



New South Wales Bar Association

Criminal justice in NSW: more to do but are we heading in the right direction?

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Pre-election promises to boost police numbers will count for nothing unless the wider criminal system is adequately funded, according to the president of the New South Wales Bar Association, Michael Slattery QC.

"Both major political parties must match their zeal for crime fighting with a firm commitment to increase funding for prosecutors, legal aid, courts and prisoner rehabilitation", said Mr Slattery.

A well-funded DPP is essential for maintaining public confidence in our criminal justice system, but there are plans to cut their budget by \$3.5 million after the election.

"Expanding the police force and arresting more people, whilst cutting funding to the prosecutors will simply create a growing bottleneck in our courts. This will impact upon the victims of crime and their families, as well as diminish the quality of criminal justice.

"This policy contradiction should be resolved by ensuring that the people of New South Wales have a properly funded legal system", said Mr Slattery.

To improve the efficiency and reverse the underfunding of the criminal justice system, the Bar Association's policy calls for:

- both parties to commit to security of funding for the DPP and Legal Aid;
- control over the release of people found not guilty on the grounds of mental illness to be placed with the Mental Health Review Tribunal and the judiciary in accordance with long-standing Australian recommendations;
- greater resources for post-release rehabilitation of prisoners;
- adequate financial support for all our citizens who serve on juries; and
- an overhaul of the criminal statutes, which need to be rationalised in order to make the criminal law understandable to citizens and jurors alike.

For more information about the Bar Association's Criminal Justice Policy, visit www.nswbar.asn.au or contact Alastair McConnachie on ph: (02) 9229 1756 ; mob: 0420 314 462 or via e-mail: mediaenquiries@nswbar.asn.au