



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 6 February 2018

### **NEW YOUTH KOORI COURT AT SURRY HILLS**

The Youth Koori Court has doubled its capacity to help vulnerable Indigenous young people with the commencement of a second location at Surry Hills today.

The program, which operates out of the Children's Court, was established at Parramatta in 2015 to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in custody and to provide interventions to help set these young people back on the right path.

Attorney General Mark Speakman, who took part in a ceremonial sitting this morning, said the government had invested \$2.7 million over three years to fund the expansion of Youth Koori Court.

"Today is a major milestone for the pioneering and passionate team behind the Youth Koori Court. I am extremely pleased the NSW Government backed the launch of this revolutionary program four years ago. Now we are paving the way for the Youth Koori Court to help more Indigenous youth across the state every year," Mr Speakman said.

"The state-of-the-art Surry Hills Children's Court is an ideal location as it's a purpose built facility, which celebrated its first anniversary last month. It offers many features which will provide a non-threatening environment for participants."

The Youth Koori Court program helps turn around the lives of Indigenous people aged between 10 and 17 by targeting the reasons they get into trouble with the law. If key issues such as drugs, alcohol, mental health, housing and education are addressed, there is a greater chance of keeping young indigenous offenders out of detention.

Magistrate Sue Duncombe who presides over the Youth Koori Court says the tragedy of Aboriginal overrepresentation in custody can't be solved by just one initiative, but the program can be life changing for the individuals involved.

"So far we are seeing some really positive indicators, including a reduction in the time young offenders are spending in detention. The second Youth Koori Court is great news because the more children we can work with, the more kids we can support to get their lives back on track," Magistrate Duncombe said.

Brendan Thomas, CEO of Legal Aid NSW, said the Youth Koori Court is an excellent example of innovative justice.

“The Youth Koori Court offers us a valuable window of opportunity to step into young people’s lives and steady them, to set them back in balance, to reconnect them with culture and country. The power of this idea and the reason that it succeeds comes from direct involvement of the Aboriginal community in the administration of justice,” Mr Thomas said.

The Youth Koori Court brings Elders or respected Aboriginal community members, lawyers and police around a table to discuss the issues that may be impacting a young person’s offending behaviour.

It puts sensible, tailored plans in place for each offender to encourage connection with family, community and culture to stop anti-social behaviour from escalating.

Participants have up to 12 months to complete the program and their performance is taken into account during the sentencing process.