



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General

**Ben Franklin**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **INVESTING IN BETTER JUSTICE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

The NSW Government has announced two new sites for the expansion of an innovative program which aims to divert Aboriginal people away from the criminal justice system by investing in community-led initiatives that address the underlying causes of crime.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the justice reinvestment approach, based on Maranguka, Bourke's successful justice reinvestment initiative, will be expanded to Nowra on the state's South Coast and Kempsey on the mid North Coast.

"The first justice reinvestment approach in NSW was the Maranguka initiative in Bourke, first launched in 2013.

"The underlying causes of offending are complex," Mr Speakman said.

"The justice reinvestment approach works to divert Aboriginal people away from the criminal justice system with evidence-based, preventative, diversionary and community development initiatives.

"Justice reinvestment builds stronger, safer communities, focusing on getting to the underlying causes of crime and stopping crime from occurring in the first place.

"I look forward to seeing the positive impact that the justice reinvestment approach will have on these two regional communities."

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Franklin said the NSW Government will seek community involvement in expanding justice reinvestment approaches in Nowra and Kempsey.

"The NSW Government is dedicated to improving Aboriginal outcomes in criminal justice, child protection and housing, as well as improving services and programs to achieve meaningful, permanent outcomes that improve the lives of Aboriginal people," Mr Franklin said.

"Both Kempsey and Nowra have experienced significant crime-related issues and have the capacity to support justice reinvestment activities.

"Consultation will be undertaken with the respective local communities on expanding justice reinvestment in these areas, including the co-design of community led initiatives."

The expansion of justice reinvestment is part of the NSW Government's \$20 million investment in justice initiatives aimed at reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

This includes:

- \$9.8 million for new justice reinvestment pilots
- \$5.8 million to expand the [Youth Koori Court](#) to the Children's Court at Dubbo and to provide more funding for Aboriginal Legal Services, Legal Aid NSW and a specialist Children's Magistrate to oversee the Youth Koori Courts including at Surry Hills and Parramatta
- \$4.2 million to expand Circle Sentencing program from 12 to 20 high-priority Local Court locations.

Mr Speakman also announced the staged commencement of the eight new circle sentencing locations, during a visit to the South Coast today:

- Broken Hill and Wagga Wagga have commenced circle sentencing.
- Campbelltown is ready to take referrals from the court.
- Wollongong aims to take referrals as early as next month.
- Batemans Bay and Penrith are expected to take referrals from April 2023.
- Waverley and the Sydney Downing Centre are expected to take referrals later in the year.

Circle sentencing is an alternative sentencing method in which a local court magistrate works with Aboriginal Elders, victims, respected members of the community and the offender's family to determine the appropriate sentence.

"Since the circle sentencing program began as a pilot in Nowra 21 years ago this month, more than 1,518 circle sentencing sittings have been held for Aboriginal offenders, helping them to address the causes of their behaviour and turn their lives around," Mr Speakman said.

"The circle sentencing program has proven that the justice system can work with Aboriginal communities on common goals of reducing re-offending and helping victims of crime in their recovery."

A 2020 [study](#) by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research showed that, compared with those sentenced in traditional ways, Aboriginal offenders participating in circle sentencing are 9.3 percentage points (51.7 per cent) less likely to go to prison, 3.9 percentage points (9.6 per cent) less likely to re-offend within 12 months and (if they do reoffend) take 55 days longer to reoffend.

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