



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
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Thursday, April 30, 2009

AMENDMENTS WILL STREAMLINE CRIMINAL TRIALS

The NSW Government will amend legislation to reduce the length of criminal trials following a landmark report from the senior ranks of the justice system, Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Mr Hatzistergos said one measure would give the court the power to order parties to meet before trial and identify the key issues for determination.

"NSW courts lead the nation in the timely disposal of criminal cases and the majority of trials are completed efficiently," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"However, we can do more to reduce avoidable delays, which place a significant burden on the justice system and the taxpayer."

Mr Hatzistergos said the amendments aimed to reduce the burden on juries, relieve the anguish for victims and cut costs to the court system and the parties.

The announcements follow the release of a report by the Trial Efficiency Working Group, which was formed last year to examine inefficiencies in criminal trials.

The Working Group, which consisted of three Supreme Court judges, the NSW Senior Crown Prosecutor, the Bar Association, directors of the Attorney General's Department and others, made a number of recommendations. These include:

- Requiring prosecution and defence to exchange information immediately following committal.
- Allowing the court to order a pre-trial conference to determine if the prosecution and defence can agree on the evidence to be admitted.
- Allowing a party to provide a summary of the evidence from a witness where it wouldn't prejudice the other party.
- Making it easier for the court to order the intensive pre-trial case management and disclosure of the facts and matters in dispute between the parties.
- Giving the court the power to order the parties to identify the issues for determination at trial.

Based on these recommendations, amendments to the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* will be introduced this Parliamentary session.

"Measures for pre-trial case management already exist for complex cases, but they are not being used frequently enough," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"These amendments will relax the requirements of the *Evidence Act* and dispense with formal proof requirements where the issues aren't in dispute."

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