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ACCESSIBILITY BOOST FOR NSW PARLIAMENT

The NSW Parliament will today become the first state or territory legislature in Australia to introduce live captions, enhancing the accessibility of parliamentary proceedings for everyone in the community.

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Jonathan O’Dea said the new tool is an important step to making the Parliament more inclusive.

“Captioning will play a major role to ensure members of the deaf or hard of hearing community can participate more easily in our democratic system of government,” Mr O’Dea said.

“We want to ensure people have equitable access to the Parliament - whether you are hard of hearing or someone who prefers to follow proceedings via the written word.”

A dedicated team of stenographers will deliver the captions in real time using technology developed from the same model used by the United Kingdom’s House of Commons.

President of the Legislative Council Matthew Mason-Cox said the new service has undergone extensive testing over several months to ensure a smooth introduction.

“Testing behind the scenes of live parliamentary events, including sitting weeks, public hearings, and Budget Estimates will help ensure the high levels of accuracy required can be achieved,” said Mr Mason-Cox.

“We are looking forward to delivering this essential service and hope that it will inspire more parliaments around the country to introduce it.”

Captioning is a practical and useful tool but it is not a formal record of proceedings.

Hansard will continue to be the official record of the Parliament.

You can watch NSW Parliament in action, including the new live captions, at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au when Parliament is sitting.