



New South Wales

Courts Legislation Amendment (Broadcasting Judgments) Bill 2014

Explanatory note

This explanatory note relates to this Bill as introduced into Parliament.

Overview of Bill

The object of this Bill is to amend the *District Court Act 1973* and *Supreme Court Act 1970* to require the District Court and Supreme Court to permit the recording and broadcast of certain judgments given by those Courts in open court unless satisfied that one of a limited number of exclusionary grounds is present.

Outline of provisions

Clause 1 sets out the name (also called the short title) of the proposed Act.

Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the proposed Act on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation.

Schedule 1 Amendment of District Court Act 1973 No 9

Schedule 1 amends the *District Court Act 1973* to insert a new Part in that Act dealing with the recording and broadcast of certain judgments of the District Court. The new Part provides for the following matters:

Proceedings to which Part applies

Proposed section 177 excludes certain kinds of proceedings in the Court from the application of the new Part. These include proceedings held in closed court, bail proceedings, certain appeals involving children and young persons and certain proceedings concerning forensic procedures.

The proposed section also enables the Governor to make regulations to exclude other classes of proceedings.

Meaning of “judgment remarks”

The new Part only relates to the recording and broadcast of judgment remarks of the District Court. Proposed section 178 defines *judgment remarks* of the Court to mean:

- (a) in relation to a criminal trial—the delivery of the verdict, and any remarks made by the Court when sentencing the accused person, that are delivered or made in open court, and
- (b) in relation to any other proceedings—any remarks made by the Court in open court when announcing the judgment determining the proceedings.

Proposed section 178 also defines certain other terms used in the new Part.

Applications for permission

Proposed section 179 enables a person to apply to the District Court in proceedings to which the new Part applies for the Court to permit the recording and broadcast of judgment remarks of the Court that are made in those proceedings.

The District Court will be required to grant permission for one or more news media organisations (whether or not the organisations are also the applicants) to broadcast the judgment remarks unless it is satisfied that one of the exclusionary grounds specified in the proposed section is present.

The following are the exclusionary grounds:

- (a) that the broadcast of the judgment remarks would be likely to reveal the identity of a person in circumstances where the disclosure, publication or broadcast of the person’s identity is prohibited by a suppression or non-publication order of the District Court or by law,
- (b) that the judgment remarks will contain material:
 - (i) that is subject to a suppression or non-publication order by the District Court or the disclosure, publication or broadcast of which is otherwise prohibited by law, or
 - (ii) that is likely to be prejudicial to other criminal proceedings (including proceedings for the same or a related criminal offence) or a current criminal investigation, or
 - (iii) that is likely to reveal the existence of a covert operation carried out by law enforcement officials,
- (c) that the broadcast of the judgment remarks would pose a significant risk to the safety and security of any person in the courtroom or who has participated, or has otherwise been involved, in the proceedings,
- (d) that the Chief Judge of the District Court has directed that the judgment remarks not be recorded or broadcast because, in the Chief Judge’s opinion, the broadcast of the judgment remarks would be detrimental to the orderly administration of the Court.

The presence of exclusionary ground (a), (b) or (c) will not be sufficient justification to refuse permission unless the District Court is also satisfied that it is not reasonably practicable to implement measures when recording or broadcasting the judgment remarks to prevent the broadcast of any thing that gives rise to the exclusionary ground.

Proposed section 179 also makes it clear that nothing in the proposed section is intended to limit:

- (a) the circumstances in which the District Court may decide to permit the recording or broadcast of judgment remarks of the Court, or
- (b) the persons (in addition to news media organisations) to whom the District Court may decide to grant permission to record or broadcast judgment remarks of the Court.

Protections for accused persons, victims and their families

Proposed section 179 provides that images that identify any of the following persons must not be recorded in connection with the recording or broadcast of judgment remarks of the District Court:

- (a) the jurors in proceedings where the Court is sitting with a jury,

- (b) an accused person or a victim in a criminal trial (or a member of the accused person's or victim's immediate family),
- (c) any other person belonging to a class of persons the recording of images of whom is prohibited by regulations made by the Governor.

Proposed section 179 also enables the District Court to make orders (on application or of its own motion) for the purpose of preventing the recording or broadcast of such images or the recording or broadcast of any thing that gives rise to an exclusionary ground.

Rules of the District Court concerning recordings and broadcasts

Proposed section 179 enables the rules of the District Court to make provision for regulating the manner in which recordings of judgment remarks of the Court for broadcasts permitted by the Court are made, including:

- (a) limiting the number and kinds of persons who may be involved in making such recordings in the courtroom, and
- (b) providing for measures to prevent the recording or broadcast of any thing that may give rise to an exclusionary ground or prevent a contravention of the requirement for images of certain persons not to be recorded, and
- (c) providing for the shared use of recordings among broadcasters.

However, sections 161 and 171 of the *District Court Act 1973* will operate to prevent the rules from making provision for other matters in a manner that is inconsistent with proposed section 179. For example, rules that create additional grounds of exclusion to those specified by the proposed section, or that limit the application of those grounds, would be inconsistent with the proposed section.

Schedule 2 Amendment of Supreme Court Act 1970 No 52

Schedule 2 makes a corresponding amendment to the *Supreme Court Act 1970* with respect to the recording and broadcast of judgment remarks of the Supreme Court.

In addition to provisions that correspond to those to be inserted in the *District Court Act 1973*, Schedule 2 also makes provision for the following matters in the new Part inserted in the *Supreme Court Act 1970* for the Supreme Court:

- (a) the new Part also excludes proceedings in exercise of the *parens patriae* jurisdiction of the Court or under the *Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006*,
- (b) the new Part extends to proceedings in the Court of Criminal Appeal as well as to proceedings in the Supreme Court (which includes the Court of Appeal by virtue of section 38 of the *Supreme Court Act 1970*).