



MEDIA RELEASE

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

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MAJOR REVIEW OF THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS OF CRIME IN NSW

Victims of crime are being asked to have their say on how the law can be strengthened to better protect their rights, Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

“We want to hear from victims of crime as well as the wider community on what works well and what can be improved with the NSW Charter of Victims Rights,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“The Charter is now 13 years old and will be reviewed and revised to ensure it accurately reflects the needs and expectations of victims today.”

Mr Hatzistergos said the NSW Government led the way on protecting the rights of victims in the criminal justice system with the introduction of the Charter of Victims Rights into the Victims Rights Act in 1996.

“We are building on our strong record of protecting the rights of victims of crime and are committed to ensuring their voices are heard in all areas of government,” he said.

“A revised charter may include performance standards for government agencies, supported with practical guidelines, to ensure victims are properly consulted and informed of decisions within a reasonable timeframe.”

The review, being conducted by the Department of Justice and Attorney General, will examine how the Charter may be improved including whether the current definition of a victim is adequate under the Victims Rights Act.

Under the existing Charter, a person’s immediate family are only regarded as victims if the person dies as a result of the crime.

The review is seeking submissions from victims, families and friends of victims, victims groups, service providers, lawyers and the wider community.

The NSW Charter of Victims Rights is based on the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power.

“The Charter aims to promote and protect the rights of victims of crime and sets out how government agencies should treat and assist victims,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

The Charter requires that victims are: treated with dignity, compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect; given access to welfare, health, counselling and legal assistance; informed of relevant police investigations and court processes; protected from the person accused of causing them harm; and entitled to claim compensation if they are a victim of assault.

To obtain a copy of the consultation paper on the NSW Charter of Victims Rights contact Victims Services on (02) 8688 5511 or email: vct@agd.nsw.gov.au. Submissions close September 4. An online survey is also available at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs