



Local Court of
New South Wales



Annual Review
2024

Front cover: Kangaroos, Buckaroo.
Credit: Destination NSW



Welcome to Country ceremony. Credit: Destination NSW

Acknowledgement of Country

The Uluru Statement from the Heart reads:

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.¹

The Chief Magistrate of the Local Court of New South Wales acknowledges that the locations where the Local Court sits are on traditional lands of First Nations peoples.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all First Nations peoples and cultures. We acknowledge their ongoing

connection to culture, heritage, and beliefs and their relationship to land, waters and communities. The structural nature of the inequality that First Nations peoples experience cannot be separated from the legal system of which this Court is a part. The Local Court of New South Wales acknowledges its power to take steps to help ameliorate that imbalance and undertakes to do so.

1 First Nations National Constitutional Convention, 2017, Uluru Statement from the Heart

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Foreword by Judge Michael Allen, Chief Magistrate of the Local Court of New South Wales



*Judge Michael Allen, Chief Magistrate of the
Local Court of New South Wales*

I was appointed the Chief Magistrate of the Local Court on 8 July 2024. I followed Judge Peter Johnstone, who retired after nearly three years as Chief Magistrate.

The Local Court of New South Wales is regularly and accurately described as ‘the busiest court jurisdiction in Australia’. Being busy, however, is not an achievement in itself. What I hope to do in this foreword is describe some of the structural changes and procedural reforms that I have begun in my first six months as Head of Jurisdiction. More importantly, I want to outline the steps that are being taken to deliver justice to the people of NSW in a way that is principled, respectful and consistent by Magistrates who are intellectually equipped to meet the challenges of the complex and diverse Local Court jurisdiction – that is, Magistrates who are knowledgeable not just of the law (although this is critically important) but also of the social and cultural environments in which they preside.

***I trust these four values –
principled, respectful, consistent
and knowledgeable – will inform
my leadership of the Local Court
and will guide the manner in
which any change or improvement
is implemented.***

Principled

There was a time, not very long ago, when it seemed unnecessary to explicitly state the foundational role of the ‘separation of powers’ in our stable democracy. But recent, tumultuous world events remind us that we should never take our relative stability for granted. Courts are one of the three constitutional pillars that maintain the checks and balances considered necessary to avoid a dangerous concentration of power in any one branch, be it Parliament, the Executive or the Judiciary.

For most people in NSW, if they are to have any exposure to a court, it will be the Local Court of NSW that they step into. The Local Court therefore has a special responsibility to demonstrate the utility and importance of the independence and integrity of the judicial branch of power.

People attending the Local Court are entitled to be treated in a respectful and principled manner and to be afforded procedural fairness, including the all important right to be heard. Courts contribute to the rule of law in our community but can only do so when they enjoy the trust and confidence of citizens. Maintaining a principled approach to the delivery of justice is one way in which this trust and confidence can be maintained. Being principled includes applying the law without fear or favour, with intellectual honesty and with regard to Parliamentary intent and subsequent higher court interpretation where this can be discerned.

The Local Court is not some ‘lower order add-on’ but rather an intrinsic part of the judicial system in NSW, and the same principles articulated in the Supreme Court should be evident in the Local Court.

Respectful

In December 2024, the Attorney General of New South Wales announced that Magistrates would soon be referred to as ‘Judges of the Local Court’. This announcement capped a long campaign by the Local Court and organisations such as the Australian Judicial Officers Association and Magistrates Association of NSW for a change in

title to reflect the complexity of the work that is now undertaken in the Local Court. Magistrates engage in complex judicial work, and the reality is that the community understands that work to be the work of a Judge.

With the change of title there will be a renewed emphasis on Local Court Judges being both entitled to respect in the courtroom and obligated to ensure that all court users are similarly shown respect when they appear in court.

The Local Court deals with many people who face extraordinary challenges in life – people who struggle with addiction, substance use, mental health impairment, poverty, domestic violence, trauma, a lack of formal education, homelessness, poor physical health and many other challenges. The Local Court is incapable of treating all these ills, but it must be responsive and empathetic to the realities of the people who appear before it. Judicial education of Magistrates will continue to equip Magistrates to navigate these human conditions and experiences.

The New England Circuit Court was temporarily extended in 2024 as a result of additional NSW Government funding to address concerns about an increase in crime in that region. This funding enabled an additional Magistrate to sit in the New England circuit for the second half of 2024 into early 2025.

Circle sentencing is a sentencing option for Local Court Magistrates dealing with First Nations defendants who have entered a plea of guilty or have been found guilty. Circle sentencing promotes the sharing of responsibility between the defendant’s community and the criminal justice system and allows direct input from victims of crime and offenders themselves. I was pleased to see circle sentencing expanded to new communities in 2024, and I hope to report further expansion in my next report.

The Local Court is working closely with DCJ and the Aboriginal Services Unit to improve the manner in which it delivers justice to Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. Like many of my colleagues, I have a strong personal commitment to ensuring that we play our part in closing the gap while upholding the judicial oath.

With the assistance of my Deputy Chief Magistrates and the Chief Magistrate's Office (CMO) I am developing a new approach to the promotion and maintenance of judicial wellbeing. A number of recent studies have highlighted the extraordinary pressures imposed upon Magistrates and the real and unsurprising impacts on mental and physical health. It is in everybody's interest that Magistrates are alert, rested and fully engaged when considering matters before them. My 2025 report will have more detail on the Local Court's wellbeing program.

Consistent

The law is not an exact science, but court users should experience a level of consistency in how their matters are conducted by the court. Court outcomes should fall within a range that is consistent with outcomes across the jurisdiction. Consistency is a crucial ingredient in fostering community confidence in our court system.

A new Bail Division of the Local Court commenced in 2024, with a view to centralising bail proceedings. This change was hastened by new legislation that requires any bail application to be heard by a Magistrate in the first instance. The Bail Division will promote greater consistency in the determination of bail, with specialised bail Magistrates eventually hearing most bail applications across NSW. In October 2024, centralised weekend bail courts commenced operation, and the centralisation process will continue to roll out in the coming year.

The Court's specialist family violence list was expanded to Bankstown, Katoomba, Liverpool, Windsor and Sutherland, bringing a more focused domestic violence jurisdiction to more courts, consistent with what occurs at the Downing Centre Local Court. The specialist family violence lists give greater voice to victims of domestic violence and their families.

I made specific mention of the importance, both symbolic and real, of remote and rural courts at my swearing-in as Chief Magistrate. Although there is an imbalance in the allocation of resources between metropolitan and regional courts, there is much that can be done to improve the experience of court users in regional NSW.

While some programs and services may not be available west of the Great Dividing Range, there should be no other material difference between the court experience of a court user in Tamworth and a court user at the Downing Centre in Sydney.

My next report will address new efforts to manage domestic violence lists and the centralisation of civil matters to a specialist Civil Bench under the guidance of newly appointed Coordinating Magistrates for those jurisdictions.

Knowledgeable

With deep respect for our fellow Judicial Officers in the District and Supreme Courts, I have made it clear to Magistrates of the Local Court that – putting aside gowns, wigs and jurisdictional limits – the NSW community should have difficulty distinguishing between a Local Court Judge and a Judge of the Court of Appeal. Ultimately, we have the same responsibility to deliver justice in a fair and impartial manner to all who come before our courts.

To achieve the objectives I have set out above, the Local Court relies on Judicial Officers who have many years of experience as legal practitioners. In December 2024, the NSW Government announced the appointment of an additional six Magistrates, which means NSW is now served by 154 Magistrates. Further appointments, to replace retiring Magistrates, will be made in early 2025. Future recruitment, in consultation with the Attorney General, will be focused on attracting highly respected solicitors and barristers from the criminal and civil law jurisdictions. These new appointees will join an existing body of Magistrates who have proven themselves over many years to be exemplary decision-makers, efficient and adaptable.

Critical to sustaining this body of knowledgeable Judicial Officers is the judicial education program the Local Court delivers in partnership with the Judicial Commission of New South Wales. Since my appointment as a Magistrate, then as a Judge, I have always taken a great interest in the content and delivery of judicial education. With Deputy Chief Magistrate Antrum as Chair of the Education Committee, I will be ensuring that the curriculum is both intellectually engaging and relevant to the dynamic and ever-growing Local Court jurisdiction.

Conclusion

It is only six months into my role as Chief Magistrate of the Local Court. My belief in the Local Court as the most important court for the greater majority of citizens in NSW fuels my enthusiasm to ensure that all court users experience a principled, respectful and consistent court presided over by knowledgeable Magistrates.

I thank the State Coroner, Magistrate O'Sullivan; the President of the Children's Court of New South Wales, Judge Skinner; and my Deputy Chief Magistrates Antrum, Freund and Tsavdaridis for the contributions they have made to sustaining the operation of both the Local Court of New South Wales and the Coronial and Children's Court jurisdictions. I thank Ms Yasmin Hunter, Executive Officer of the Chief Magistrate's Office, and her outstanding staff for their diligence and professionalism. I would also like to personally thank all the wonderful Registry staff, who demonstrate a principled, respectful and highly professional attitude to all court users and Magistrates while performing and managing work that is often difficult and challenging. Without them, the Court could not function at the capacity that it does.

Most importantly, my thanks extend to the extraordinarily hard working and dedicated Magistrates of the Local Court Bench. Every single working day, in courts across the state from Broken Hill to Manly, from Albury to Tweed Heads, from Waverley to Liverpool, the Magistrates of the Local Court of New South Wales preside over large lists, numerous defended hearings, civil applications and countless procedural matters. In 2024, more than 500,000 matters commenced and overwhelmingly concluded in the Local Court, Children's Court and Coronial Jurisdiction of the Court. I am immensely proud of the Magistrates who preside over this relentless workload with dedication, care and strict adherence to their judicial oath.



Judge Michael Allen
Chief Magistrate of
the Local Court



Overview of the Work of the Local Court of New South Wales

The Local Court of New South Wales is the busiest court in Australia. The Court hears and determines a significant range of matters across several jurisdictions. This section outlines the work undertaken in those jurisdictions and developments in the Local Court in 2024.

*The Living Desert and Sculptures, Broken Hill –
Credit: Destination NSW*

In total,

388,739

criminal matters commenced in 2024

a **3.3%** increase on 2023 and

a **34.1%** increase since 2014.

In the **Civil Jurisdiction**,

67,805

matters commenced,

a **4.5%** increase on 2023.

In the **Special Jurisdiction**,

55,194

Apprehended Violence Order proceedings commenced,

a **5.7%** increase on 2023 and

a **40.7%** increase since 2014.

In total, 388,739 criminal matters were commenced.

In the Civil Jurisdiction, **67,805 matters** were filed.

Criminal Jurisdiction

The Local Court deals with more than 90% of all criminal matters in the state, including the finalisation of charges for summary offences and the summary hearing of certain indictable offences nominated under Schedule 1 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986*, commonly referred to as *Table Offences*.

The Court also case manages matters that proceed on indictment through the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea scheme, up to committal to the District Court or Supreme Court for either sentence or trial.

Magistrates are involved in most criminal proceedings from the time a matter first comes before the court to the time it is finalised. A matter is considered finalised for the purposes of this Annual Review where the matter is any of the following:

- finalised by a plea of guilty
- finalised at a hearing upon a not guilty plea, at which the defendant is found guilty or acquitted
- committed for sentence to the Supreme Court or District Court after a plea of guilty
- committed for trial to the Supreme Court or District Court where the matter is to be defended
- withdrawn by the prosecuting authority and therefore dismissed
- an apprehended domestic or personal violence final order made by consent
- an apprehended domestic or personal violence final order made after hearing
- an apprehended domestic or personal violence order dismissed after hearing.

Prosecutions in the Criminal Jurisdiction include matters that are brought under Commonwealth law by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and brought under State law either by the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions, NSW Police Force or local councils or regulatory bodies.

When the Local Court deals with criminal matters, a wide range of penalties and sentences can be imposed depending on the type of offence. These penalties and sentences include:

- **non-custodial sentences**
 - dismissal without a conviction being recorded against the offender
 - discharge on condition the offender enters an intervention program
 - discharge under a conditional release order, without conviction being recorded against the offender
 - conviction without further punishment
 - conditional release order, with conviction
 - fine, with conviction
 - community corrections order, with conviction.
- **custodial sentences**
 - an intensive correction order
 - full-time imprisonment.

Both Community Correction Orders and Intensive Correction Orders often involve the offender being externally assessed as to their suitability for certain conditions before the sentence is delivered.

When sentenced to an Intensive Correction Order, the offender serves a sentence of imprisonment in the community. This sentence type also requires the offender to comply with conditions that may include a curfew, completion of community service work, home detention, electronic monitoring, abstention, non-association, place restrictions and/or completion of rehabilitative or treatment programs. The Court acknowledges the hard work and professionalism of Community Corrections Officers and Youth Justice Officers for the important work they do in supervising and engaging offenders in the community.

The maximum term of full-time imprisonment that can be imposed by the Local Court is a term of two years for a single offence where gaol is the maximum penalty, or an accumulation of up to five years for multiple offences where the maximum penalty for each offence is a term of imprisonment.

Domestic and Family Violence

In 2024, nearly half of the Local Court’s case load was related to domestic, family and personal violence.

