



MEDIA RELEASE

**Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Industrial Relations**

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DRUG COURT CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Attorney General John Hatzistergos will today open a special conference marking the 10th anniversary of the NSW Drug Court.

“The Drug Court was the first of its kind in Australia, and since it opened in 1999 other States have used the successful program as a model for their own programs,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

Mr Hatzistergos said the court had helped almost 1700 drug-dependent offenders address the causes of their criminal behaviour. Around 150 defendants complete the program each year, following intensive drug treatment and rehabilitation.

The conference, which is being held in Parramatta, will feature experts in law, health and corrections and will analyse how the Drug Court has achieved its success.

The Member for Parramatta Tanya Gadiel said a purpose-built Drug Court registry is being constructed at Parramatta Courthouse as part of the building’s \$13 million upgrade.

“Not only is the Drug Court a worthwhile program, it is also the catalyst for continued infrastructure investment in Parramatta,” she said.

Ms Gadiel said the Drug Court was operating at the neighbouring Sydney West Trial Courts until the upgrade is completed in July.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research evaluated the Drug Court last year and found it was an effective alternative to prison for drug dependent offenders.

“The evaluation showed that the program is more cost-effective than prison in reducing re-offending rates among drug offenders,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“Those who finish the program are 37% less likely to be convicted of a further offence and 58% less likely to be convicted of a drug offence.”

Mr Hatzistergos said the Government was currently examining the option of extending the Drug Court program.

The Drug Court conference will be held from 9:20am to 3:30pm, Friday, February 6, at the Riverside Theatre, Church Street, Parramatta.

The speakers include Professor Richard Mattick, Director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, Nicholas Cowdery QC, NSW Director of Public Prosecutions, Senior NSW Drug Court Judge Roger Dive, Magistrate Stephanie Tonkin, from the Queensland Drug Court and Craig Jones, of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.