

Review into sentence discounts

Released: 10 January 2008

Sentence discounts and reduced sentences for guilty pleas are under review following a referral to the NSW Sentencing Council, Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Mr Hatzistergos said that the review would examine issues relating to the principles governing reductions in sentencing and also:

- Sentences served concurrently;
- The effect of pleas for lesser offences;
- Cases where a criminal pleads guilty to additional new offences at the last minute, and
- The interaction of different factors regarding sentence discounts.

“While reduced sentences for guilty pleas have a part to play in the justice system, it is important they are applied consistently and in accordance with clear principles,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“This review is in response to police and community expectations and concerns for greater accountability regarding sentence discounts,” he said.

Mr Hatzistergos said that he was particularly concerned that some discount principles overlap and when applied mechanically can lead to perceptions of greater leniency.

“For the public and police to have confidence in the justice system then it is important to see offenders being held accountable for their crimes and that any discounts have a legitimate public purpose,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

Mr Hatzistergos said that while individual sentences can be reviewed by an Appeal Court, it is important to ensure that the underlying principles are also examined.

The NSW Sentencing Council is chaired by Justice James Wood AO QC and has key victims groups as community representatives on the council.