



Budget 2010-11

Building for NSW's future

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Increasing spending on court rehabilitation and diversion

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Investment in court rehabilitation and diversionary programs will increase by 13% as part of the Keneally Government's drive to keep crime rates low, Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Mr Hatzistergos said the investment in innovative court initiatives designed to tackle the causes of crime and increase victim participation in the justice process would rise to \$26.7 million in this year's budget – an increase of \$3.1 million.

"While the Keneally Government's strong record in toughening bail and sentencing laws is seeing more offenders spend time behind bars, we are also expanding our use of alternative means to punish, deter and rehabilitate criminal offenders", he said.

"In recent years we have introduced innovative programs like the Drug Court, which is now yielding clear results in turning offenders away from a life of crime.

"With assistance from the Commonwealth Government, we've also expanded the Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment (MERIT) program to 64 local courts.

"And we are working to involve more victims and communities in the criminal sentencing process through restorative justice schemes like Forum and Circle Sentencing."

Mr Hatzistergos said this year's \$26.7 million budget allocation towards court rehabilitation and diversion programs would include:

- \$5.5 million to fund the innovative Forum Sentencing program, which gives victims a say in sentencing and will be rolled out to an additional 25 courts over the next year;
- \$1.1 million towards Circle Sentencing, an alternative sentencing court for Aboriginal offenders that involves local Aboriginal communities and victims in the court process;
- \$2.2 million to fund the NSW Drug Court, which forces drug dependent offenders to engage in an intensive, supervised program of treatment and rehabilitation;
- \$4.2 million in funding for the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court, which aims to reduce re-offending by young offenders with alcohol and or drug problems;
- \$483,000 to continue a trial of CREDIT, a brand new rehabilitative program modelled on New York's Community Court; and
- \$13 million for MERIT, a joint NSW-Commonwealth Government initiative that allows magistrates to refer offenders with drug problems into treatment prior to sentencing.

Mr Hatzistergos said these initiatives would aim to help the Keneally Government achieve its State Plan goal of reducing rates of re-offending by 10% by 2016.

Mr Hatzistergos said the record investment in court rehabilitation and diversionary programs comes on top of the Keneally Government's record \$144 million on rehabilitative programs for the NSW Department of Corrective Services.



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