



Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 1 March 2018

A.G. LETS THE DOGS OUT TO TEN NSW COURTS

A further nine courthouses across NSW have been chosen to host therapy dogs following the howling success of a pilot program at Manly Local Court, Attorney General Mark Speakman announced today.

“Therapy dogs have been a huge hit. Paws down, the Canine Court Companion pilot is one of the most popular programs ever trialled in a courthouse, which is why we are expanding the initiative,” Mr Speakman said.

An evaluation of the nine-month pilot showed the calming presence of placid pooches in the courthouse plays a significant role in helping victims of crime and witnesses feel less anxious.

“Hundreds of people took part in the trial and every one of them gave therapy dogs the tick of approval. Having a floppy ear to talk to and a friendly paw to hold helps victims and witnesses feel relaxed and more focused. The scientists call it ‘the pet effect’.

“One of the unexpected bonuses has been the positive impact the dogs have had on court staff, police and lawyers, who also reported feeling a reduction in stress levels after spending time with the happy hounds,” Mr Speakman said.

In addition to Manly, therapy dogs will soon be on duty at Burwood, Campbelltown, Gosford, Goulburn, Lismore, Nowra, Orange, Sutherland and Taree. Mr Speakman said dedicated volunteers will visit the busy metro and regional courthouses with their dogs on one or more mornings a week.

“Visiting a courthouse is a stressful experience, but having a comforting canine around reinforces to victims and witnesses that they’re in a safe place,” he said.

Therapy dogs are already regular visitors to hospitals and aged care centres in NSW, where their friendly, even temperaments have earned smiles and spread puppy love.

In courthouses, they will be available in foyers, waiting areas, safe rooms and witness rooms. Qualified therapy dog providers can find out more about applying to provide the service at <https://tenders.nsw.gov.au> between 5-31 March.

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