



MEDIA RELEASE

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Friday October 30, 2009

NEW LAWS TO FAST-TRACK LENGTHY CRIMINAL TRIALS

NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos said new laws introduced into Parliament this week will cut excessively long criminal trials by forcing lawyers to prepare early and operate more efficiently.

“Trials that run for months on end not only burden the criminal justice system, jurors and the taxpayer, they prolong the distress and anguish of victims of crime,” he said.

“These reforms will go some way to cutting the unnecessary hold ups.”

Mr Hatzistergos said the new trial efficiency laws will reduce the overall length of time between committal and sentence.

“There have been a number of recent examples where lengthy criminal trials could have been avoided through early preparation and more efficient processes,” he said.

The new laws will streamline trial procedures to allow judges to:

- Order case management between parties before the trial;
- Force parties to disclose facts in dispute before the trial; and
- Set up pre-trial conferences for parties to agree on admissible evidence.

“The presentation of unimportant or uncontested evidence can be a significant contributor to unnecessarily long trials,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“The new measures seek to address these issues and improve the overall efficiency of the criminal justice system.

“Some measures such as pre-trial case management already exist for complex cases, but are simply not being used enough,” he said.

The NSW Government conducted a review last year to identify the causes of inefficiencies in criminal trials.

It found the causes of delays included:

- Identifying admissible evidence during the trial;
- Process of informing jurors of their responsibilities; and
- Conduct of counsel in relation to lengthy questioning.

Mr Hatzistergos said the amendments to the Criminal Procedures Act 1986 (Case Management) would help to bring about cultural change in the legal system.

“NSW courts lead the nation in the timely disposal of criminal cases and the majority of trials are completed efficiently,” he said.

“However, more can be done to cut delays which unnecessarily burden the criminal justice system and the taxpayer.