This included applications for apprehended domestic and personal violence orders for persons in need of protection, and the

prosecution in the Court’s Criminal Jurisdiction of offences arising in a domestic and personal violence context.

In light of the significant volume of work on these matters, the Local Court is continuing to develop ways to reform and improve the Court’s handling of domestic, family, and personal violence matters and is providing input on proposed law reform.

Apprehended Violence Statistics

There has been a steady increase in lodgements and finalisations of both domestic and personal violence matters.

Apprehended Violence Statistics 2024

Domestic Violence	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lodgements	37,054	39,273	41,816	44,537	47,453
Final orders made	28,826	30,101	33,680	35,621	37,125
Complaints withdrawn/dismissed	4,792	5,364	6,736	7,686	7,669
Complaints dismissed after hearing	314	325	476	609	522
Application not served	35	52	46	43	76
Orders varied or revoked	3,640	3,549	3,344	3,254	3,235
Application to vary/revoke withdrawn/dismissed	1,365	1,484	1,498	1,729	1,921
Other miscellaneous finalisations	186	240	254	277	314
Total Finalisations	39,158	41,115	46,034	49,240	50,889

Personal Violence	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lodgements	6,650	7,128	7,157	7,669	7,741
Final Orders made	3,784	4,433	4,623	5,199	5,039
Complaints withdrawn/dismissed	1,749	1,857	1,851	1,940	1,932
Complaints dismissed after hearing	73	70	96	117	116
Application not served	12	9	5	14	34
Orders varied or revoked	111	121	113	136	109
Application to vary/revoke withdrawn/dismissed	42	58	52	62	102
Other miscellaneous finalisations	119	134	126	167	160
Total Finalisations	5,890	6,682	6,866	7,635	7,492

The Local Court acknowledges the importance of the assistance and work of:

- the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, which provides support and assistance for women and children in Apprehended Violence Orders proceedings across the state
- Police Domestic Violence Officers, who provide assistance on list days
- Community Justice Centres, which provide for mediation of complaints between private parties in personal violence order proceedings
- solicitors from the Legal Aid NSW Domestic Violence Unit and Domestic Violence Duty Scheme, who work with Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) to provide legal advice on Apprehended Violence Order list days, including advice on Apprehended Domestic Violence Order conditions, financial advice, family law, immigration and other issues
- Court Appointed Questioners who assist the Court in meeting the requirements of s 289VA of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* by relaying questions from unrepresented defendants in domestic violence hearings to the complainant.

Civil Jurisdiction

Overview

The Local Court’s Civil Jurisdiction hears and decides matters where people, companies or business owners make claims (of up to \$100,000) for recovery of debts, demands or damages.

The civil caseload of the Court is shared between the following divisions:

- The Small Claims Division hears claims with a monetary value of up to \$20,000. Proceedings in the Small Claims Division are conducted with as little formality and technicality as is needed for the proper consideration of the issues in dispute (s 35(2) *Local Court Act 2007*). A small claims hearing is generally an informal process where the Court considers statements and documents provided by the parties. The parties are given the opportunity to comment upon the evidence. Small Claims matters are primarily presided over by an Assessor, or otherwise by a Magistrate. Throughout 2024, where possible, Small Claims hearings were held remotely.
- The General Division hears claims between \$20,000 and \$100,000 (except in claims relating to personal injury or death, where the limit is \$60,000). Matters where the monetary value of the claim is less than \$20,000 may also be transferred to the General Division if the issues in dispute are complex, difficult or of such importance that they should more properly be dealt with in the General Division (Part 2, Division 2 Local Court Rules 2009).

Small Claims Division

Small Claims Assessors hear matters in the Small Claims Division. Assessors hear small claims lodged at the following Local Court locations:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| • Albury | • Moss Vale |
| • Bankstown | • Newtown |
| • Blacktown | • Nowra |
| • Burwood | • Parramatta |
| • Campbelltown | • Penrith |
| • Downing Centre | • Picton |
| • Fairfield | • Sutherland |
| • Hornsby | • Waverley |
| • Liverpool | • Windsor |
| • Manly | • Wollongong |

In all other Sydney metropolitan and regional locations, Small Claims matters are dealt with by the Presiding Magistrate at that location. In 2024, Magistrates undertook Small Claims work in most regional areas. From 2025, all Small Claims matters across NSW be heard by an Assessor.

Civil Liaison Committee

The Civil Liaison Committee includes members nominated by the Bar Association of NSW, the Law Society of NSW and DCJ. It met four times in 2024 and provided a forum to seek feedback and identify improvements to the management of Civil Proceedings.

