory function |
| **Deployment** | **Live across all civil and family courts**; rolling out to Magistrates courts nationally following successful early-adopter pilots in Mold, Kent, Essex, and Redditch in late 2024 | **Pilot underway**; national rollout committed subject to results and backed by over £12 million in dedicated justice AI funding announced in February 2026 |

> [On J-AI] If the pilot is successful, we will begin a national roll-out as soon as possible, to take us from local listing, done on basic spreadsheets, to a national and intelligent listing process that delivers swifter justice for victims
>
> – The Rt Hon. David Lammy MP, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK

## Applicability to Australian courts

Australian courts are at a similar starting point to the UK, with Magistrates and regional courts in particular still relying on paper diaries and spreadsheets for daily listing. Enabling AI-assisted scheduling requires centralising hearing calendars, judge availability, and courtroom allocation onto a shared digital platform.

Source: UK Government (2025) *Scheduling and listing: using technology to co-ordinate resources more effectively*; UK Government (2025) *AI Action Plan for Justice*; Computer Weekly (2026) *Deputy prime minister vows to reform justice system with AI.*

# AI-assisted document review reduces the time spent on high-volume review tasks, freeing associates and judges to focus on legal analysis and judgment

**How AI-assisted document summarisation can reduce the time courts spend on manual document review and summarisation**
The volume of written materials involved in each case is substantial and has grown considerably. Associates and judges are under sustained and increasing pressure to process large volumes of material with high accuracy within tight timeframes. The case for AI is strongest where document volumes are high and where locating relevant information across multiple sources is time-consuming.

**51,000** additional cases heard

**Illustrative current vs AI-powered approach to document summarisation**

| | Case file review | Identifying and summarising key issues and arguments | Daily transcript review and evidence tracking | Synthesising factual and evidentiary material |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Current approach** | Associates **work through filed documents**, including pleadings, affidavits, and witness statements, and prepare materials such as chronologies for trial. | Associates **review documents to summarise the key issues** in dispute and each party's position. Judges review materials, supported by the summaries provided by the associate. | Associates **manually log tendered exhibits**, track witness evidence against the transcript, and flag any errors or gaps for the judge's review during each day of a trial. | Associates **review, organise, and summarise trial documents**, transcripts, and submissions to help judges efficiently navigate information and write their judgments. |
| **AI-powered approach** | The system **generates structured chronology, indexes and witness lists** from documents provided for associates to review and verify. The system identifies any missing documents for the associate to follow up. | The system **produces an issue-by-issue summary** of each party's position, drawing on evidence across multiple sources. The associate verifies and refines the output. | The system **continuously processes the transcript to log exhibits**, tag evidence by witness and issue, and flag inconsistencies with prior statements, replacing manual end-of-day reconciliation with a live and searchable record. | The **system summarises trial documents, transcripts, and submissions, with the associates verifying output**. This reduces time spent on manual document organisation, allowing associates to spend more time writing judgments. |

Source: Supreme Court of Victoria (2025) *Sir Ninian Stephen Law Program Oration 2025 'AI and the Judicial System';* Needham (2025) *AI and the Courts in 2025;* McQuillen and McCann (2026) *AI and the evolution of document review and production;* The Chief Justice of New South Wales (2025) *Supreme court practice note SC GEN 23 Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI);* Mandala analysis.

# AI-assisted document review delivers the largest proportional gains in courts with high document volume

**AI document review and summarisation free up an estimated 1.4 million hours of review time across Australian courts, net of time required to verify AI outputs.** In the Magistrates Court, where document volumes are lower, review time is not a binding constraint on case progression. In the District and County courts and Superior courts, where judges have greater control over scheduling, it is. The time savings realised by AI tools could result in approximately 51,000 additional case finalisations.

**Superior courts see the largest proportional gain in case finalisations.** Complex commercial matters and class actions before the Federal and Supreme Courts generate significant volumes of evidence, making review time a particularly binding constraint. In one major Federal Court matter (*the C7 case*), discovery encompassed 85,700 documents across 589,000 pages. Of these, only 15 per cent were cited in submissions and a further 15 per cent were formally tendered into evidence. Class actions compound this further, given the volume of documentation associated with cases that may have thousands of members. This burden has grown substantially in recent decades due to the proliferation of digital communications.

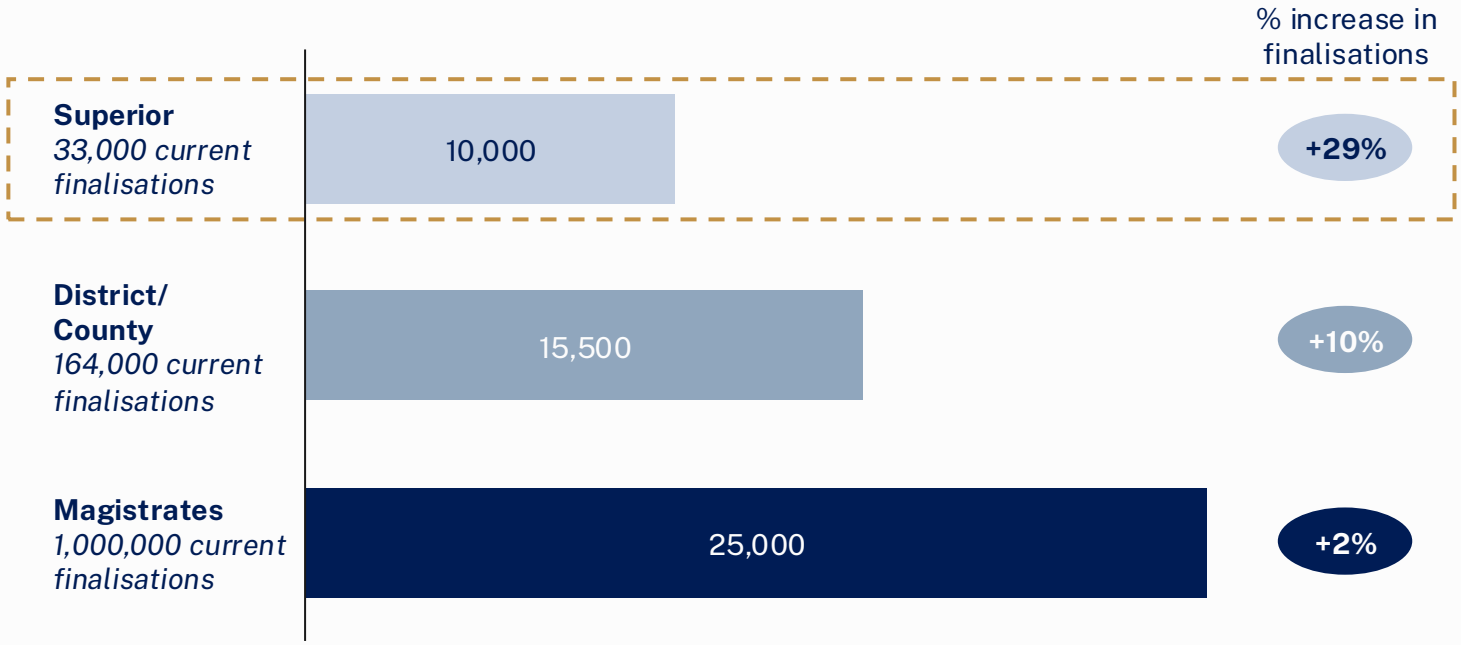
Source: Australian Law Reform Commission (2011) *Federal Court of Australia;* Murphy (2013) *The Operation of the Australian Class Action Regime;* Australian Law Reform Commission (2010) *Issues with the process of discovery.*

