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MEDIA RELEASE

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TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR STRANGULATION

The NSW Government is toughening up penalties relating to strangulation and reforming the law to ensure people who commit such violent acts, generally in the context of domestic violence, can be successfully prosecuted.

Attorney General Brad Hazzard said the Director of Public Prosecutions had been concerned the current offence of strangulation was inadequate and did not fully reflect its serious nature.

“The new offence of strangulation does away with the need to prove the offender choked the victim while intending to commit another offence, such as sexual assault, murder or robbery. This will make prosecution much easier,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The new offence attracts a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and clearly sends the message that this is a very serious offence which deserves significant punishment.”

Currently 70 per cent of strangulation cases in a domestic violence context are dealt with as common assault, attracting a maximum penalty of 2 years imprisonment.

Minister for Family and Community Services, Gabrielle Upton, said on average there were nearly 15,500 proven charges of domestic violence in NSW each year.

“Choking a vulnerable partner is a horrific act that instils great fear and often acts as a threat within escalating domestic violence,” Ms Upton said.

“Often perpetrators strangle their intimate partner to the point of unconsciousness, putting their partners in fear for their lives, but leaving little or no physical evidence.”

The Crimes Amendment (Strangulation) Bill 2014 was introduced into Parliament today. It will retain the aggravated version of the offence, committed in the context of another indictable offence with a maximum penalty of 25 years.

The reform builds on other measures across the police and justice system to deal with domestic violence such as specialist domestic violence training for police prosecutors, the establishment of a Violent Domestic Crimes Taskforce to look at current sentencing options and *It Stops Here*, the whole of Government domestic and family violence reform.

“Where there are shortfalls in the law we will take a common sense approach and act on that advice, delivering a criminal justice system the community can have confidence in,” Mr Hazzard said.