

Evaluating the first tranche of the Table Offences Reform:

Impacts on District Court finalisations, time to finalisation and sentencing outcomes

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SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND

The NSW Government has introduced a range of reforms to improve the efficiency of court processes and reduce the time taken to finalise matters in the District Court. One such reform, the Table Offences Reform, involved reclassifying some strictly indictable offences that must be dealt with in the higher courts, to 'Table offences' that can be dealt with in the Local Court.

The first tranche of the Table Offences Reform commenced in November 2016 and involved a subset of strictly indictable break and enter offences. The objective of this study was to examine whether this change was associated with differences in:

- the number of District Court finalisations
- time from charge to finalisation
- the proportion of offenders who received prison penalties
- the proportion of offenders who received prison penalties longer than 12 months.

We compare these outcomes for charges of interest in the 2 years before and after the introduction of the reform.

KEYWORDS

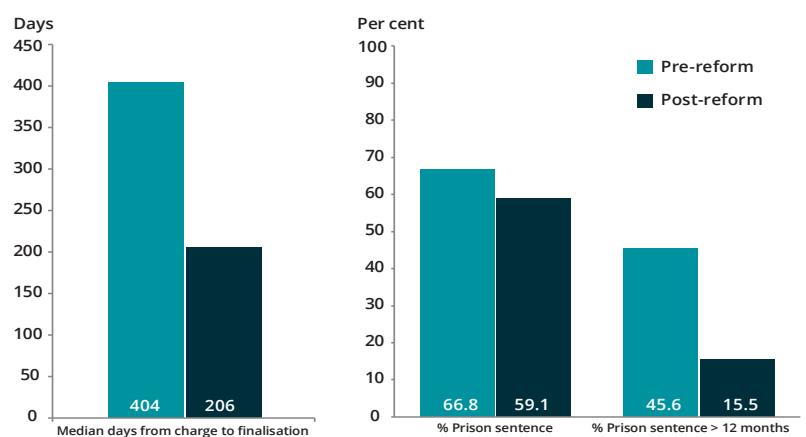
court processes and delay

legislative evaluation

sentencing

KEY FINDINGS

Outcomes pre- and post-reform



After the introduction of the reform:

- 85 per cent of eligible offences were diverted from the District Court, resulting in 62 fewer trials and 509 fewer sentenced finalisations in the District Court.
- The time from charge to finalisation decreased from a median of 404 days for pre-reform charges to 206 days for post-reform charges.
- Of those guilty of a post-reform charge, 59 per cent received a penalty of imprisonment, compared to 67 per cent of those guilty of a pre-reform charge.
- Of those guilty of a post-reform charge, 16 per cent received a prison penalty (non-parole period) longer than 12 months, compared to 46 per cent of those guilty of a pre-reform charge.

Differences in post- versus pre-reform outcomes remained significant after adjusting for a range of factors such as prior offending, number of offences and plea.

CONCLUSION

Results from this study suggest that reclassifying offences from strictly indictable to Table offences significantly reduced both the number of matters finalised in the District Court and court delay, and decreased the likelihood of a custodial penalty being imposed.