Civil Jurisdiction Statistics 2024

Domestic Violence		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lodgements	Small Claims Division	45,277	33,454	41,716	52,638	55,055
	General Division	6,601	5,452	6,428	8,313	9,148
	Other (i.e., certificates)	3,311	4,394	3,626	3,953	3,602
	Total	55,189	43,300	51,770	64,904	67,805
Defences Filed	Small Claims Division	5,821	4,760	4,238	5,358	5,186
	General Division	1,848	1,497	1,465	1,961	2,024
	Total	7,669	6,257	5,703	7,319	7,210
Total finalisations		78,436	47,561	44,765	59,600	67,491
Finalisation	Court judgment	7%	3%	1%	1%	1%
	Settled	7%	11%	6%	8%	7%
	Discontinued	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%
	Default judgment	26%	23%	30%	28%	30%
	Dismissed due to lack of progress (UCPR 12.9)	52%	38%	40%	44%	43%
	Other finalisations	3%	21%	18%	14%	14%

Special Jurisdiction

The Local Court exercises a special jurisdiction to determine proceedings other than criminal or civil proceedings. Powers are conferred by Parliament under Part 4 of the *Local Court Act 2007*.

Industrial Jurisdiction

Since 2013, all Magistrates have been appointed as Industrial Magistrates. The Industrial Jurisdiction hears matters involving:

- **recovery** of money owing under industrial instruments, such as awards, enterprise agreements and statutory entitlements
- **prosecutions** for breach of industrial instruments
- **appeals** from various administrative decisions (e.g., granting – or not – of licences)
- **prosecutions** for statutory breaches.

Children's Court

The Children's Court Act 1987 constitutes the Children's Court as a court of record, such that it is separate from the Local Court but preserving a symbiotic relationship between the two. Magistrates of the Local Court exercise Children's Court jurisdiction in both care and criminal matters in various circumstances and at various locations.

The President of the Children's Court is Judge Skinner. Children's Magistrates are appointed from the body of Local Court Magistrates by the Chief Magistrate in consultation with the President. Children's Magistrates are appointed based on the belief of the Chief Magistrate and President that the Magistrate has the knowledge, qualifications, skills and experience (in the law and in dealing with children and young people and their families) that will enable the Magistrate to exercise the functions of a Children's Magistrate.

The Children's Court makes decisions in care and protection matters as well as in all criminal matters relating to children and young people under the age of 18.

The Children's Court is a closed court that determines Criminal Proceedings, Care and Protection Proceedings, Apprehended Violence Orders and applications for Compulsory Schooling Orders under the *Education Act 1990*. It determines offences committed by a person aged 10–18 years when the person is charged before 21 years of age. The Court also determines parole hearings for young offenders. Relevant legislation includes the *Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987*, the *Young Offenders Act 1997* and the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987*. In 2024 there were 30,203 criminal lodgements across the jurisdiction, including Apprehended Violence Order proceedings.

Care and Protection proceedings apply to children from birth to the age of 18. Relevant legislation includes the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. In 2024 there were 2,135 lodgements across the jurisdiction.

Apprehended Violence Order proceedings for defendants aged under 18 are determined in the Children's Court. The *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* applies.

Education Act proceedings apply to school-aged children up to the age of 17. In 2024 there were 311 lodgements across the jurisdiction.

There are four standalone Children's Courts: Parramatta, Surry Hills, Broadmeadow and Woy Woy. There are also permanent sittings of the Children's Court in Campbelltown and Port Kembla. The Children's Court shares facilities with other courts across NSW. The Children's Court conducts full-time circuits in the Northern Rivers and Illawarra regions, and part-time circuits in the Mid North Coast, Hunter, Riverina, Western and New England regions. When a specialist Children's Magistrate is not available, a Local Court magistrate sits as a Children's Magistrate. Local Court Magistrates may request assistance from the Children's Court to determine lengthy or more complex care and protection or criminal proceedings.

The Children's Court has introduced specialist court processes to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families appearing before it. The Youth Koori Court is a sentencing court within the criminal jurisdiction of the Children's Court that sits regularly in Parramatta, Surry Hills and Dubbo. Elders and respected community members work alongside the Children's Magistrate in this court.

The Winha-nga-nha List is a dedicated court list for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families involved in care proceedings at Dubbo Children's Court. Specialist Magistrates are supported by Children's Registrars who conduct Dispute Resolution Conferences to improve participation and reduce contested issues in care proceedings.

