



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC  
Attorney General  
Minister for Industrial Relations**

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## **TAMWORTH TO TRIAL NEW OFFENDERS PROGRAM**

Tamworth Court House will trial an innovative new crime prevention program by the NSW Government which aims to reduce re-offending among small-time criminals, NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced today.

Mr Hatzistergos said the Court Referral of Eligible Defendants Into Treatment or CREDIT scheme, which is modelled on New York's Community Court program, would be trialled locally for two years from August.

"The aim of CREDIT is to identify criminal defendants who are at high risk of re-offending and steer them into treatment programs and social services," he said.

"Studies show that focusing on problems such as drug, alcohol and gambling addictions, mental illness, unemployment and lack of vocational skills and homelessness can help reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

"This is about addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour to help stop offenders graduating to further or more serious crimes."

Mr Hatzistergos said the Court would use a computer-based screening process, developed by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, to identify defendants who might be eligible to participate.

"Using information such as age, gender, the offence and prior criminal record, the program is able to predict individuals at high risk of re-offending with a high degree of accuracy," he said

"Anyone identified as high risk will be invited to voluntarily take part. A face-to-face interview will follow to pinpoint the underlying issues related to the defendant's behaviour and determine if they are suitable for ongoing participation."

Mr Hatzistergos said defendants would have a strong incentive to take part in the program and to take it seriously.

"Involvement in CREDIT would signify a defendant's commitment to get their lives in order. This could be considered favourably by the court at sentencing."

Welcoming today's announcement, the Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper, said Tamworth would be the only location in regional NSW trialling CREDIT.

"Here we have the opportunity to showcase an innovative crime prevention program that could potentially be rolled out across the state," Mr Draper said.

Mr Hatzistergos said a working group of local agencies would be established to monitor the program and ensure participants got the assistance they needed.