



District Court

New South Wales

Media Release

District Court of NSW celebrates Central Court opening, child evidence and Indigenous sentencing programs

Thursday, 5 June 2025

The District Court of New South Wales has celebrated the opening of a refurbished courthouse in Sydney's central business district and acknowledged the ongoing success of its specialist programs for Indigenous defendants and witnesses in child sexual assault matters.

Central Courthouse was officially opened on Thursday by Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC.

The courthouse on Liverpool Street was previously occupied by Central Local Court before it was closed for renovation in 2022. It has since reopened with four District Court courtrooms, which allow matters from the nearby Downing Centre to continue being heard within ideal time standards.

District Court of NSW Chief Judge, the Honourable Justice Sarah Huggett, hosted a morning tea to celebrate the opening. The event also noted the successful expansion of the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program to District Courts across NSW.

Judge Kate Traill was appointed a Specialist Child Sexual Assault Judge in 2015 and has overseen the program.

"Our criminal justice system was designed for adults to give evidence in a courtroom setting," Judge Traill said.

"This program allows children who previously may have struggled to give evidence to have their voices heard and give their best evidence."

Justice Dina Yehia SC acknowledged the success of the Walama List, a holistic sentencing approach for engaging with Indigenous defendants, now sitting at Central Courthouse.

She began the Walama List in 2022, as a judge of the District Court, and has since been appointed to the Supreme Court.

"The Walama List is a conversation between the participant, the judge, and representatives from the local Indigenous community," Justice Yehia said.

"It has produced excellent results for participants, and it is hoped that Walama can be implemented in more locations throughout the state."

District Court sittings at Central Courthouse appear on the online public list as 'Downing Centre Central Court'.

CSOEP background:

The Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program aims to reduce the stress and trauma experienced by children and young people who are victims and prosecution witnesses in sexual offence cases.

The program makes the criminal justice process easier for children by pre-recording their evidence and providing witness intermediaries to assist them during police interview and at court.

It was initially limited to the Sydney Downing Centre and Newcastle District Court, but has expanded to District Courts statewide after a bill to boost the program was passed in 2023.

Walama List background:

The Walama List provides a therapeutic and holistic approach to sentencing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have criminal matters before the District Court of NSW.

The list aims to reduce reoffending, address overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in custody, and increase community participation and confidence in the criminal justice system.

The pilot began at Sydney Downing Centre in 2022 and has since moved to Central Courthouse, though still operates as a District Court practice note.

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