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### **\$81.9 MILLION TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE TO SLASH COSTS AND TIME IN JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is investing a record amount in technology and modernising court complexes to deliver a more efficient, smarter justice system that delivers for the community.

Attorney General and Minister for Justice Brad Hazzard said the technology measures would reduce the unnecessary financial burden of transporting accused and convicted people across the State for court appearances.

“There have been advances in expanding videoconferencing – in recent years an average 63,000 sessions a year were held connecting correctional centres, courts, legal professionals, health professionals and families,” Mr Hazzard said.

“But there are still parts of the State where, for example, juveniles and accompanying staff have to catch a plane for court appearances because there is no audio visual option.

“The Budget’s four year \$40 million *Justice Audio Visual Link Consolidation Project* will expand technology to meet not just current, but future needs of criminal and civil proceedings in a safer, more efficient justice system.”

The project covers 99 courts, 34 correctional centres, 9 juvenile justice facilities, 89 police stations, ten metropolitan and regional offices of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and 21 Legal Aid offices.

A further \$41.9 million over four years will be spent on new information communications technology, replacing old and fragmented systems operating across the Department of Police and Justice.

Mr Hazzard said a record building program for new courthouses and modernising existing courts was coming to fruition this year, helping regional economies.

“Unlike the previous Labor government, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have a track record in funding infrastructure the community needs. It’s great to see that planning and groundwork now emerging as bricks and mortar.

“This is boom time for major capital works.

“In addition to the technology upgrades, major upgrades of Wollongong and Wagga Wagga courthouses and the replacement of Bidura Children’s Court in Sydney are commencing this year.

“Because of the construction timetable of existing projects, \$239.6 million will be spent on major capital works in the next 12 months – the highest spend in over a decade - creating safer, more technologically efficient court and correctional facilities.

“New projects in the 2014-15 Budget account for \$96.3 million of this funding.”

Mr Hazzard said the NSW Government wants to break the cycle of child to adult offending and re-offending and recognised the vulnerabilities of some communities and families.

“I recently visited the Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre at Airds and spoke to youngsters who were 12 years old – and they are not the youngest – there are times when there are ten year olds at the centre,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The \$38 million allocated over four years to the Department of Police and Justice and Legal Aid NSW in this Budget aims to reduce the likelihood of at-risk children remaining in the court system and is a targeted and worthy investment.”

Budget initiatives include:

**Keep Them Safe:** \$13.2 million over four years to continue reforms from the Wood Commission into Child Protection Services in NSW, with programs including:

- *Mothering at a Distance*, a joint program for Aboriginal female offenders with Tresillian Family Care centres (two year funding)
- additional Children’s Court registrars for Alternative Dispute Resolution conferences in care matters and
- Bail Assistance Line to locate the transport, adult supervision or accommodation needed when young people are released on bail (2 year funding).

**Child Protection Reforms:**

- \$12.4 million over four years for Legal Aid NSW for early intervention and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

- \$12.4 million over four years to the Children's Court for improved case management, additional magistrates and support staff. The whole-of-Government child protection *Safe Home for Life* reforms support vulnerable children and their families to reduce the long-term need for court-imposed child protection and intervention and out of home care.

“Our Budget priorities clearly demonstrate that the NSW Liberals & Nationals are investing in the infrastructure the community needs for an efficient justice system while tackling the difficult and long standing need for early intervention,” Mr Hazzard said.