Coronial Jurisdiction

The Coroners Act 2009 confers jurisdiction for Coroners to hold inquests or inquiries concerning certain types of deaths or suspected deaths and fires in NSW.

The Coronial Jurisdiction forms part of the Local Court. Under the *Coroners Act 2009*, every Local Court Magistrate in NSW is a coroner by virtue of their office as a Magistrate. However, most complex coronial functions are centralised to the Coroners Court at Lidcombe, which is overseen by State Coroner O'Sullivan. Its jurisdiction is exercised by specialist Magistrates who hold a commission as Deputy State Coroner. Their role includes conducting mandatory inquests into certain kinds of deaths, such as deaths of persons in custody, deaths as a result of Police operations and deaths of missing persons.

The role of a Coroner is both judicial and investigative. It is to investigate and make findings about unnatural, sudden, suspected or suspicious deaths to determine identity, date, place, circumstances and medical cause of death. In some cases, the Coroner may make recommendations following an inquest to improve public safety and prevent future deaths.

Coronial proceedings involve three NSW Government agencies: the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), NSW Health Pathology (Forensic Medicine) and the NSW Police Force. Their roles are as follows:

- DCJ is responsible for the administration and oversight of the Coronial Jurisdiction.
- Forensic Medicine is responsible for the care and custody of deceased persons conveyed to Forensic Medicine facilities, conducting post-mortem examinations at the direction of the Coroner and providing family social work support, including viewings and grief resources. Other specialist services within NSW Health (e.g., Pathology Criminalistics and Forensic and Environmental Toxicology) work closely with Forensic Medicine as required.
- The NSW Police Force is responsible for reporting sudden, unexpected and unexplained deaths to the Coroner. The Police also advise the Coroner on the nomination of the legislative Senior Next of Kin and the formal identification of the deceased. A Coroner may request the Police to compile a coronial brief of evidence. These investigations are conducted under the direction of the Coroner.

Statutory Review of the Coroners Act 2009

The Report of the Statutory Review of the Coroners Act was tabled in Parliament on 14 February 2024.

The Report found that the broad policy objectives of the Act remain valid and made a range of recommendations aimed at updating the Act in line with modern coronial practice, improving the timeliness of the coronial process and improving the experiences of families following the death of a loved one.

The recommendations of the statutory review are with the NSW Government.

Bondi Junction Mass Casualty Event and Inquest Team

On 13 April 2024, a mass casualty event occurred at Bondi Junction Westfield in which seven people tragically lost their lives. All deaths were reported to the Coroner. The NSW State Coroner will hold the seven inquests together, in April 2025.

Following the event, the NSW Government allocated additional funding to the Coroners Court to allow an extensive and timely inquest into the incident, which will proceed with trauma-informed care for families. From this allocation of funding, an additional Deputy State Coroner was appointed on a temporary basis to ensure other inquests and inquiries continue to progress in a timely manner.

A dedicated special inquest team, comprising 13 registry and counselling staff, has been established at Lidcombe Coroners Court to manage sensitive and high-volume evidentiary and case management issues.

2019–2020 Black Summer Bushfire Inquests

In August 2021, the State Coroner convened an inquiry into the 2019–2020 Black Summer Bushfires, including inquests into the deaths of 25 persons associated with the 2019–20 bushfire season. There were 46 fires, 11,774 fire incidents and 240 consecutive days of burning across NSW during this devastating season.

The State Coroner presented her findings on 27 March 2024 after holding hearings across the state for more than two years to examine the 25 deaths and 46 fires. Her honour made 28 recommendations directed to the commissioners of the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW Police Force and the chief executive of state-owned infrastructure company Essential Energy.

The 734-page report can be accessed on the Coroners Court [website](#).

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

On 8 July 2021, the Federal Government announced the formal establishment of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (DVSRC). Hearings by the Commission commenced in late 2021 and continued in 2023.

The NSW Coronial jurisdiction and the State Coroner assisted the Commission, including providing information in response to Notices to Produce, two of which were furnished on the State Coroner in October 2023.

On 9 September 2024, the DVSRC's final report was tabled in the Federal Parliament. It included 122 recommendations to Government. Two of these recommendations (105 and 107) are relevant to Court Services. Work on implementation and support for these recommendations is occurring.

