



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

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Law Society's key priorities under a Coalition government

The Law Society of NSW today congratulated Greg Smith SC on his appointment as the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, and welcomed the opportunity to engage with the newly elected Coalition government.

Mr Smith, the Member for Epping, was sworn in as the new Attorney General and the Minister for Justice at Government House on the weekend.

Law Society President, Stuart Westgarth said he was looking forward to working proactively with the new Attorney General, on behalf of the state's 24,000 solicitors, on a range of law and justice issues.

"We've worked hard to generate constructive debate about law and justice policy in the lead-up to the election, we congratulate all parties on their participation in the discussion and we are looking forward to engaging with the Coalition government to progress their commitments," he said.

"The Law Society has developed a very good professional relationship with Mr Smith during the last year, and we are hopeful that legislative change will be preceded by meaningful consultation.

"Mr Smith is well qualified to take on the role of Attorney General and we look forward to a new era of legal reform in NSW."

The Law Society's main priorities include:

- A **review of court funding and staffing levels** across NSW, (particularly in rural and regional areas) and, where necessary the re-opening of Courthouses.
- Addressing the growing backlog of **DNA cases** in NSW with increased and sustainable funding to improve DNA testing times and facilities.
- An assessment of **funding of the Children's Court Clinic** and the appointment of **specialist Children's Court Magistrates** to the Children's Court rather than the general Local Court.

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- A **comprehensive and consultative review of the Bail Act 1978**, including its impact on juveniles.
- A **review of the issue of legal representation at tribunals** under the *Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal Act 2001* and *Guardianship Act 1987* and as part of a wider overhaul of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.
- **Repealing the Torrens Assurance Levy** (currently payable on properties where the purchase price is \$500,000 or more).

Mr Westgarth said the Society would be pursuing a number of other key reforms with the Coalition, including:

- Continuing to lobby for a rationalised legal model for **personal injury compensation** claims
- Calling for the introduction of a clear framework for human rights in the form of a charter of human rights and responsibilities in NSW.

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