



Brad Hazzard MP

**Attorney General
Minister for Justice**

MEDIA RELEASE

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FAMILIES GIVEN A GREATER VOICE IN SENTENCING

Reforms allowing family members of homicide victims to have their Victim Impact Statements considered in sentencing have passed the NSW Parliament, Attorney General Brad Hazzard said.

“We want to give families of victims of homicide a greater voice in sentencing and that is what we are delivering through these legislative reforms,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Victim Impact Statements allow victims to tell the offender, and the court about the impact of the crime on their lives. These statements can be immensely empowering and help parents, partners or siblings get closure.

“Such statements by victims of crime can already be considered in cases like sexual or physical assault, but until now statements from surviving family members could not be taken into account by a judge in sentencing for matters involving unlawful death in NSW.

“Our reforms allow family members to make a statement that could form part of the judge’s consideration.

“Unlike Labor, we don’t believe in forcing family members to have their statement considered, we understand that some families might feel anxious about how well they express themselves or be worried about potential cross-examination by the offender’s legal representative.

“No family member will be pressured or forced to give a Victim Impact Statement under our reforms.”

The NSW Government has consulted extensively with victims’ advocates and legal stakeholders, and listened to the families of people killed in violent crimes, including the family of Thomas Kelly.

“Victims support groups have told us that some family members want their statement considered in sentencing as an acknowledgment that their perspective matters,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Others prefer not to be subject to these strict legal rules and scrutiny, and believe the current arrangement allowing them to address the court and the offender is enough.

“We want families – who are effectively the secondary victims in unlawful death cases - to be able to make an informed choice,” Mr Hazzard said.

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