



Dominic Perrottet

Treasurer

Mark Speakman

Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW BUDGET: YOUTH KOORI COURT EXPANDS TO SURRY HILLS

A court program designed to break the cycle of crime for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders is being rolled out to a second location in Sydney.

Attorney General Mark Speakman and Treasurer Dominic Perrottet today announced the NSW 2018-19 Budget will include \$2.7 million over three years to fund the expansion of the Youth Koori Court to the Surry Hills Children's Court.

"The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody is a major problem that needs to be addressed. This is why the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is investing in a program that targets the issues contributing to offending, before the behaviour becomes entrenched," Mr Speakman said.

Those issues can range from unstable accommodation, lack of engagement in education and employment, drug and alcohol misuse and disconnection from Aboriginal culture. The Youth Koori Court has been operating in Parramatta since 2015 where it sits one day a week. In that time it has dealt with 92 offenders.

This effective doubling of the Youth Koori Court's capacity will enable more young Indigenous offenders to address the behaviour that's brought them before the court and to access tools with which they can improve their lives.

"Getting young people who've taken the wrong path back on track has major benefits for Aboriginal communities and the state as a whole," said Mr Perrottet. "This is a budget that puts people first. We are only in a position to fund social programs because our finances are in order."

Magistrate Sue Duncombe said the court has the same powers as a Children's Court, but is more informal and involves community Elders in its processes.

"We sit down with the young person and discuss the offence and develop a plan to keep them out of trouble, which might include finding stable accommodation, getting back into school or a job and addressing health, drug and alcohol issues," Magistrate Duncombe said.

To participate in the Youth Koori Court, offenders must be aged 10 to 17, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and have pleaded guilty or been found guilty of a criminal offence. Participants have up to 12 months to complete the program and their performance is taken into account during the sentencing process.