



Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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COURTS TO OPEN DOORS TO CAMERAS

The government is proposing new legislation to encourage greater media access to broadcast sentencing proceedings in criminal trials, Attorney General Greg Smith SC, said today.

“The courts should not be cloaked in mystery – they should be open and accountable to the community,” said Mr Smith.

“Social media such as Twitter have already helped to demystify the court process and as Attorney General I want to take the next step towards making television access the norm, rather than the exception, for sentencing in criminal trials.”

The proposals will create a presumption in favour of allowing filming and broadcasting of final proceedings – such as verdicts and sentences in criminal cases – except in a defined range of circumstances.

Exceptions will be clearly defined. For example, broadcasting would be inappropriate when:

- filming would reveal the identity of jurors, protected witnesses or victims,
- proceedings contain significant material subject to suppression orders, or material which would prejudice other trials or police investigations, or reveal police methodology,
- filming would put the safety and security of someone at risk.

“The courts are important public institutions, but they need to keep pace with the advance of technology, and it is time to bring them up to date.”

“This measure will open courts to greater scrutiny, enhance the public understanding of the criminal justice system, and increase the transparency of the decision making.”

Media organisations and other stakeholders will be consulted about the proposed legislation, and it is expected the current process of allowing one pool camera to film proceedings will continue.

“Initially, this policy will apply to the Supreme Court, but we will examine its success to consider extending it to other courts and to civil cases.”

“My department will also work towards limited web streaming for selected proceedings in the future, and is also working on education initiatives in schools and the wider community.”

The Department of Attorney General and Justice's YouTube channel, *Justice NSW*, is already active, featuring informative videos for victims, the general community and people seeking to represent themselves at court.

"Justice should be seen to be done and be accessible to all. Allowing more people to watch court decisions will help to show the considerations that go into the decisions judges make," Mr Smith said.

"Our courts are open to all, and in most cases there is no good reason why cameras should not be allowed to bring the judge's decision straight into our living rooms and onto our smartphones."

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