

Ryan Park

Minister for Health
Minister for Regional Health
Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast

**Michael Daley**

Attorney General

Media Release

NSW Drug Court to expand in Sydney CBD

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The NSW Government is expanding the sitting days of the NSW Drug Court from one day per week to full time in Sydney's CBD.

The Drug Court is a diversionary program that provides an alternative to a custodial sentence for eligible adult offenders who are drug dependent. It supervises an intensive drug treatment and rehabilitation program tailored to the needs of drug-dependent offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to full-time imprisonment.

A phased approach to expansion aims to ensure the appropriate services and supports are in place that play a vital role in the Court's holistic approach to managing drug dependent offenders.

- **Phase 1**, commencing 20 September 2023, will increase the Court's sittings from one day to up to three days per week. The Court will start accepting referrals from the new local government areas from 21 August 2023.
- **Phase 2**, commencing in the first quarter of 2024, will increase the Court's sittings to full time.

This expansion will enable the specialist Court to increase the number of participants from 40 currently up to 160 per year.

A joint justice and health intervention, the Drug Court aims to reduce drug dependency, reduce offending, and promote reintegration into the community.

The program provides evidence-based treatment, with a focus on addressing drug use and factors that may influence offending behaviours. Counselling and case management are core components. Participants are closely supervised by the Drug Court throughout the program, which also supports them to achieve financial, social and domestic stability. Participants also receive assistance with housing, education, vocational training and readiness for employment, living skills, and relationship, parenting and child-care skills.

The Drug Court has been operating since 1999 and sits in Parramatta, Toronto, the Sydney CBD and Dubbo.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) has undertaken a number of evaluations of the effectiveness of the Court and its success in reducing reoffending. Both major studies, which followed the same cohorts in 2008 & 2020, found:

- The Drug Court is more cost-effective than prison in reducing the rate of reoffending among offenders whose crime is drug related; and
- The Drug Court program continues to have a significant impact on reoffending over a long period of time.

NSW Attorney General Michael Daley said:

“The NSW Drug Court is an innovative and effective program that can change the course of a participant’s life for the better by treating the underlying causes of their criminal offending.

“We want to ensure people have access to the support they need to successfully address their drug dependency and keep them out of prison, where appropriate.

“The NSW Drug Court has already demonstrated that intensive rehabilitation costs less than sending people to prison, and it also reduces rates of reoffending.”

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park said:

“What makes the Drug Court program unique and effective is that it gives participants access to a range of health services rather than criminal sanctions, which can help to improve their physical and mental health, reduce their drug use and increase their social wellbeing.

“The Drug Court is an excellent example of how addressing drug dependency as a health issue can make a real difference to a person’s life, and help them to lead a life free from drugs and ongoing contact with the criminal justice system.”

MEDIA

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