



**ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FIRST WAVE OF REFORMS TO IMPROVE LEGAL PURCHASING**

Attorney-General Robert McClelland today announced the first wave of reforms by the Rudd Government to improve the way the Commonwealth buys legal services, following a blow-out in spending on lawyers by the Howard Government.

The Government is developing standard tendering and contracting documents for agencies and legal firms tendering for Commonwealth work.

“This should help reduce costs for both the Government and firms by improving the predictability of tender requirements and simplifying the task of tendering,” Mr McClelland said.

The Government is also developing a standard reporting format for legal expenditure by Commonwealth agencies.

“Under the Howard Government, reporting of legal expenditure was a dog’s breakfast. The Rudd Government’s reforms will help better monitor how taxpayer’s money is being spent on legal services,” Mr McClelland said.

“To promote equal opportunity briefing practices, the new mandatory reporting format will also include information on the number and value of briefs to male and female counsel.”

The Attorney-General will also develop amendments to the Legal Services Directions to:

- strengthen the requirement that agencies consider and use alternative dispute resolution processes where appropriate, and
- enable a broader range of law firms to receive standing instructions to accept service of legal documents on behalf of the Commonwealth.

“These reforms will help promote the efficient resolution of disputes as well as competition in the Commonwealth legal services market,” Mr McClelland said.

A further amendment to the Legal Services Directions will provide that firms which undertake pro bono work against the Commonwealth must not be discriminated against by Commonwealth agencies in procurement.

“This is a first step by the Rudd Government to promote pro bono work through the Commonwealth legal sector. The Government is consulting on other possible reforms in this area,” Mr McClelland said.

“My Department held a series of roundtables this week to seek the views of legal services providers and other stakeholders on a range of reforms to Commonwealth legal purchasing, including those I foreshadowed earlier in the year.”

“The Government values this input from legal providers and experts, and will consider the views received in developing further reforms to improve Commonwealth legal purchasing.”

“Unlike the Howard Government, these reforms demonstrate the Rudd Government’s commitment to keep a check on government spending and to pursue value for taxpayer’s money.”

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