

Sexual assault victims will be better protected from having their confidential counselling records used against them in court under changes to laws, NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos announced.

The new laws are part of a suite of initiatives to support victims of sexual assault that includes a \$4.4 million fund to provide free legal representation for victims in applications by defence to subpoena their records.

"We must have laws in place that encourage victims of sexual assault to come forward," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"That is why the Government will strengthen legal protections for victims of sexual assault and provide free legal representation for victims in these subpoena applications.

"We should be encouraging sexual assault victims to seek counselling after the offence has occurred. But if a victim of sexual assault fears that their personal counselling records, could be used against them in court, they may be reluctant to speak out or discouraged from seeking counselling."

"These new laws will help shield victims from this sort of intimidation."

Under the changes, sexual assault victims themselves will be given the automatic right to argue that their counselling records are 'Privileged' and

## New laws and \$4.4 million to protect sex assault victims

therefore cannot be accessed by the defence. Until now, it has usually been the record holder, such as a hospital, employer, school or government agency, who has had to stand up in court and oppose releasing the information. Minister for Women, Jodi McKay, welcomed the new laws and the specialist free legal advice for victims of sexual assault.

"Victims of sexual assault need to be supported through the sometimes stressful court process and the free legal advice and new laws will provide that support," Ms McKay said.

"They will also form a key part of the NSW Government's Sexual Violence Prevention plan, which is currently being developed."

Mr Hatzistergos said: "Specialist sexual assault counselling services and psychologists commonly assert Privilege over victims' records, but other service providers are often unable or unaware of the need to do so.

"This reform ensures victims have a say in whether their confidential counselling records will be released."

"It is vital that victims are not reluc-

tant to come forward for fear their counselling records could be scrutinised in a court."

The amendments to laws relating to Sexual Assault Communications Privilege, to be introduced into Parliament, will also extend the protection of Privilege to victims of sexual assault that occurred outside NSW.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre chief executive Karen Willis welcomed the moves to protect sexual assault victims when their counselling and medical records are subpoenaed.

"Too many times sexual assault victims suffer further humiliation when private information is used in trials," Ms Willis said

"Some even withdraw their complaints under threat of public humiliation." "These victims need strong protections in the face of such tactics and these improvements go a long way to provide that."

Women's Legal Services NSW (WLS) ran a 12 months pilot project that finished early this year to assist victims of sexual assault keep their counselling records confidential in sex-

ual assault trials in the Downing Centre courts.

"Our pilot demonstrated how crucial legal representation is for sexual assault victims seeking to maintain the confidentiality of their counselling records, and highlighted the pressing need to strengthen legal and procedural protections for victims in NSW," WLS Principal Solicitor, Janet Loughman said.

"The proposed changes to legislation and the commitment to fund an independent specialist unit to provide representation is an excellent step to better support victims of sexual assault during the criminal trial process.

Mr Hatzistergos today also announced \$4.4 million in funding over four years to establish an independent specialist unit to provide free legal representation to sexual assault victims asserting Privilege.

"The unit will provide specialist duty solicitors to represent sexual assault victims in Privilege matters," he said.

"The unit will also be responsible for raising awareness of the changes to the law surrounding Privilege, particularly among the legal profession, government departments and organisations likely to receive subpoenas for the counselling records of sexual assault victims."



### Club Champion 2010; Alex Katholos

Alex Katholos with the winning trophies for 2010, the 72 hole championship, the match play club championship and the junior club championship for the lakes golf club the current venue of the Australian open for 2010.

Alex has won the club championship at the lakes winning after 36 holes gruelling final 1 up on the final hole beating roy vanduluis to complete a clean sweep of all major trophies.

He is only one of three players that was crowned club and junior champion in the same year the others being ewen porter and danny vera that are now professionals playing on the Australasian circuit .

He is dedication and his drive are second to none training 6-7 hours per day to reach his goal.his handicap is plus 2.

Alex katholos talent will be on show at Sandhurst golf club where on the 12 December he will try to win his tour card to turn professional at the tour school.

His goal is to be the first golfer on the professional golf circuit to play under the greek emblem.

We all wish him all the best.

## Mytilene: Yesterday and Today

Following his recent photo-exhibition, Home of the Heart: Lesvos and Australia, Vasilis Vasilas teams up with former Greek-Australian journalist, Nikos Grivas- who currently lives in Mytilene, to present the photo exhibition, Mytilene: Yesterday and Today, as part of the Mytilenian Brotherhood of Sydney's Lesviaki Evdomada.

Mytilene: Yesterday and Today merges old and new photographs to capture the town's beauty in both bygone and current eras. Kindly authorised by the Photographic Society of Mytilene, the exhibition includes a collection of old photographs and carte postales of Mytilene taken in the first twenty years of the twentieth century. To highlight the contrast with the past, the exhibition also includes a collection of photographs taken by Vasilis during his recent visit to Mytilene.

Both Nikos and Vasilis glowingly emphasise how this project provides an exciting opportunity for them to overcome the constraints of distance- as Nikos and Vasilis live in Mytilene and Sydney respectively- and bring Lesvos and Australia closer together. "It is interesting how my nostalgia for my second homeland, Australia, and Vasilis' love for his parents' homeland, Lesvos, has united our efforts and brought about this project," explains Nikos, "What this project shows is there are no borders- with a flurry of e-mails and correspondence, we can work together on great ideas".

For Vasilis, the exhibition provides an opportunity to bring Greek culture and history closer to Australia by working directly with people there. "I am a firm believer that as Greek Australians we can "export" history and culture to Greece, because there has not been enough research work on



Greek migration done. My recent photograph exhibition, With Home of the Heart, created interest on an issue (i.e. migration) that has largely been overlooked by locals," explains Vasilis.

With this exhibition, however, the objective is to further develop a relationship with Greece- for Greek Australians to realise there are people in Greece who are very interested in what we are doing here and are willing to work with us."

The photograph exhibition, Myti-



Above: A carte Postale of the entry of Mytilene's Port, signed in 1911.

Left: A Carte Postale of the entry of Mytilene Town, signed in 1902.

Photographs Courtesy of Photographic Society of Mytilene

lene: Yesterday and Today, will open today, November 16, 2010 (and will be exhibited until Thursday, November 18) at the Mytilenian House, 225 Canterbury Rd, Canterbury, and will coincide with Dr Vrasidas Karalis' lecture on Odysseus Elytis and Mikis Theodorakis' magnum opus "Axion Estis" and an exhibition from Sydney artist Amalia Koulioumbis.

## \$110 million, 40 jobs for Western Sydney

The NSW Government has helped Sydney Global agribusiness company Viterra establish a \$110 million malthouse and container packing facility which will create at least 40 new jobs.

Minister for Western Sydney, David Borger, said the project was a major manufacturing investment project in Western Sydney

"The NSW Government worked with Viterra at Minto in Sydney's west to secure these investment projects and jobs for our State," Mr Borger said. "Research company IBISWorld estimates the Australian beer and malt manufacturing industry generated revenues of \$4.61 billion in 2009-10. "This new investment will help generate further business and jobs for this growing industry sector. "The malthouse and container packing facility being developed by Viterra at Minto will produce up to 110,000 tonnes of malt each year for Australian and international brewers. "It will also include an adjacent container packing facility that will handle a further 147,000 tonnes of grain each year. "Viterra Malt, which produces Joe White Maltings branded malt, is the largest maltster in Australia and currently produces 500,000 tonnes of malt per annum. "The new Minto facility will provide an ongoing source of business for NSW barley growers and contribute to NSW's food processing and export base," Mr Borger said.