**Estimated increase in annual finalisations from AI document review and summarisation, by court tier**

Additional case finalisations per year

**1.4 million** **Document review and summarisation hours** freed up across Australian courts

**51,000** **Additional case finalisations** using the same court resources




**Superior courts record the largest proportional increase in finalisations.** AI document review and summarisation is most effective here because cases involve larger document volumes that are time-consuming to review and search for relevant information.

Note: Additional court finalisations do not add to the total due to rounding.
Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts.* Mandala analysis.

# Singapore's Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) AI tool summarises case materials for magistrates and individuals

## Context

Singapore has developed an AI-powered document summarisation and translation tool for the Small Claims Tribunal, where growing evidence volumes and self-represented litigants create significant workload pressure on magistrates.

| AI-powered case summarisation tool | |
|---|---|
| **Overview** | Developed with Harvey.AI under a two-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2024. Supports the SCT, which handles over 10,000 cases annually. Parties are self-represented in low-value civil disputes, and legal representation is not permitted. |
| **Function** | Processes large volumes of unstructured evidence from informal channels such as WhatsApp and email. Generates pre-hearing case summaries for each party. Translates documents on demand. |
| **Impact** | Reduces the time magistrates spend organising disorganised submissions. Enables magistrates to focus on the more complex aspects of each case. Helps self-represented parties understand each other's claims before the hearing. |
| **Safeguards** | Case details are securely stored and confidentiality is maintained. All AI outputs are subject to mandatory human verification by judicial officers. The tool is scoped to factual summarisation only and does not inform judicial decision-making. |

> "We are committed to harnessing the power of technology to improve access to justice for all. This new AI tool is a testament to that mission, helping our Tribunal Magistrates manage an increasing caseload while maintaining the Judiciary's high standards of quality and fairness."
>
> – Mr Tan Ken Hwee, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer, Singapore Courts

## Applicability to Australian courts

Australian courts face a similar challenge of processing large volumes of digital communications, including emails and message threads. AI document summarisation would reduce the time associates spend identifying and extracting relevant information from the evidentiary record.

Source: Government of Singapore (2025) *Media Release: New Generative AI-powered Case Summarisation Tool to Help Small Claims Tribunals Users*; Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice (n.d.) *Singapore*; Cheng, I (2025) *Singapore Courts rolls out new AI tool to help support, summarise Small Claims Tribunals cases.*

# AI legal research support can reduce time spent locating, verifying and synthesising legal precedent, freeing capacity for hearing and deciding cases

**How AI legal research support can reduce the time courts spend finding and applying legal precedent**
Legal research is one of the most time-intensive stages of judicial work. Locating, verifying and organising relevant precedent requires repeated manual searches across multiple databases, with each step dependent on the researcher's familiarity with the specific area of law. An AI legal research tool accelerates these tasks, allowing more court capacity to be directed toward hearing and deciding cases.

**22,000** additional cases heard

**Illustrative current vs AI-powered approach to legal research**

| | Framing the legal issue and search terms | Searching and retrieving relevant law | Verifying that authorities remain good law ('noting up') | Synthesising findings into a structured research output |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Current approach** | Associates build keyword queries manually, **testing multiple term combinations** across databases to capture relevant authorities. | Researchers run **separate keyword searches across multiple databases** to locate relevant cases, legislation, and secondary sources, with results ranked by **keyword frequency.** | Researchers **manually verify** each cited authority is operative and has not been overruled, requiring **separate checks** across case law databases and amendment histories. | Associates **manually compile** verified authorities into a research memo or precedent table, extracting key principles and organising findings by issue. |
| **AI-powered approach** | System accepts plain-language queries and generates **semantically matched search terms**, broadening coverage without requiring precise legal terminology. | System retrieves relevant cases, legislation, and secondary sources ranked by **conceptual relevance** across **integrated databases**, reducing multi-jurisdiction research time. | System routes all cited authorities through **automated citation verification**, identifying cases that have been overruled or weakened and legislation that has been amended or repealed. | System generates **structured precedent summaries and comparison tables** directly from verified results, organised by legal issue. Associate performs **quality checks** on outputs. |

Source: Varun Magesh et al. (2025) *Hallucination-Free? Assessing the Reliability of Leading AI Legal Research Tools*; Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice (2025) *Singapore*; UC Berkeley Law (2025) *Major Case Studies of AI Implementation;* Thomson Reuters (2023) *Legal Research Guide*; Thomson Reuters (2025) *Future of Professionals Report*; Kathy Mack et al. (2010) *Time for Judgment Writing*; Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals.*

# AI-assisted legal research delivers the largest proportional gains where research intensity is highest

**AI tools are projected to free an estimated 500,000 hours of research time annually across Australian courts.** This figure reflects gross hours saved, minus the time required to verify AI outputs. Importantly, the extent to which those hours convert to additional finalisations depends on whether research is the binding constraint on court output. Given the respective binding constraints across court tiers, the time saved yields approximately 22,000 additional finalisations per year.

