

JUSTICE

Investing in better legal services for NSW

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions will be relocated under one roof in an \$8.6 million investment in improving legal services in NSW.

Attorney General John Hatzistergos said the three separate locations for the ODPP will move to the former American Express building on Liverpool Street.

"The ODPP is currently located in three separate offices around the Sydney CBD; in Castlereagh, Pitt and Elizabeth streets," said Mr Hatzistergos.

"Bringing the staff together under one roof will integrate the ODPP's crown prosecutors with solicitors and support staff, and help make the office run more effectively and efficiently."

Mr Hatzistergos said the Auditor General had recommended the ODPP take a cradle-to-grave approach which would require crown prosecutors and solicitors to work closely together for the duration of the case.

The move to the new office will take place in stages between July and November when leases on current office space expire. The total cost of the project is \$13.2 million.

Mr Hatzistergos said other funds allocated as part of the NSW Budget will include:

- \$6 million to continue the rollout of the Remote Witness Program, which will involve installing audio-visual equipment in 10 more courts
- \$5.7 million to implement Legal eServices, a project to provide access to and exchange of information with the legal profession
- \$3.7 million to develop the Joined Up Justice program, which will allow justice agencies to share information
- \$2.3 million for child protection including \$2.1 million for alternative dispute resolution in the Children's Court and \$165,000 for night patrols in remote Aboriginal communities
- \$2.2 million to implement the Witness Assistance Service following its transfer of its administration from the ODPP to the Attorney General's Department
- \$890,000 for the refurbishment of the Public Trustee office in Sydney's CBD.

Mr Hatzistergos said \$12.6 million will also be spent on major works across NSW courthouses. Some of the works include:

- \$1.8 million for the upgrade of the Law Courts Building in Queens Square. Specifically the funds will be used to refurbish Level 9 which is required to speed large civil Supreme Court matters

- \$600,000 for Central Local Court to improve holding cells and security systems. The courthouse roof will also be fixed
- The Downing Centre will receive \$400,000 to replace the fire sprinkler system, \$200,000 to upgrade the air conditioning system and \$150,000 to upgrade secure judge lifts
- \$800,000 to refurbish Gosford Courthouse. The funding will be spent on improving the jury facilities, registry, disabled access, fire systems and toilets
- \$500,000 to install a new lift, improve disability access and install new toilets at Lismore Courthouse
- \$410,000 to upgrade Blacktown Courthouse which will include repairing the roof, automatic security gate and perimeter fencing
- \$400,000 to improve disability access, access to cells and security at Toronto Courthouse.