



# Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General  
Minister for Justice

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## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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**12 April 2012**

### **STATES TAKE AIM AT COST OF PEOPLE SMUGGLERS**

Australia's four largest states have called on the Federal Government to help pay for the cost of a failed policy on border protection that has put a huge strain on courts and jails across the nation.

NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia will tell Commonwealth Attorney General Nicola Roxon that the funding agreement for Federal trials needs to be rewritten because the flow of illegal entry vessels shows no signs of slowing.

In February, there were 192 crew members before State and Territory courts for alleged people smuggling. NSW, Queensland and Victoria all expect to run about 60 trials this year, with WA budgeting for 30 after years of shouldering the entire burden.

There is also the cost of keeping about 300 convicted and alleged people smugglers in the nation's jails at an average of \$289 per day. This equates to about \$315,000 per convicted people smuggler if they serve the mandatory three-year minimum non-parole period.

The NSW Attorney General, Greg Smith SC, estimated his State would spend more than \$10 million this year on trying and jailing people smugglers.

"The States are losing out and the Commonwealth is basically ignoring us," Mr Smith said.

"These amounts are significant for the States. And this is money we would not be spending but for a change in policy by the federal Labor Government."

The Victorian Attorney General, Robert Clark, said litigants were now facing six-month delays in the County Court and that, like others, his state had becoming a dumping ground for people smugglers.

"The Commonwealth is shirking its responsibility," Mr Clark said.

"These crimes were committed thousands of kilometres away from Victoria. We don't mind paying when an accused lives in this state or the crime was committed here, but not for matters which are entirely the Commonwealth's responsibility."

The Queensland Attorney General, Jarrod Bleijie, said Queensland taxpayers should not have to foot the bill for Federal Labor's ineffective border security policies.

"We have 56 people smuggling crews awaiting prosecution in Queensland and at a cost of approximately \$500,000 per individual, including the cost of the trial, sentencing and custody, that is a \$28 million dollar hit to Queensland taxpayers," Mr Bleijie said.

The Attorney General of Western Australia, Christian Porter, said his state "had gone from a position of conducting almost all Australia's people smuggling trials to now conducting about 38 per cent of them".

"This is an improvement but it is still too high," Mr Porter said.

"This issue will really only be solved by some indication from the Federal Labor government that if the arrivals keep occurring and the trials and prisoner numbers grow that they will start making some real financial contribution to the States."