



MEDIA RELEASE

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

Saturday, June 20, 2009

INCREASED USE OF FREE DISPUTE MEDIATION SERVICES

Attorney General John Hatzistergos said the number of minor legal disputes that were referred to the NSW Government's free mediation service increased by 16% on last year for the March quarter.

He said the number of referrals from courts, and government and non-government agencies rose from 1,030 for the three months to March 2008 to 1,190 for the same period in 2009.

"Disputes over boundary fences, faulty goods and services, trees and noisy animals are, regrettably, part and parcel of daily life," said Mr Hatzistergos.

"However, resolving them often involves lengthy court proceedings and exorbitant lawyer fees."

Mr Hatzistergos said instead of going to court disputes could be mediated by accessing the Government's network of Community Justice Centres (CJCs).

"Mediation can help resolve disputes quickly and cheaply and is becoming increasingly popular."

Mr Hatzistergos said mediation was sometimes more effective in dispute resolution and offered a greater range of solutions than courts.

In the last 12 months CJCs received more than 3,000 referrals concerning neighbourhood disputes, and organised more than 1,400 mediations. During that time, 70% of mediations organised by CJCs ended in agreement.

Mr Hatzistergos said most referrals to CJCs were made by Local Courts. Others come from State Government departments, local government and non-government agencies.

CJCs are capable of mediating on any legal dispute apart from criminal matters and spousal domestic violence.

About half the matters mediated are neighbourhood disputes, with the remainder including disputes over goods and services, contracts for work, and workplace issues.

For more information, call 1800 990 777 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.