**Superior courts see the largest proportional gain in finalisations.** Two factors explain this. First, Superior courts handle a higher share of research-intensive matters, and those matters take substantially longer per case than their equivalents at lower tiers. Although AI tools deliver a somewhat smaller efficiency gain per research task at Superior courts, where novel legal questions resist easy compression, that gain operates on a far larger base of research hours. Second, in Superior courts, research time is also a greater constraint on how many cases can be resolved. Freeing it up translates more directly into additional finalisations than at lower tiers, where courtroom availability is the primary constraint.

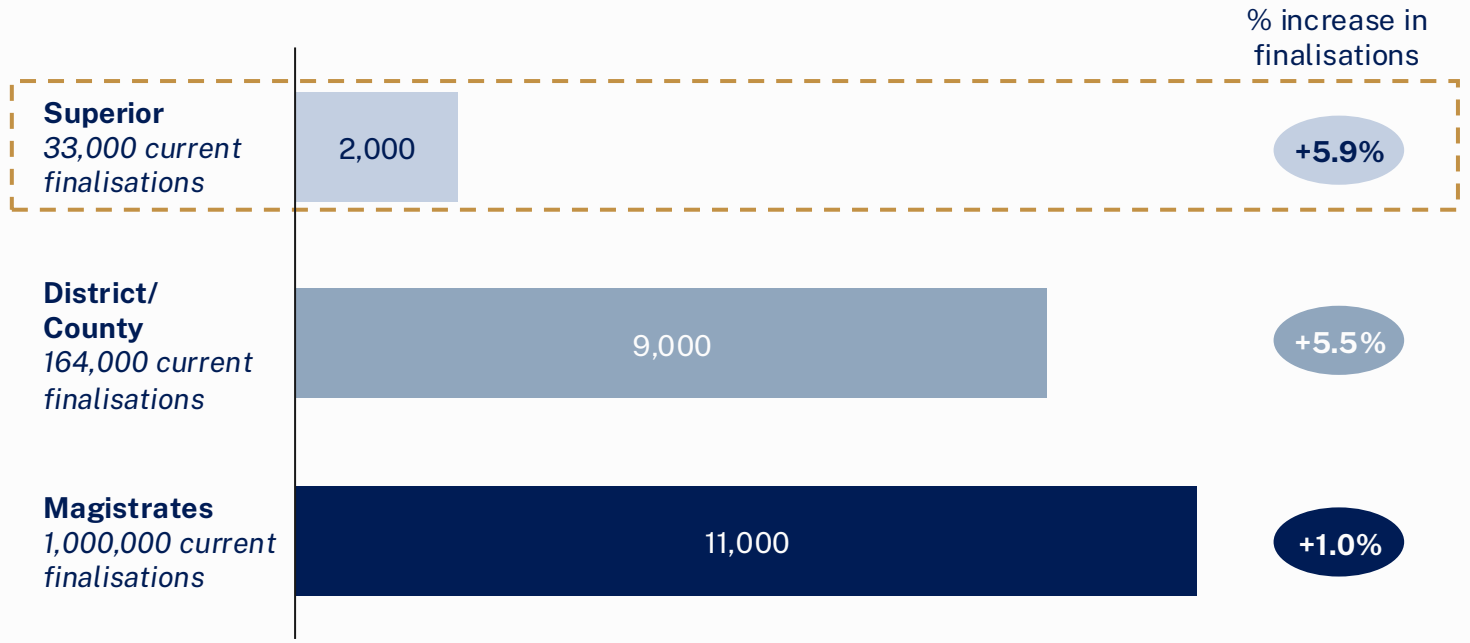
Source: Mandala analysis.

**Estimated increase in annual finalisations from AI-assisted legal research, by court tier**

Additional case finalisations per year

**500,000** **Research hours** freed up across Australian courts

**22,000** **Additional case finalisations** using the same court resources




**Superior courts record the largest proportional increase in finalisations.** AI legal research is most effective here because there is more research to compress, and research time is a key constraint on case output.

Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts*; Mack et al., (2012) *Judicial Workload: Time, Tasks and Work Organisation;* Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals;* Magesh et al. (2025) *Hallucination-Free? Assessing the Reliability of Leading AI Legal Research Tools;* expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

# Singapore's GPT-Legal cuts legal research from days to ten minutes

## Context

Singapore has built a government-developed AI legal research tool **embedded in its national platform**, combining summarisation, natural language search, and hallucination safeguards designed specifically for judicial use.

| GPT-Legal | |
|---|---|
| **Overview** | A government-developed AI research tool deployed on Singapore's national legal research platform **LawNet** |
| **Function** | Condenses 8,000-word court judgments into **structured 800-word summaries**. A natural language Q&A layer (launched September 2025) allows researchers to query across judgments, legislation, and law reports in plain English |
| **Impact** | Reduces judgment summarisation from **two days to approximately ten minutes,** generating summaries for over 15,000 previously unsummarised unreported judgments |
| **Safeguards** | Hallucination risk is addressed **within the workflow**: each summary carries an **accuracy score**, poorly substantiated passages are flagged, and source paragraphs are **highlighted for cross-referencing** |

> AI's central promise to us is as a capability booster, allowing us to do our tasks faster, cheaper and, hopefully, better. On occasion this boost may also enable us to be redeployed on other tasks, particularly those that require greater flexibility, or the human touch.
>
> – The Honourable Justice Xu

## Applicability to Australian courts

Australia's existing platforms (AustLII, Jade, Westlaw AU, and LexisNexis) collectively cover the authoritative corpus practitioners rely on daily. AI tools can likely be trained and validated against these datasets directly, without the need to construct new legal infrastructure from scratch.

Source: IMDA (2024) Legal research to become more efficient with new large language model contextualised to domestic law; IMDA (2025) Smart AI Tools will Transform How Singapore Firms Handle Legal Research and Company Paperwork; AWS (2024) IMDA case study; Judiciary of Singapore (2025) Justice Aidan Xu: Speech at the IT Law Series.