Legislation, Policy and Reform Work

During 2024, the Office of the State Coroner worked closely with the Ministry of Health in the implementation and updating of a range of laws, policies and processes applying to coronial processes, including the following:

- The State Coroner contributed to ongoing monitoring of the operation of Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation, which provided eligible people the choice to access voluntary assisted dying in NSW from 28 November 2023. Development is underway on a practice note to address deaths that are approved under the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation but reviewable by a Senior Coroner under the *Coroners Act*.
- The State Coroner assisted the Ministry of Health to update its *Coroners Act 2009 Policy Directive* following updates to legislation. The directive guides NSW Health staff in performing tasks under the Act.
- The State Coroner made operational improvements in organ and tissue donation in coronial matters.
- The State Coroner assisted the Ministry of Health in relation to *Human Tissue Act 1983* amendments to support ante-mortem steps prior to donation.

The State Coroner has given approval for the commencement of a trial under which two forensic pathologists will prepare a short-form post-mortem report in certain cases where a cause of death is apparent. The trial aims to help address current delays in post-mortem reports being finalised.

Establishment of the Coronial Operations Unit

In mid-May 2024, a new business unit, the Coronial Operations Unit, was established. This business unit is responsible for statewide coronial operations, including the initial triaging of all reportable deaths through the Coronial Case Management Unit and Coronial Information and Support teams. It also has oversight of all Assistant Coroners across NSW and associated operations, such as transport of deceased remains.

Operational Expert Panel (Assistant Coroners)

Assistant Coroners across NSW work hard to ensure that all deaths and fires across NSW are appropriately reported and examined in a timely manner. The office and role of the Coroner is one of the oldest within our legal system, and Assistant Coroners provide critical assistance to Magistrates in the performance of administrative functions.

On 11 September 2023, a Coronial Operational Expert Panel was established to support regional Assistant Coroners, supported by the publication of an updated version of the *Practical Guide for Assistant Coroners*. The panel consists of eight experienced Assistant Coroners drawn from across the state, led by a convenor and supported by executive sponsors.

The primary purpose of the Panel is to provide a consistent source of operational expertise to NSW Assistant Coroners and staff working in the Coronial Jurisdiction.

In September 2024, a one-year review of the operation of the Panel was undertaken. It identified positive outcomes and experiences during the first 12 months of the Panel's operation. With the positive conclusion of the pilot, the Operational Expert Panel is now a business-as-usual support for Assistant Coroners statewide.

Expansion of Coronial Case Management Unit

The Coronial Case Management Unit (CCMU) enables co-located staff from all three stakeholder agencies concerned with the delivery of coronial services (NSW Health, DCJ and NSW Police) to collectively triage coronial cases.

The CCMU's objective is to ensure that reportable deaths are subjected to a standardised initial assessment, in a timely manner, to enable a Coroner to make an appropriate direction. This is achieved via processes that ensure relevant evidence is presented to a Coroner to assist their decision, and by facilitating real time information-sharing between stakeholders at a centralised location.

The CCMU helps ensure grieving families can lay their loved ones to rest sooner and receive better and more timely information. Led by Coroners, the unit is a successful collaboration between NSW Police, forensic pathologists, medical specialists and counsellors.

Enhancing the CCMU's oversight of regional matters was the key focus during 2024, with additional participation by CCMU staff in daily tri-agency meetings where regional matters are discussed to ensure consistency and efficiency of all initial coronial directions and triaging of reported matters. Dedicated coronial liaison officers were also introduced in all NSW Police Area Commands and Police Districts to support timely regional triage.

In July 2024, a redrafted version of Case Management Note 5 was re-issued by the State Coroner for the first time since 2015, to support efficient and effective statewide triaging of initial directions for all coronial matters.

Continuation of well-being program for Judicial Officers and staff at the Coroners Court

In 2023, a well-being program for Deputy State Coroners was commenced, with a focus on psychosocial hazards arising from coronial matters.

A pilot program of well-being checks for staff at the Lidcombe Coroners Court also commenced in November 2023, providing one-to-one sessions delivered by a mental health specialist. These wellbeing checks help staff identify practical ways to reduce work-related stress and equip them with strategies to manage workplace stressors effectively.

