



MEDIA RELEASE

**Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
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NEW AGENCY TO HELP THE VULNERABLE WITH FINANCES

Improved services to people with impaired decision-making ability will be one of the benefits from the merger of the Public Trustee and the Office of the Protective Commissioner, said Attorney General John Hatzistergos.

Legislation amalgamating the two agencies will be introduced into Parliament today (Friday.)

“Both agencies provide similar services, including legal and financial management services,” said Mr Hatzistergos.

“This legislation will create a strong new organisation that will build on the existing strengths of both offices; harmonising its common functions.

The Protective Commissioner is an independent office responsible for managing the financial affairs of approximately 9,000 people with a disability or mental illness.

The Public Trustee acts as executor in deceased estates, provides legal and financial services to some 27,000 clients annually and has made over 900,000 wills.

In all other Australian jurisdictions, the Public Trustee or its equivalent can be appointed to manage the estate of a person incapable of managing their estate. The reason for the difference in NSW is historical and flows from the role of the Protective Commissioner originally being exercised by the Supreme Court.

Under the new legislation, a new agency to be called the NSW Trustee and Guardian will commence on July 1, 2009.

Mr Hatzistergos said clients of the Protective Commissioner will, in time, be able to access the network of Public Trustee shopfronts across the State.

He said as part of the legislation the new agency will be required to give top priority to the welfare of clients with disabilities and encourage the clients to live, as far as possible, a normal life in the community.

“The legislation gives greater protection to the rights of people with a disability and enables people with impaired decision-making capacity to live with dignity and as much autonomy as possible,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

The Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues will further examine the laws relating to the management of estates of people incapable of looking after their affairs and the guardianship of people who have a disability.