



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Justice

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HELPING VICTIMS OF CRIME HAVE THEIR SAY

The Lemma Government is moving to make it easier for victims of violent crimes to present their victim impact statements in NSW courts, Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Amendments to the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* will deliver significant benefits for vulnerable witnesses such as sexual assault victims and children who, for the first time, will be able to give their statements via Closed Circuit Television.

“Sexual assault victims and children can already give evidence via CCTV during a trial, so there is no reason why the law shouldn’t allow them to deliver their victim impact statements in the same way,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“The aim is to reduce any additional trauma for victims by enabling them to be heard in a separate room to their attacker.”

Mr Hatzistergos said the law would also be changed to ensure photographs and drawings can be included in victim impact statements made to the court.

“Sometimes words aren’t enough to convey the suffering felt by a victim of crime and a picture could carry additional impact,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“A victim may wish to attach a photo to their statement that shows the court how they or their family were before the incident, while a child might find it easier to express their hurt through a drawing.”

Further reforms to victim impact statements include:

- Changing terminology in the Act to ensure a victim of any ‘prescribed sexual offence’ is entitled to give a victim impact statement (including victims of indecent assault, kidnapping and child prostitution).
- Enabling witnesses to a sexual assault to give victim impact statements
- Clarifying that a parent or guardian may make a Victim Impact Statement on behalf of a child (providing the child does not object)
- Broadening the range of psychological impacts that victims can include in their statement.

The Government has also changed the Young Offender regulation to allow victims to request an apology from young offenders who are being formally cautioned.

This builds on changes made last year which allow the person giving the caution, usually a Police officer, to seek a statement from the victim and read it out to the offender at the formal cautioning.

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