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MEDIA STATEMENT

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DEFAMATION REFORM TO BE 'PARLIAMENT READY' IN 2020

Attorneys-General from all Australian jurisdictions have agreed to a timetable for defamation reform that seeks to enable all Australian Parliaments to begin enacting changes from the middle of 2020.

The NSW-led Defamation Working Party (DWP), consisting of representatives from the Commonwealth and each Australian state and territory government, will formulate new Model Defamation Provisions fit for purpose in this digital age.

The timetable is designed to allow the reform process to be as expeditious as possible, while providing opportunity for extensive engagement by community and stakeholder groups to help determine how our new defamation law should function.

This exciting reform process schedules two substantial rounds of public consultation to allow considered contributions on nationally consistent defamation law.

To assist those consultations, the DWP will now turn to settling a Discussion Paper for the consideration of the Council of Attorney's General consideration and subsequent public release in coming weeks.

Reforming national defamation law will be complex and demanding. The agreed timetable now provides the community, stakeholders and the DWP with the framework to deliver reforms to ensure the right balance between protecting reputations and freedom of speech.

DEFAMATION WORKING PARTY AGREED TIMETABLE

Agreed deadline	Defamation Working Party (DWP) action
Feb 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAG out of session agreement to release Discussion Paper for national public consultation, including stakeholder roundtables (2 Months)
Apr 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultation responses due
Apr-Sep 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP review of public consultation results, further consultation if required, and agreement to draft proposed Model Defamation Provisions (MDPs) amendments
Sep 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAG in principle agreement (out of session) to proposed amendments to MDPs • Instruct Parliamentary Counsels Committee (PCC) to prepare draft amended MDPs
Sep-Oct 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC drafting amended MDPs
Nov 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAG agreement to release of public consultation draft of amended MDPs
Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultation on draft amended MDPs
Jan 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultation responses due
Feb-Mar 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP review of public submissions and reach agreement on any further revisions to MDPs
Apr 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct PCC to prepare final revised MDPs
Apr-May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC drafting final revised MDPs
June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAG agreement to changes to final revised MDPs
From June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jurisdictions to enact changes to model law