

Tuesday, 18 June 2019

NSW LEGAL PROFESSION WELCOMES LAW & JUSTICE MEASURES IN 2019-20 NSW BUDGET

President of the Law Society of NSW, Elizabeth Espinosa, today welcomed additional funding announced in the 2019-20 NSW Budget which will provide upgrades for regional courts, support for children impacted by homicide and the establishment of an Ageing and Disability Commissioner.

The 2019-20 NSW Budget includes \$9 million in 2019-20 (as part of a \$18 million project) to refurbish and upgrade the Queanbeyan Court House as well as funding to upgrade and refurbish court houses at Orange (\$1.2 million), Bathurst (\$1 million) and Griffith (\$1.2 million).

“The Law Society is pleased to see the NSW Government’s commitment to ensure that court facilities meet the needs of the community, particularly in regional and rural areas,” Ms Espinosa said.

“People accessing our court system are some of the most vulnerable in our state, including victims of family and domestic violence, and we need to ensure they feel safe and supported when they attend court, that their privacy is protected and that those working to assist them, including solicitors and court support workers, have access to appropriately resourced court facilities,” she said.

“I know that members of the profession working in the Queanbeyan, Bathurst and Orange regions will welcome these much-needed upgrades.”

Ms Espinosa also applauded the NSW Government’s \$3.3 million commitment to establish the world’s first dedicated residential trauma centre for children who have lost a loved one to homicide. “Grace’s Place” will be named in honour of Grace Lynch, the mother of Anita Cobby, and will be built at Doonside in Sydney’s west. It will be managed by the Homicide Victims Support Group.

“We welcome the Attorney General’s commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for those young children who have to deal with the long-lasting trauma of losing a family member to homicide,” Ms Espinosa said.

“Losing a family member is particularly traumatic for a young person and this is further compounded when that loved one is the victim of a homicide.

“We need to do all we can to support them on their long and difficult road to recovery.

“A dedicated residential unit will play an important role in their recovery, and I hope this concept will be expanded to other areas of the state.”

Ms Espinosa said it was pleasing to see the NSW Government has followed through on its commitment to establish an Ageing and Disability Commissioner. \$13.9 million has been allocated in the NSW Budget over four years to establish an Ageing and Disability Commissioner.

“The Law Society of NSW has been advocating strongly for measures that will safeguard the rights and wellbeing of older people and people with disabilities.



“We are particularly pleased that the new Ageing and Disability Commissioner will have strong powers to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation against the elderly and people with disabilities.”

Other law and justice measures in the 2019-20 NSW Budget include:

- \$30.6 million in 2019-20 through the District Court Backlog Program, which includes funding for five additional District Court Judges and support staff as well as additional funding to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid NSW.
- \$2.7 million to fund a new Public Sector Prosecution Unit (PSPU), which will prosecute public officials for corruption. The PSPU will comprise a team of lawyers to make applications to prosecute, freeze and seize the assets of public officials, including politicians who break the law. It will sit within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and complement the work of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.
- A \$21.8 million investment to ensure that all serious sex offenders on parole are subject to 24/7 GPS tracking and enhanced supervision.
- A two-year pilot of Drug Supply Prohibition Orders, which give police more search powers for drug-related crimes.
- 1500 new police.
- \$65 million for new and upgraded police stations including new police stations in Bega (\$13m) Goulburn (\$25m) the Jindabyne area (\$13m) and major upgrades to police stations at Bourke (\$7m) and Bathurst (\$7m).
- \$35 million to build a state-of-the art police education and training centre at Dubbo.
- \$5.6 million in 2019-20 to reduce domestic and family violence reoffending and support victim safety through the continuation of the Men’s Behaviour Change Programs in NSW.

“We welcome the additional funding for our state’s justice system, but we note that the Government has not made any commitment to expanding the Drug Court to Dubbo in the Orana region or building a new multi-purpose justice precinct in Sydney’s south west.

“We also anticipate that further additional funding will be required for the justice system in future years to handle the increase in work generated by the additional police officers.

“We look forward to working with the Government to secure these vital funding commitments which will ultimately increase the delivery of preventative strategies for our state’s justice system.”

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