# Adopting these AI use cases would lower the cost of delivering justice, accelerate resolutions for litigants and reverse a decade of backlog growth

**95,500**
additional cases finalised per year

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME METRIC** | **68%** fewer backlogged cases by 2030 than without AI | **~9 day** reduction in average ~16 week case duration | **$431M** in additional court output annually |
| **IMPLICATIONS** | ▪ **All courts now finish more cases than they receive in a year.** The three court types move from adding cases to the backlog each year to having fewer backlogged cases due to added finalisations.<br>▪ **District and County courts result in 71 per cent fewer backlogged cases by 2030.** They already finish almost as many cases as they receive (99.9 per cent vs. 92.5 per cent in the Superior courts), so additional AI-enabled capacity can more easily go to reducing the existing backlog rather than just keeping pace with new cases. | ▪ **The time savings are largest where delays cost people the most.** District and County courts are projected to see case durations fall by around four weeks, and Superior courts by six weeks. For the approximately 20,000 criminal defendants on remand at any given time, shorter proceedings mean less time in custody before verdict.<br>▪ **Each week saved reduces legal bills and lost income for parties.** For legal aid clients and self-represented litigants, faster resolution directly lowers the cost of going through the system. | ▪ **Courts resolve an additional $431M worth of cases each year.** This is equivalent to cutting the average cost per case by 7 per cent. Cost reduction for finalisations is greatest in the Superior courts, followed by District and County courts.<br>▪ **Future expenditure growth can now target access gaps rather than baseline operations.** Rather than increasing spending just to maintain output, courts can direct additional funding to unmet need, including the 160,000 Australians turned away from community legal centres each year and the $484M legal aid shortfall. |

Deep dives to follow

Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts;* National Legal Aid (2024) *Justice on the Brink: Legal Aid Funding Falls Short;* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025) *Prisoners in Australia*; Mandala analysis.

# AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support will see 73,000 fewer backlogged cases by 2030

**Adopting AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support limits the 2030 backlog to 34,000 cases, against a no-intervention projection of 107,000.** The 73,000-case reduction reflects finalisations in excess of new lodgements, with a further adjustment for the greater resources required to resolve long-standing matters. As AI-enabled gains compound, the gap between trajectories widens to 68 per cent by 2030.

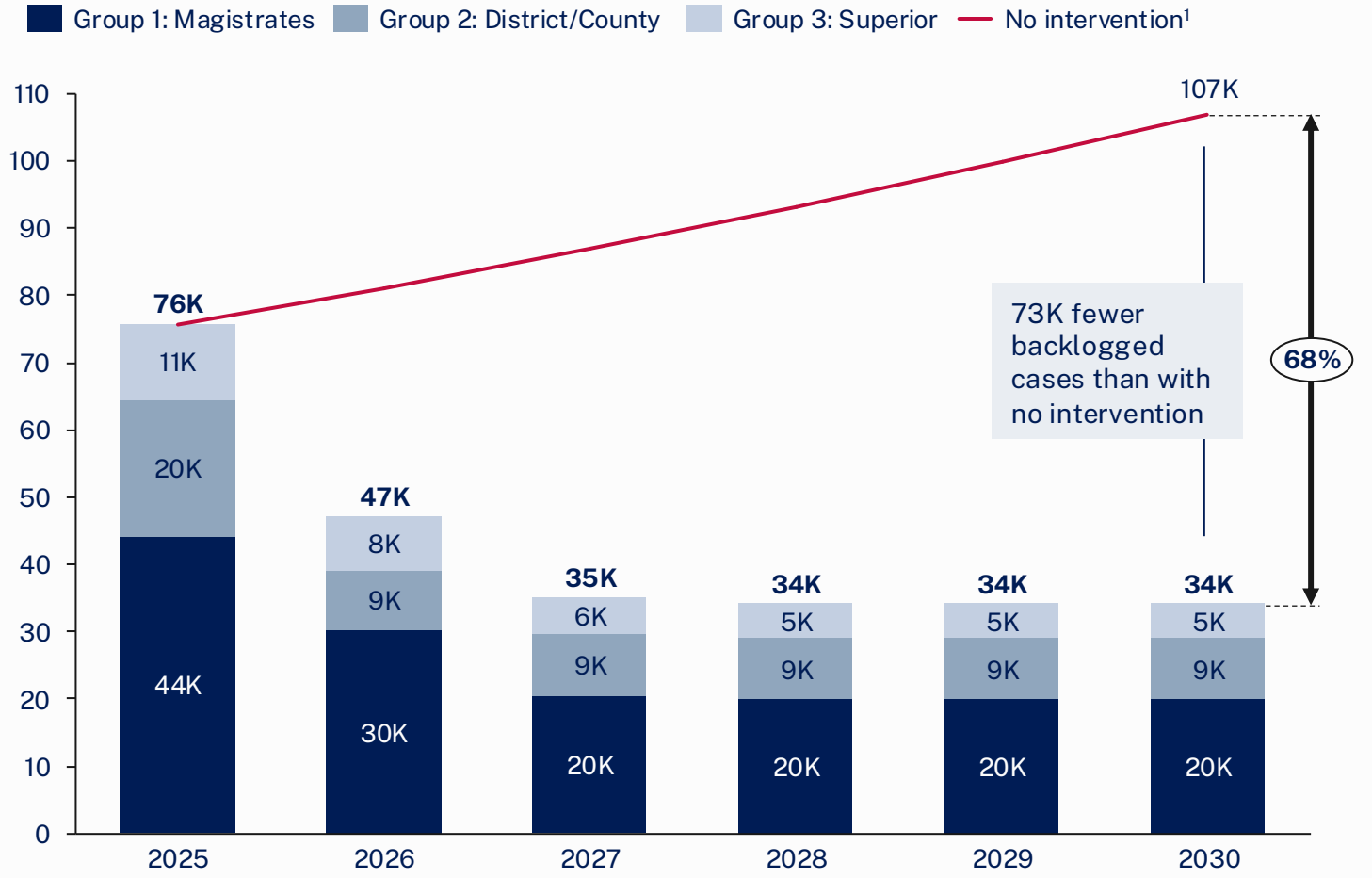
**The reduction in the case backlog is substantial due to the gains from document review, with backlogs reducing to the structural minimum within one to two years.**[1] District and County court backlogs are reduced to a structural minimum within a year. Superior and Magistrates court backlogs are reduced to the structural minimum within about two years.

