

Monday, 14 January, 2013

Stronger protection for health workers

People who assault health workers will face increased penalties of up to 25 years imprisonment under laws announced today.

Changes to regulations under the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* will make it an aggravated offence to assault a broad range of health professionals.

Attorney General John Rau said that the Government has little tolerance for those who are violence towards health workers.

“If you assault someone that works in a health setting, it is likely that you will face a very lengthy stay in prison,” Mr Rau said.

“Under current laws, introduced by this Government, it is already an aggravated offence to assault a health worker in an Emergency Department.

“These new laws extend beyond Emergency Departments so that rather than being charged with a basic offence, a person who assaults a doctor, nurse, midwife or someone who assists them in their work, will also be charged with the aggravated offence.

“This means that a person who intentionally causes serious harm to a health worker faces up to 25 years in prison, five more than under the basic offence.

Health Minister John Hill said the laws recognise the fact that people that work in health settings are exposed to more violence than many other professions.

“These laws recognise this increased risk and send a clear message to the community that we value our health workforce and will not tolerate violence against our hard working health staff.

“We have been in discussions with the unions representing health workers and they have told us that they want the protection of aggravated offences extended beyond Emergency Departments.

“Our proposals will mean the existing law can be quickly amended to afford this extra protection to the people who so clearly deserve it.”