



Dominic Perrottet
NSW Premier

Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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GREATER SUPPORT FOR CHILD SEX ABUSE VICTIMS

A nation-leading program that reduces the trauma of court processes for children who are victims of sexual abuse will be expanded across the state, providing greater support to more young people.

Premier Dominic Perrottet and Attorney General Mark Speakman today announced the NSW Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$64.3 million over four years to expand the Child Sexual Offences Evidence Program (CSOEP) to every District Court and Police District in NSW.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said this important program reduced the difficulties and stress endured by our most vulnerable victims as they navigate the justice system.

“Child sexual abuse is one of the most heinous crimes and those children who have already endured the unimaginable should not have to suffer further at the hands of a justice system designed for adults,” Mr Perrottet said.

“Under this program, young people are able to pre-record their evidence and are provided with intermediaries to assist them during police interviews and hearings, as well as supports to spare them the trauma of facing their alleged attacker in court.

“Our Government led the nation when we piloted this program and now we want to make sure that every child – no matter where they live in our state – can access this support.”

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the program will further strengthen the state’s criminal justice response to child sexual abuse.

“Re-traumatising a complainant does not advance justice,” Mr Speakman said.

“We need to do all we can to ensure that children and young people who have been sexually abused are supported through the court experience, so they can begin the process of rebuilding their lives.

“The NSW Government was nation-leading in piloting the CSOEP, nation-leading in making it a permanent program and is now nation-leading in extending it state-wide.”

The CSOEP commenced in 2016 as a pilot in two court locations – the Sydney (Downing Centre) District Court and Newcastle District Court – as well as in the corresponding South-West Metropolitan, Central Metropolitan, and parts of the Northern Police Districts.

The NSW Liberal and Nationals Government invested more than \$28 million in 2018 to make the program permanent in these locations.

This followed an independent assessment by the University of NSW that found that the CSEOP received very strong support from participants, reduced stress for children and resulted in a better quality of evidence from child witnesses.

It also followed the release of the landmark final report by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in 2017, which made seven recommendations about the importance of pre-recording witness evidence and using intermediaries in child sexual offence prosecutions. The CSOEP is consistent with those recommendations.

The expanded program will be rolled out across NSW from 1 July 2023 to every District Court. A list of these locations is at: <https://www.districtcourt.nsw.gov.au/district-court/court-lists-and-sitting-dates/district-court-sittings---criminal-jurisdiction.html>