**AI can address the growing structural capacity problem in the courts.** These three interventions alone are projected to stabilise a backlog that has grown consistently for a decade and reduce the expenditure pressure courts would otherwise face to maintain service levels.

Note: 1. The structural minimum reflects cases pending over 12 months that are unlikely to be resolved through court-side efficiency gains alone. These include matters delayed by party-driven adjournments, complex multi-party proceedings, interlocutory appeals, and other factors outside direct court control.

**Projected case backlog in Australia's Courts**

Backlog (cases pending >12 months), 000s, 2025-2030



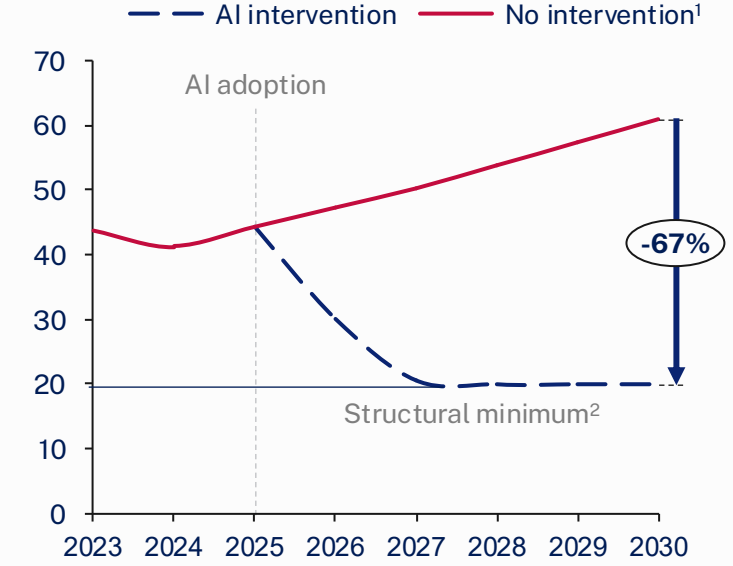

Note: 1. Modelled using 9-year average annual backlog growth rate. Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts*; Mandala analysis.

# Specifically, these interventions would significantly reduce the backlog across all court tiers within one to two years

## Magistrates

AI adoption **reduces the backlog by 67 per cent** over the next five years. Absent intervention, the backlog is projected to grow to **61,000**

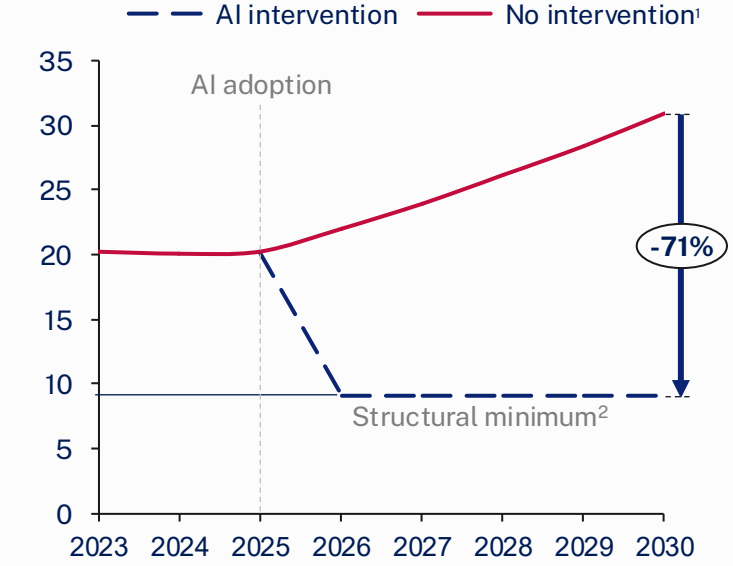
Backlog (cases pending >12 months), 000s, 2023-2030




## District / County

Within a year, AI-enabled finalisations **reduce backlog to its ~9,000 structural minimum** (leaving only cases delayed by factors beyond court control)

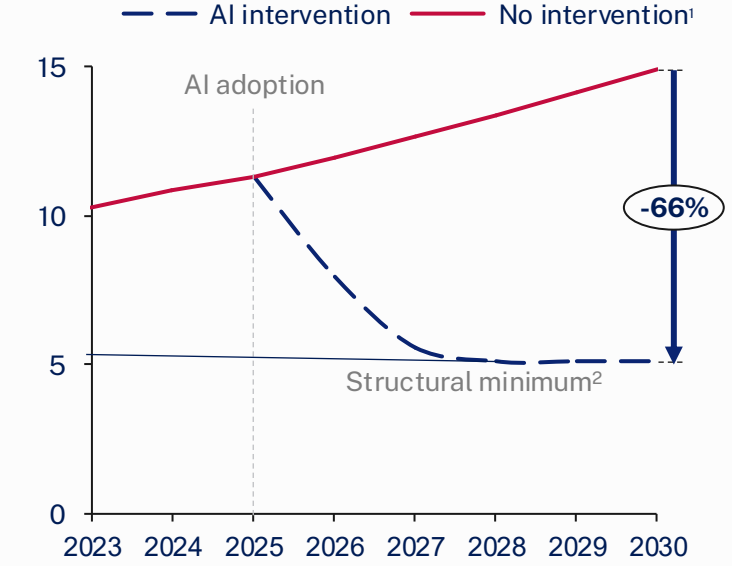
Backlog (cases pending >12 months), 000s, 2023-2030




## Superior

AI adoption **reduces the backlog by 66 per cent** over the next five years, reducing the backlog by nearly 10,000 by 2030

Backlog (cases pending >12 months), 000s, 2023-2030




The structural minimum reflects cases pending over 12 months that are unlikely to be resolved through efficiency gains alone. These include matters delayed by party-driven adjournments, complex multi-party proceedings, interlocutory appeals, and other factors outside direct court control. Broader judicial process reforms could further reduce this structural backlog, but these sit outside the scope of the AI opportunity examined in this report.

