



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General  
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **COURT REFORMS TO PROTECT AND EMPOWER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS**

Domestic violence complainants will have extra protections when giving evidence in court, while jurors will be educated on the complexities of abuse, under proposed court reforms to be introduced in NSW Parliament this week.

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said the reforms would allow complainants in domestic violence criminal proceedings to give evidence in closed courts or remotely via audio-visual link.

The changes build on existing arrangements for vulnerable witnesses, including child complainants and witnesses, sexual offence victims and those who are cognitively impaired.

“Testifying in criminal proceedings can be overwhelming for victims. Expecting them to give evidence in front of a public gallery, which may include the defendant’s friends and family, can be intimidating and add to the trauma of the court process,” Mr Speakman said.

Currently, domestic violence complainants can only give evidence remotely after a successful application to the court, but this is not always granted. These changes will provide a prima facie entitlement to give evidence remotely, should complainants so choose.

A new jury direction will state that delayed reporting by a domestic violence complainant should not be viewed as evidence suggesting the allegation is false.

“Domestic violence is a complex crime due to the intimate nature of the relationships between victims and perpetrators,” Mr Speakman said.

“If you were robbed by a stranger, you’d have no reason to delay reporting that to police. But when you’re abused by someone who claims to love you, you have children together, you own property together and you’re terrified of retribution – that’s a very different story.

“Considering these issues, you begin to understand why victims commonly delay reporting.”

The reforms – which amend the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* - are part of the *Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020*.

“These reforms aim to ease the burden of the court process on victims so they’re empowered to report abuse and can know they’ll be supported during proceedings,” Mr Speakman said.

Further details of the Bill will be available on the [NSW Parliament website](#) this week.