



# New South Wales Bar Association

20 October 2006

## Jurors shouldn't suffer for doing their duty

Today's reports that a District Court jury requested extra pay following a five month trial highlight the poor pay and conditions for those who serve on juries in NSW, according to the president of the New South Wales Bar Association, Mr Michael Slattery QC.

"Levels of jury pay in this state are simply unacceptable. Jurors, particularly those involved in long criminal cases, make a substantial personal sacrifice, spending long periods of time away from their jobs, homes and families in order to perform an essential civic duty. Our criminal justice system cannot function without their involvement, yet the government fails our jurors by refusing to reimburse them adequately" he said.

Mr Slattery's comments came after reports this morning that a District Court jury requested an extra week's allowance in light of the effect the five month trial had on their health and welfare.

Jurors in New South Wales are paid \$83.90 per day for the first five days, increasing to \$113.70 per day from the 11th day and subsequent days of service. The maximum weekly payment for jurors is \$568.50 per week, well below full time adult average weekly earnings of \$1035 per week.

Low rates of jury pay have been maintained for decades, despite the 1986 findings of the NSW Law Reform Commission, which recommended that jurors pay be set at average weekly earnings for trials over five days. The report also recommended that jurors have a right to reasonable amenities and refreshment during adjournments to a trial.

"For twenty years successive state governments have ignored these findings and failed to provide jurors with realistic pay and conditions. It is crucial that juries continue to be representative of broader society, yet the current conditions associated with jury service don't recognise the difficult and sometimes distressing task jurors face" said Mr Slattery.

"Proper pay and conditions can at least lessen the financial burden placed on citizens by jury service. This is particularly important for the growing numbers of self-employed people" said Mr Slattery.

The legal profession is concerned that if the situation is allowed to continue, long criminal trials will be endangered and juries will become increasingly unrepresentative of the general community."

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