Note: 1. Modelled using 9-year average annual backlog growth rate.
Source: Productivity Commission (2026) *Report on Government Services, Part C, Section 7: Courts*; Mandala analysis.

1 Australia's courts face a structural capacity problem and have been slow to adopt the AI tools that could address it

2 AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are three high-impact, low-risk entry points for courts

**3 Maximising AI's impact requires investment in digital infrastructure, governance and workforce capability**

4 Appendix

# Digital infrastructure, coordinated governance, and workforce capability are the three foundational pillars of AI excellence in courts

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PURPOSE** | **To improve access to justice for all Australians by adopting AI safely, responsibly, and at scale** | | |
| **RECOMMENDATION** | **1 Digitise court records and standardise data infrastructure** | **2 Establish national AI governance and accountability standards** | **3 Build structured workforce capability for AI adoption** |
| **RATIONALE** | Structured, machine-readable data expands the range and quality of AI applications available to courts | Courts need a coordinating governance structure to adopt AI tools consistently and manage risks across jurisdictions | Judicial officers and court staff need to understand how to use, verify, and scrutinise AI outputs to fully realise productivity gains |
| **ELEMENTS** | • **Target digitisation efforts at Magistrates courts and regional registries**, where paper-based filing remains most prevalent<br>• **Create structured, machine-readable legal databases** to enable efficient AI-powered analytics and research<br>• **Ensure courts have access to secure cloud environments** with sufficient capacity to support AI solutions | • **Engage AIJA,[1] CCJANZ,[2] and AJOA[3]** to help develop AI governance standards and procurement frameworks<br>• **Establish a single judicial AI impact assessment standard,** to ensure consistent evaluation of accuracy, bias, and data protection across jurisdictions<br>• **Require disclosure and human review of AI outputs** that materially influence judicial outcomes | • **Develop role-specific AI training for all judicial staff**, focused on evaluating AI-generated outputs rather than tool operation alone<br>• **Establish a vendor-independent national curriculum** through the National Judicial College, covering all jurisdictions<br>• **Refresh training content on a fixed schedule** as AI tools and court practice evolve |
| **EXAMPLES** | Queensland Courts CDO-led Digitisation Program; Singapore eLitigation system; UK HMCTS Reform Programme | Canada guidelines for AI use in courts; UK Ministry of Justice AI Action Plan for Justice | UK Courts and Tribunals Judiciary AI Guidance; Singapore Ministry of Law GenAI Guide |

Notes: 1. Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration 2. Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand 3. Australasian Judicial Officers Association
Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals*; UK Ministry of Justice (2025) *HMCTS Reform Programme*; Supreme Court of Singapore (2024) *eLitigation Case Management System;* Queensland Courts (2025) *CDO-led Digitisation Program*; Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Canada (2024) *Use of Artificial Intelligence by Courts to Enhance Court Operations;* UNESCO (2025) *Guidelines for the Use of AI Systems in Courts and Tribunals*; UK Ministry of Justice (2025) *AI Action Plan for Justice*; Canadian Judicial Council (2024) *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts*; UK Courts and Tribunals Judiciary (2025) *Artificial Intelligence Guidance for Judicial Office Holders*; Mandala analysis.

# Courts should pilot the three prioritised use cases in high-volume, lower-risk settings before a wider deployment across the court system (I / III)

| | **ASSESS**<br>*Set tool boundaries* | **CONFIGURE**<br>*Prepare data and adapt to court context* | **PILOT**<br>*Test in a selected court* | **SCALE**<br>*Roll out with ongoing monitoring* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Smart scheduling** | ▪ **Define the tool's primary remit** (e.g., predict hearing duration, flag failure to appear risk) and where human authority over listing decisions is preserved<br>▪ **Audit whether further digitisation is necessary** or whether existing case management data is sufficient to support the tool | ▪ **Clean and structure historical listing data**, resolving gaps in hearing outcomes and adjournment reasons<br>▪ **Calibrate the tool to jurisdiction-specific patterns** such as seasonal variation, matter-type mix, and judge availability | ▪ **Select one high-volume District or County court to pilot** where scheduling waste is concentrated in overlisting and allocation mismatches<br>▪ **Equip listing staff with clear protocols** for when to accept, override, or escalate the tool's recommendations | ▪ **Extend to additional jurisdictions**, recalibrating the model for local listing practices and matter-type mix as it accumulates outcomes data and prediction accuracy improves<br>▪ **Monitor for allocation bias** across matter types, with periodic review against the pre-pilot baseline |

Source: Digital Transformation Agency (2025) *Australian Government's AI Technical Standard*; Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals*; Canadian Judicial Council (2024) *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts;* Department of Industry, Science and Resources (2024) *Voluntary AI Safety Standard*; Mandala analysis.

# Courts should pilot the three prioritised use cases in high-volume, lower-risk settings before a wider deployment across the court system (II / III)

| | **ASSESS**<br>*Set tool boundaries* | **CONFIGURE**<br>*Prepare data and adapt to court context* | **PILOT**<br>*Test in a selected court* | **SCALE**<br>*Roll out with ongoing monitoring* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Document review** | ▪ **Define the tool's primary remit** (e.g., summarising submissions, generating chronologies, indexes and witness lists) and where judges and associates retain responsibility for interpretation<br>▪ **Establish information security requirements**, including whether sensitive, suppressed, or confidential material can be input into the tool and whether a closed system is required<br>▪ **Establish clear guidelines** for judicial officers on using AI for document summarisation, and confirm disclosure obligations under relevant court practice notes | ▪ **Structure and tag historical case files** to train or calibrate the tool on document types specific to the jurisdiction (affidavits, statements of claim, expert reports)<br>▪ **Test summarisation accuracy** against past documents with known content, to establish a baseline error and omission rate<br>▪ **Track the version history** of documents prepared using the AI tool compared to those prepared by a human | ▪ **Select one Superior court with a high volume of documents to pilot** with associates and judges<br>▪ **Require associates to verify all AI-generated summaries** against source documents and record instances of missed or misstated content<br>▪ **Provide education** to judicial officers using the tool for document review | ▪ **Extend to additional document types or court tiers,** prioritising those with the greatest review burden<br>▪ **Maintain summarisation accuracy** as document formats and drafting practices evolve, with scheduled audits against human review benchmarks<br>▪ **Track efficiency gains and user satisfaction** among judicial officers, feeding both into the case for wider rollout |

Source: Mortimer, D S, Chief Justice (2026) *Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Practice Note (GPN-AI);* Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals;* NSW Supreme Court (2025) *Supreme court practice note SC GEN 23 Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI);* Mandala analysis.

