



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **NSW LEADS WORK ON CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT REFORMS**

A NSW Government-led process to significantly reform evidence law in Uniform Evidence jurisdictions across Australia will help achieve a more effective and consistent response in prosecutions involving child sexual abuse.

At today's Council of Attorneys-General meeting, relevant states, the territories and the Commonwealth agreed to introduce uniform Bills paving the way for greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in child sexual assault proceedings, NSW Attorney General Mark Speakman announced.

"The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse exposed the devastating effects of child sexual abuse, as well as the serious difficulties survivors face when trying to seek justice," Mr Speakman said.

"While we cannot undo the horrors of the past, we can ensure our legal system offers a fair and effective response for victims and survivors."

In NSW, child sexual assault proceedings have a significantly lower conviction rate than other criminal offences. The Royal Commission noted that the exclusion of tendency and coincidence evidence in some cases led to "unwarranted acquittals".

A new rebuttable presumption will ensure that evidence that a defendant has, or has acted on, a tendency to have a sexual interest in children is presumed to have 'significant probative value' in relevant proceedings.

Additional reforms will include procedural changes to improve the prosecution of child sexual assault matters, such as the introduction of a presumption of joint trials where multiple allegations are made against the same person and the prosecution is seeking to rely on tendency or coincidence evidence.

"These landmark reforms build on the NSW Government's comprehensive response to the Royal Commission, ensuring our criminal justice system is working in the best interests of victims and survivors to hold perpetrators to account," Mr Speakman said.

These reforms to the Uniform Evidence Law will complement the NSW Government's record investments to help prevent child abuse and improve support for survivors.

NSW was the first state to pass legislation to participate in the National Redress Scheme and delivered one of the State's largest ever criminal justice reform packages to crack down on child abusers and boost access to justice for survivors of child sexual assault.