

MEDIA RELEASE

COURT SECURITY BREACH HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF RESOURCES IN OUR COURTS

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NEW SOUTH WALES
BAR ASSOCIATION

This week's incident involving the escape of a prisoner from the Downing Centre court complex highlights the lack of adequate funding for security arrangements in our courts, the Acting President of the New South Wales Bar Association Noel Hutley SC said today.

'The Minister for Corrective Services and some elements of the media initially wrongly stated that the presiding judge in the matter ordered that the prisoner's handcuffs be removed in the court. This was not the case. The presiding judge said no such thing. The removal of handcuffs was done by the Corrective Services officers and is standard practice in courtrooms. Corrective Services officers were in attendance in the courtroom at the time. The real issue is the inadequate resources being devoted to security in our courts', Mr Hutley said.

'The Bar Association has consistently advocated for the proper resourcing of the Sheriff's Office to ensure that we have effective security in courts. The fact that a prisoner can escape from the Downing Centre precinct is a salutary reminder that the current level of funding is inadequate', said Mr Hutley.

'Rather than focus upon potentially dangerous solutions such as the recent protocol on the carrying of guns in court by police officers which raise concerns for the safety of judicial officers and parties, the State Government should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the Sheriff to fund the necessary improvements', Mr Hutley said.

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