



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
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CRACKDOWN ON CRIMINALS CHANGING NAMES

The NSW Government is leading the way in a national crackdown on criminals changing their names to avoid detection, which will include an alert list for high-risk offenders.

The Attorney General, Greg Smith SC, said he hoped State and Territory Ministers would agree to a 10-point plan developed by NSW when they gather in Launceston today ahead of a meeting of the Standing Council on Law and Justice.

Mr Smith said NSW was asked to report on ways of ensuring all jurisdictions had robust laws and processes in place, so there was no weak link that could be exploited by criminals and name-change information could be obtained in a timely manner.

There will also be a National Proof of Identity Framework and an electronic document verification system so registries that look after births deaths and marriages (BDMs) can verify people's identity, and that they are not using illegal documents.

"Unfortunately some people change their name to conceal a criminal record, avoid detection by police, facilitate the commission of a crime or to simply create multiple identities," Mr Smith said.

"This abuse of the system is a risk to the safety of the community and the police.

"The danger is heightened when you are talking about those convicted of serious crimes, such as pedophiles, moving interstate to escape detection and unleash their misery on unfortunate victims."

Mr Smith said that under the strategy;

- All serious sex offenders must obtain approval before changing their name;
- Police will be asked to provide an alert list for high-risk individuals to BDMs;
- Prisoners and parolees will have to obtain approval and their supervising authorities will notify BDMs of the change; and
- People can only change their name three times in a lifetime.

The Attorneys General are gathering in Launceston today, where there will be discussion between the State Attorneys General ahead of the Council meeting on Friday.

Mr Smith said NSW already had most of the 10-point plan in place and was looking to implement two parts of the new framework – the alert list for high-risk individuals and the requirement for prisoners to obtain approval.

“Inconsistencies between jurisdictions allow people to forum shop and find the place with the weakest safeguards,” Mr Smith said.

“This heightens the need for harmonisation in this area and these changes should go a long way to eliminating abuses of the system.”