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## **\$38M CHILDREN'S COURT FOR INNER SYDNEY**

The state's largest ever children's court redevelopment begins this month at a Surry Hills' site steeped in legal history.

The Department of Justice today handed the keys to the old Metropolitan Children's Court building to Taylor Construction Group, which will undertake a major redevelopment of the Albion Street building.

"It's exciting to see a building which hasn't sat as a court in more than three decades returning to its original purpose in a way that incorporates the best of the old and the new," Children's Court President Judge Peter Johnstone said.

Behind the building's 105-year-old façade will be state-of-the art facilities to make justice fast, accessible and sensitive to the needs of young people, particularly victims of crime and children in care and protection cases.

The Surry Hills building will become the specialist children's court for inner Sydney when Glebe's Bidura Children's Court closes in the second half of 2017.

The redevelopment will include:

- four courtrooms (twice as many as Bidura);
- Audio Visual Link facilities;
- a private room for vulnerable witnesses to give evidence via closed-circuit cameras;
- alternative dispute resolution facilities;
- a holding cell complex;
- interview rooms for the legal profession and rooms for support agencies.

The federation-style Metropolitan Children's Court sat between 1911 and 1983 and operated as a shelter for boys for most of that period.

Over the past three decades, sections of the building have been used as offices by a range of tenants. The site was purchased for \$8 million from Family and Community Services last year. The total cost of the project is \$38 million, which includes site acquisition and construction.