

# Media Release

**SENATOR THE HON.  
CHRISTOPHER ELLISON**

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**Minister for Justice and Customs  
Senator for Western Australia**

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## **New technology boosts the fight against crime**

Fighting crime in the 21st century has received a boost with passage of the Howard Government's new national DNA database legislation through the Senate last night.

Senator Ellison said the *Crimes Amendment (Forensic Procedures) Bill 2000* would allow the collection and storage of electronic profiles from DNA samples to be added to the Howard Government's \$50 million CrimTrac national database system.

"The DNA national database is a revolution in crime fighting. It will give Australian law enforcement agencies access to the latest technology in their fight against crime," Senator Ellison said.

The legislation enables the collection of samples from volunteers, existing Commonwealth prisoners and those people convicted of serious Federal offences such as drug trafficking.

The new powers will enable the collection of samples from anyone convicted of a Federal offence with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment or more and who is still under sentence (whether the offence was committed before or after the proposed legislation).

"As we have seen from the overseas experience, providing a DNA sample can exonerate the innocent, as well as identifying a guilty offender," Senator Ellison said.

Blood samples have been able to be obtained from those convicted of serious offences since the beginning of 1999. The new provisions enable the taking of saliva and hair samples.

If an offender does not consent to the taking of a blood or saliva sample, the proposed legislation will provide that a Magistrate must approve the taking of those samples.

There will be strict rules governing the matching of DNA profiles and the destruction of identifying records where an accused person is found not guilty. Compliance with these rules will be monitored by the Privacy Commissioner, and an independent review will be conducted after 12 months.

"The national DNA database is great news for the Australian community and will provide a much needed boost to the crime fighting capacity of our law enforcement agencies," Senator Ellison said.

All State and Territory Governments have or are in the process of enacting complimentary legislation to enable the collection of DNA samples and electronic storage of profiles on the national database.

CrimTrac is expected to be operational in the near future.

**Media Inquiries: Nicole Johnston 02 6277 7260 or 0419 217 918**