



Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$88 MILLION BOOST FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Court cases requiring legal aid will be finalised more efficiently and effectively with the NSW Government investing an additional \$88 million in Legal Aid NSW, driving a fairer and more efficient justice system.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the new funding would reform the way private lawyers provide legal representation to economically disadvantaged people.

“Legal Aid NSW relies on private lawyers in almost 70 per cent of all cases run using legal aid funding. In regional areas that number rises to 80 per cent,” Mr Speakman said.

“This injection of funding will enable greater access to legal representation for disadvantaged people and help create a more sustainable system for small country law firms supporting communities through the worst drought in a century.”

The reforms will allow the Legal Aid NSW Board to increase lawyers’ hourly rates progressively to levels comparable with other states and territories. Solicitors’ hourly rates will rise progressively from the current \$150 to \$195 in 2023-24, with barristers’ fees also increasing over the same period.

This overhaul of private practitioners’ fees in legal aid matters will encourage more lawyers across NSW to offer their valuable services to Legal Aid. In addition, structural changes introduced progressively for pre-hearing work will allow lawyers to spend more time with their clients and preparing for cases, as well as promoting the timely finalisation of criminal matters.

These reforms build on the NSW Government’s record investments into the legal assistance sector, with the State already providing \$224 million in funding to Legal Aid NSW in 2019-20, more than doubling its funding compared with 2010-11.

Chief Executive Officer of Legal Aid NSW Brendan Thomas thanked the NSW Government for its robust response to the recommendations of Legal Aid’s business case.

“Legal Aid plays a crucial role in creating a fair and accessible justice system for every member of the NSW community – from the Downing Centre to Dubbo and beyond,” Mr Thomas said.

“We are delighted that the NSW Government has made such a significant commitment to Legal Aid, enabling us to build greater partnerships with the private profession and ensuring our clients get the best legal service possible.”

Structural reforms will commence from 1 January 2020 and private lawyers' fees will increase from 1 July 2020.

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