# Courts should pilot the three prioritised use cases in high-volume, lower-risk settings before a wider deployment across the court system (III / III)

| | **ASSESS**<br>*Set tool boundaries* | **CONFIGURE**<br>*Prepare data and adapt to court context* | **PILOT**<br>*Test in a selected court* | **SCALE**<br>*Roll out with ongoing monitoring* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AI-assisted legal research** | ▪ **Define the tool's primary remit** (e.g., case law retrieval, citation checking) and where judicial officers retain responsibility for outputs<br>▪ **Establish information security requirements**, including what case-specific or suppressed material can be input into the tool and whether a closed system is required | ▪ **Integrate the tool in relevant legal databases**, ensuring coverage of jurisdiction-specific legislation, case law, and practice directions<br>▪ **Test output accuracy** using past judgments with known research inputs, to establish a baseline hallucination rate | ▪ **Select one Superior court to pilot** with associates and research staff<br>▪ **Require judicial officers to verify all AI-generated research** and record instances where outputs are inaccurate or incomplete | ▪ **Extend access to additional court tiers**, prioritising the most research-intensive roles<br>▪ **Maintain tool accuracy** as legislation and case law evolve, with scheduled audits against human research benchmarks |

Source: Digital Transformation Agency (2025) *Australian Government's AI Technical Standard*; Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals*; Canadian Judicial Council (2024) *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts;* Department of Industry, Science and Resources (2024) *Voluntary AI Safety Standard*; Mandala analysis.

# Further AI use cases can target the constraints remaining after the efficiency gains from smart scheduling, document review, and legal research

| Court tier | Major remaining constraints | **Future AI use cases** (non-exhaustive) |
|---|---|---|
| **Group 1: Magistrates** | **Self-representation and party unreadiness:** Around half of Magistrates court litigants are self-represented, generating deficient filings, longer hearings, and more adjournments | **Guided submission assistant:** Guides self-represented litigants through structured prompts to develop coherent submissions, reducing deficient filings at source |
| | **Paper-based registry operations:** Many registries still process physical files, consuming up to 30 per cent of staff time on manual tasks that reduce capacity for case progression | **Filing automation:** Validates and structures applications at lodgement, catching incomplete forms and formatting errors before they require registry rework |
| **Group 2: District/County** | **Sentencing complexity:** Serious indictable sentencing requires locating comparable sentences across jurisdictions manually, adding time and contributing to inconsistency | **Sentencing comparators:** Reduces per-matter research time, supports more consistent outcomes when used with guidelines preventing the perpetuation of systematic bias |
| **Group 3: Superior** | **Judgment writing and reasoning time:** Judgment drafting takes approximately 150 per cent of hearing time, making post-hearing preparation a binding constraint on annual output | **Transcript generation:**[1] Real-time transcription gives judicial officers immediate access to the hearing record, eliminating delays from waiting for corrected transcripts before drafting can begin |

Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals;* Kathy Mack et al. (2010) *Time for Judgment Writing;* Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration; British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal (n.d.) *The CRT Process;* expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

1 Australia's courts face a structural capacity problem and have been slow to adopt the AI tools that could address it

2 AI smart scheduling, document review and legal research support are three high-impact, low-risk entry points for courts

3 Maximising AI's impact requires investment in digital infrastructure, governance and workforce capability

4 **Appendix**

# Before rolling out pilot programs, courts should assess the extent to which AI tools directly address each court tier's binding constraints

**Priority for pilot rollout:** Low High

| Court tier | Binding constraints | Smart scheduling | AI-assisted document review | AI-assisted legal research |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group 1: Magistrates** | ▪ **Insufficient hearing slots:** Available courtroom time cannot absorb lodgement volumes, even with bulk mention lists and summary proceedings<br>▪ **Party unreadiness:** High rates of self-representation (~50 per cent) and failure to appear (~15 per cent) waste allocated slots, while late pleas and prosecution withdrawals consume further time without producing a hearing | Automated reminders and predictive listing reduce failure-to-appear driven slot waste, but **party behaviour and volume pressure** lie largely outside scheduling optimisation's reach | Low document volumes mean the gains are **unlikely to convert to a substantial number of additional finalisations**, compared to other court types | Research per matter is brief and well-precedented, so freed research time is **unlikely to convert to additional finalisations** |
| **Group 2: District /County** | ▪ **Coordination complexity:** Multi-day trials require simultaneous alignment of judicial officer, courtroom, counsel and witnesses<br>▪ **Listing to result ratios:** Less than half of listed trials proceed as scheduled, with most lost time attributable to court-side causes (e.g., over-listing, allocation mismatches) | Predictive listing and allocation optimisation **directly address the coordination failures and slot mismatches** that drive lost hearing time | **Document review converts partially into additional finalisations**, where judgments represent a modest share of case duration | **Research time converts partially into additional finalisations**, where judgments represent a modest share of case duration |
| **Group 3: Superior** | ▪ **Judgment preparation time:** Judgment writing takes about 1.5 times as long as the hearing itself, making post-hearing preparation the binding constraint on how many matters a judge can finalise per year<br>▪ **Research volume per matter:** Most matters require substantial multi-jurisdictional research, and the volume and complexity of this work directly constrains how quickly reserved judgments are produced | Scheduling waste exists but stems largely **from late settlements and complex disclosure** rather than court-side inefficiencies, limiting what algorithmic tools can recover | Accelerating document review and cross-checking **feeds directly into reserved judgment duration**, which is the primary cap on case output | Accelerating research **feeds directly into reserved judgment duration**, which is the primary cap on case output |

Source: Victorian Law Reform Commission (2025) *Artificial Intelligence in Victoria's Courts and Tribunals;* Kathy Mack et al. (2010) *Time for Judgment Writing;* Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration; British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal (n.d.) *The CRT Process;* expert interviews; Mandala analysis.

