



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Our ref: IIC/DHvk:1535418

31 May 2018

The Hon. Mark Speakman, SC MP
Attorney General of NSW
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Attorney,

Support for the Youth Koori Court

The Law Society of NSW writes to commend the Government for its support for the expansion of the Youth Koori Court. In particular, the Law Society commends the decision to provide tangible support for the work of the Aboriginal Elders who support the Youth Koori Court.

It is very positive that the Parramatta pilot resulted in improved criminal justice outcomes for participants. The evaluation of the pilot carried out by Western Sydney University found that participation in the Youth Koori Court reduced reoffending, specifically, the more serious forms of offending that result in detention. Days spent in custody were significantly reduced, thereby reducing the risk of harm that time spent in incarceration can bring to young people.¹

In addition to these improved outcomes, and perhaps more critically, the evaluation found that outcomes were improved on positive indicators, such as safe living environments, engaging in productive activities and restoring contact with Clan and Country. Through the Action and Support plans and support provided to implement these plans, participants were able to address many of the complex and interrelated factors underlying offending behaviour, including housing, education and employment, and health. For example, the evaluation found that achievements made in respect of helping young people get birth certificates and Medicare cards assisted young people to participate in society in a way that had previously been closed to them.

The Law Society acknowledges the tireless efforts of the Children's Court and other justice sector supports in the success of the Parramatta pilot. The Law Society also acknowledges the central role that Aboriginal Elders and other members of the local Aboriginal community have played in the success of the pilot. It is likely that the leadership and involvement of

¹ Williams M, Tait D, Crabtree L, Meher M, *Youth Koori Court Review of Parramatta Pilot Project*, Western Sydney University Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Engagement Advisory Board, May 2018, available online:
https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1394918/YKC_review_Oct_24_v2.pdf

Aboriginal people will be critical to the continued success of the Parramatta Youth Koori Court, as well as the success of its expansion.

The Law Society urges the Government to consider supporting the further expansion of the Youth Koori Court to regional areas, and suggests Dubbo as an appropriate regional location. Noting the success of initiatives that address the underlying causes of offending behaviour, the Law Society's view is that it is a smart and sensible approach to invest in therapeutic justice models.

As previously raised with you, the Law Society also urges the Government to approve the establishment of the Walama Court, a similar initiative in the District Court which has the support of the relevant stakeholders including the Chief Judge of the District Court, the Director of Public Prosecution, Legal Aid NSW, Corrective Services NSW, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, the Law Society of NSW, the Bar Association of NSW and a number of Aboriginal organisations.

Yours sincerely,



Doug Humphreys OAM
President