



# MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC  
Attorney General  
Minister for Citizenship  
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## LAWS PASSED TO INCREASE PAY AND MAKE JURIES MORE REPRESENTATIVE

Despite protests from the Opposition, NSW Parliament has today passed laws that increase jury allowances, broaden the jury pool to include previously exempt professions such as lawyers and retired judges, and make jury service easier for everyday working people.

“These laws are designed to expand the pool of people eligible to serve on juries, strengthen workplace protections for employees who serve and overhaul the payment system for jurors,” Attorney General John Hatzistergos said.

“Yet Shadow Attorney General, Mr Greg Smith has refused to back laws that will improve the justice process by claiming, incorrectly, that lawyers may corrupt the jury process.

“Mr Smith has got it wrong once again. Not only is he out of touch with community views about jury service but he is also out of step with the views of his own profession.

“The Law Society of NSW, a body with a membership of more than 22,000 solicitors across the State, has strongly supported the widening of the jury pool to include lawyers, with its 2008 President, Hugh Macken, stating that:

*“...it's important that in order for juries to enjoy the confidence of the public that they be selected from the whole of society without exclusions.*

*Solicitors should be treated like all other members of the community and be given the opportunity to show cause as to why they should not be allowed to serve as jurors.”*

Mr Hatzistergos said that the new laws have reduced the number of groups who are either ineligible or have a right to exemption, because there is a need to broaden the jury pool and ensure that the obligations of jury service are shared widely.

“It is also important to recognise that there are many people who were automatically exempted under previous laws who want to perform this important civic duty.” Mr Hatzistergos said.

As part of the changes, most lawyers will be eligible for jury duty, but not those working in the criminal justice system. A number of other groups will also no longer be subject to a “blanket exemption” including people aged over 70, pregnant women, carers of a person who is sick, infirm or disabled, and a person who resides more than 56 Kilometres from the court.

Under the changes, a person can claim an exemption for jury service if they can show ‘good cause’ – which could be that they have a disability, there is a conflict of interest that may result in a lack of impartiality, or that serving would cause them undue hardship.

Mr Hatzistergos also said changes to the jury allowance system will make it easier for employed jurors to serve on longer trials and will also strengthen protections.

“Changes to the allowance system will boost the daily rate from \$100 to \$225 after 10 days, when jurors no longer have to be paid by their employers, for jurors who are employed.”

“Corporations who sack or unfairly discriminate against employees could be fined up to \$22,000, while individual employers will face fines of up to \$5,500. New laws will also prevent employers forcing employees to take leave, or to work outside court sitting times, while serving on a jury.”

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