# We used court activity data, expert interviews, and global benchmarks to calculate additional finalisations from AI-assisted smart scheduling

## Input parameters

**Court activity data**
Annual finalisations, clearance rates, and pending caseloads by court tier

**Hearing waste profile**
Effective trial rates and causes of non-proceeding matters by court tier

**AI scheduling benchmarks**
Gross achievable improvements from predictive listing and judicial allocation optimisation

## Calculations (simplified)

### Step 1: Addressable waste pool

**Annual finalisations** x **Hearing-dependent share (%)** x **AI-addressable waste share (%)** = **Addressable waste pool**

- The **hearing-dependent share** captures matters requiring a judicial sitting slot to finalise, varying by court tier
- The **AI-addressable waste share** isolates non-proceeding listings due to overlisting, resource misallocation, and failure to appear, excluding non-addressable causes like late pleas

### Step 2: Net recoverable slots

**Addressable waste pool** x **Gross AI improvement (%)** x **Accuracy discount (%)** = **Net recoverable slots**

- This process is repeated for each of four scheduling sub-interventions, with tier-specific waste shares and improvement rates applied throughout

### Step 3: Additional finalisations

**Net recoverable slots** x **Annual finalisations** x **Throughput conversion rate** = **Additional finalisable matters**

- The **throughput conversion rate** reflects the share of recovered hearing capacity that converts to additional finalisations rather than slack. It varies by tier based on the extent to which hearing-slot availability is the binding constraint on finalisation volume.

## Key outputs

**Net recoverable hearing capacity**
Hearing slots recovered per year, by court tier and waste category

**Additional finalisations**
Net recoverable slots scaled across annual finalisations and moderated by throughput conversion rate, by court tier

# We used a parallel approach to calculate net hours saved and additional finalisations from AI-assisted legal research

## Input parameters

**Court activity data**
Annual finalisations, clearance rates, and pending caseloads by court tier

**Research intensity by court tier**
Baseline research hours per matter, by court tier and complexity

**AI productivity benchmarks**
Gross time savings drawn from global benchmarks and international case studies

## Calculations (simplified)

### Step 1: Net research time saved per matter

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gross AI time savings (%) | - | Verification overhead (%) | = | Net savings (%) |
| Net savings (%) | x | Current research hours per matter | = | Net hours saved per matter |

- The **current research hours** and the **gross AI time savings** are delineated by:
  - **Court tier:** Magistrates, District/County, Superior
  - **Task type:** Simple vs. substantial research matters
- The **verification overhead** accounts for the time required to check AI-generated outputs

### Step 2: Additional finalisations

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Net hours saved per matter | x | Annual finalisations | x | Throughput conversion rate | = | Additional finalisable matters |

- The **throughput conversion rate** reflects the share of time savings that translates into additional finalisations. It varies based on tier, depending on the extent to which legal research is a binding constraint

## Key outputs

**Net hours saved**
Research time recovered per matter, by court tier and task type

**Additional finalisations**
Net hours scaled across annual finalisations and moderated by throughput conversion rate, by court tier

# We replicated the approach from AI-assisted legal research to calculate net hours saved and additional finalisations from AI-assisted document review

## Input parameters

**Court activity data**
Annual finalisations, clearance rates, and pending caseloads by court tier

**Document volume by court tier**
Baseline document review hours per matter, by court tier and complexity

**AI productivity benchmarks**
Gross time savings drawn from expert consultations

## Calculations (simplified)

### Step 1: Net document review time saved per matter

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gross AI time savings (%) | - | Verification overhead (%) | = | Net savings (%) |
| Net savings (%) | x | Current document review hours per matter | = | Net hours saved per matter |

- The **current document review hours** and the **gross AI time savings** are delineated by:
  - **Court tier:** Magistrates, District/County, Superior
  - **Document volume:** Low vs. high volume of documents per matter
- The **verification overhead** accounts for the time required to check AI-generated outputs

### Step 2: Additional finalisations

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Net hours saved per matter | x | Annual finalisations | x | Throughput conversion rate | = | Additional finalisable matters |

- The **throughput conversion rate** reflects the share of time savings that translates into additional finalisations. It varies based on tier, depending on the extent to which document review is a binding constraint

## Key outputs

**Net hours saved**
Document review time recovered per matter, by court tier and task type

**Additional finalisations**
Net hours scaled across annual finalisations and moderated by throughput conversion rate, by court tier

# We converted the intervention-specific results into three output metrics: backlog reduction, case length reduction, and value of additional court output

## Input parameters

- **Additional finalisations**
- **Current lodgements, finalisations and backlog stock, by court tier**
- **Baseline case duration, by court tier**
- **Real recurrent expenditure per finalisation, by court tier**

## Calculations (simplified)

### Output metric 1: Backlog reduction by 2030

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2025 backlog | x | (1 + historical backlog growth rate)$^n$ | = | No-intervention backlog projection |
| 2025 backlog | x | (1 + counterfactual backlog growth rate)$^n$ | = | AI-intervention backlog projection |

- The **counterfactual growth rate** is derived using additional AI-enabled finalisations: tiers where finalisations exceed lodgements draw down the existing backlog; tiers still in deficit grow more slowly than the historical rate
- A **structural minimum** is applied to each tier, reflecting cases delayed by factors outside court control such as party-driven adjournments and complex interlocutory proceedings

### Output metric 2: Duration saved per matter

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline case duration | x | Scheduling-attributable share | x | Proportional slot recovery rate | + |
| Baseline case duration | x | Research attributable share | x | Net research time saving rate | = | Duration saved per matter |

- Duration savings from the interventions are summed, with the **binding constraint determining the split**: scheduling delays dominate at lower tiers, research time at Superior courts

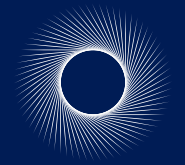
### Output metric 3: Value of additional cases

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Additional finalisations | x | Expenditure per finalisation | = | Additional court output ($) |

- The figure measures **productivity gain**: the same resources now produce more output
- The calculation is **done by court tier**, solving for the value of finalisations at higher over lower courts

## Key outputs

- **Backlog reduction by 2030**
- **Case duration reduction**
- **Value of additional cases**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