

Dear Editor,

Mr Warner Russell (Sunday, 27 June) wrote to express concern regarding recent changes to the Jury Act passed by the NSW Parliament.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring a fair and equitable jury system and has no intention of requiring those with responsibilities such as the full time care of a sick, infirm or disabled person to serve on juries where this will cause personal hardship, or to require those who are themselves unable physically or mentally to serve to do so.

People who are pregnant or have responsibility for the care of small children, the disabled or the elderly will still be able to apply for an exemption from jury duty. They will be able to do so in accordance with publicly available guidelines to be drawn up by the Sheriff's Office. These guidelines will be published before the new laws commence, later in 2010.

Many women in the early stages of pregnancy, and many people aged over 70, wish to serve on a jury. The new laws will enable them to do so.

The Sherriff will consult with key groups when drawing up the guidelines on the factors that should be considered in any request to be excused from jury service.

The recent changes to the jury system were proposed by the NSW Law Reform Commission, and are designed to introduce greater flexibility and equity into the management of jury selection.

Yours faithfully,

John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General