Deaths only

Deaths Only	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Deaths Only						
Lidcombe (Metro)	3,672	3,570	3,563	4,190	3,950	4,095
Regional	3,037	2,839	3,156	3,461	3,388	3,579
Total Deaths Reported	6,709	6,409	6,719	7,651	7,338	7,674
Cases Closed Deaths						
Lidcombe (Metro)	3,660	3,833	3,646	3,732	4,287	4,399
Regional	2,913	3,093	3,175	3,237	3,479	3,394
Total Report of Death Cases Closed	6,573	6,926	6,821	6,969	7,766	7,793
"Case status includes all report of death cases with following status recorded ('DETERMINED', 'CLOSED', 'SUSPENDED')"						
Clearance Ratios Deaths	97.97	108.07	101.52	91.09	105.83	101.50

More information about closed cases

Within the Closed Report of Death	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Medical Certificates Filed						
Lidcombe (Metro)	781	783	744	815	706	655
Regional	365	524	569	579	478	533
Total Medical Certificates Filed	1,146	1,307	1,313	1,394	1,184	1,188
Coronial Certificates Certified						
Lidcombe (Metro)	975	894	1,037	1,391	1,491	1,681
Regional	907	808	877	1,267	1,321	1,428
Total CC Issued	1,882	1,702	1,914	2,658	2,812	3,109

Closed after Inquest

Within the Closed Report of Death	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lidcombe	108	88	88	110	98	98
Regional	14	12	14	12	5	4
Closed by Finding	122	100	108	122	103	102
Number of Inquests Suspended	145	148	105	119	133	139

Fires only

Fires Only	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Report of Fire						
Lidcombe (Metro)	108	87	54	46	32	25
Regional	49	66	62	47	21	8
Total Deaths Reported	157	153	116	93	53	33
Fire Cases Closed						
Lidcombe (Metro)	43	61	41	46	96	105
Regional	50	44	67	51	46	18
Total Report of Fire Closed	93	105	108	97	142	123
Clearance Ratios Fires	59.24	68.63	93.10	104.30	267.92	372.70

Closed after Inquest

Within the Closed Cases (Fires)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lidcombe	2	0	1	3	4	44
Regional	0	2	0	1	0	0
Closed by Finding	2	2	1	4	4	44
Number of Inquiries Suspended	10	6	9	0	2	4

All (Sum of Deaths and Fires)

All (Sum of Deaths and Fires)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Lodgments (Death and Fire)						
Lidcombe (Metro)	3,780	3,657	3,617	4,236	3,982	4,120
Regional	3,086	2,905	3,218	3,508	3,409	3,587
Total Deaths Reported	6,866	6,562	6,835	7,744	7,391	7,707
Cases Closed (Death and Fire)						
Lidcombe (Metro)	3,703	3,894	3,687	3,778	4,383	4,445
Regional	2,963	3,137	3,242	3,288	3,525	3,412
Total Report of Death Cases Closed	6,666	7,031	6,929	7,066	7,908	7,857
"Case status includes all report of death cases with following status recorded ('DETERMINED','CLOSED','SUSPENDED')"						
Clearance Ratios Deaths & Fires	97.09	107.15	101.38	91.24	106.99	101.90

Chief Magistrate's Office

The Local Court of NSW has the largest number of Judicial Officers in a summary jurisdiction in Australia. Under the direction of the Chief Magistrate, the staff of the CMO provides statewide administrative support to Magistrates and Acting Magistrates. The CMO is headed by an Executive Officer and in 2024 also included: A Policy Officer and Assistant Policy Officer, an Executive Assistant to the Chief Magistrate, an Associate to the Chief Magistrate, a Judicial Administration Manager, a Listing and Rostering Coordinator, a Courts Coordinator, a Judicial Support Coordinator, a Judicial Support Officer and an Administrative Assistant.

One of the primary functions of the CMO is to assist the Chief Magistrate in organising and managing the sittings of the Local Court throughout the state. The CMO is responsible for the publication of sittings schedules, rosters, the Chief Magistrate's Circulars and Memoranda, Local Court Practice Notes and listing of cases. It is also responsible for collection and publication of statistical information and for this Review.

The CMO coordinates Magistrates' travel across the state to ensure requirements for sittings are met, and coordinates Magistrates' attendance at various conferences throughout the year. The CMO also assists the Chief Magistrate in preparing for and participating in ceremonial occasions such as the swearing-in of newly appointed Magistrates.

Under the supervision of the Chief Magistrate and Deputy Chief Magistrates, the CMO is responsible for the day-to-day listing, management and coordination of the Downing Centre Local Court.

The CMO also facilitates strategic and effective working relationships with clients and stakeholders. In particular, staff of the CMO provide advice to, and represent, the Chief Magistrate on committees and working groups regarding matters that affect the court and assist the Chief Magistrate by providing research and project support relating to changes in legislation and policy. The CMO prepares and responds to consultation requests and identifies where proposals might be made to assist the ongoing development of a just, quick and cheap jurisdiction.

Registries: The Work of Court Services

Structure of Court Services

Local Court registries are administered by Court Services, which is a branch of the Courts, Tribunals and Services Delivery division DCJ.

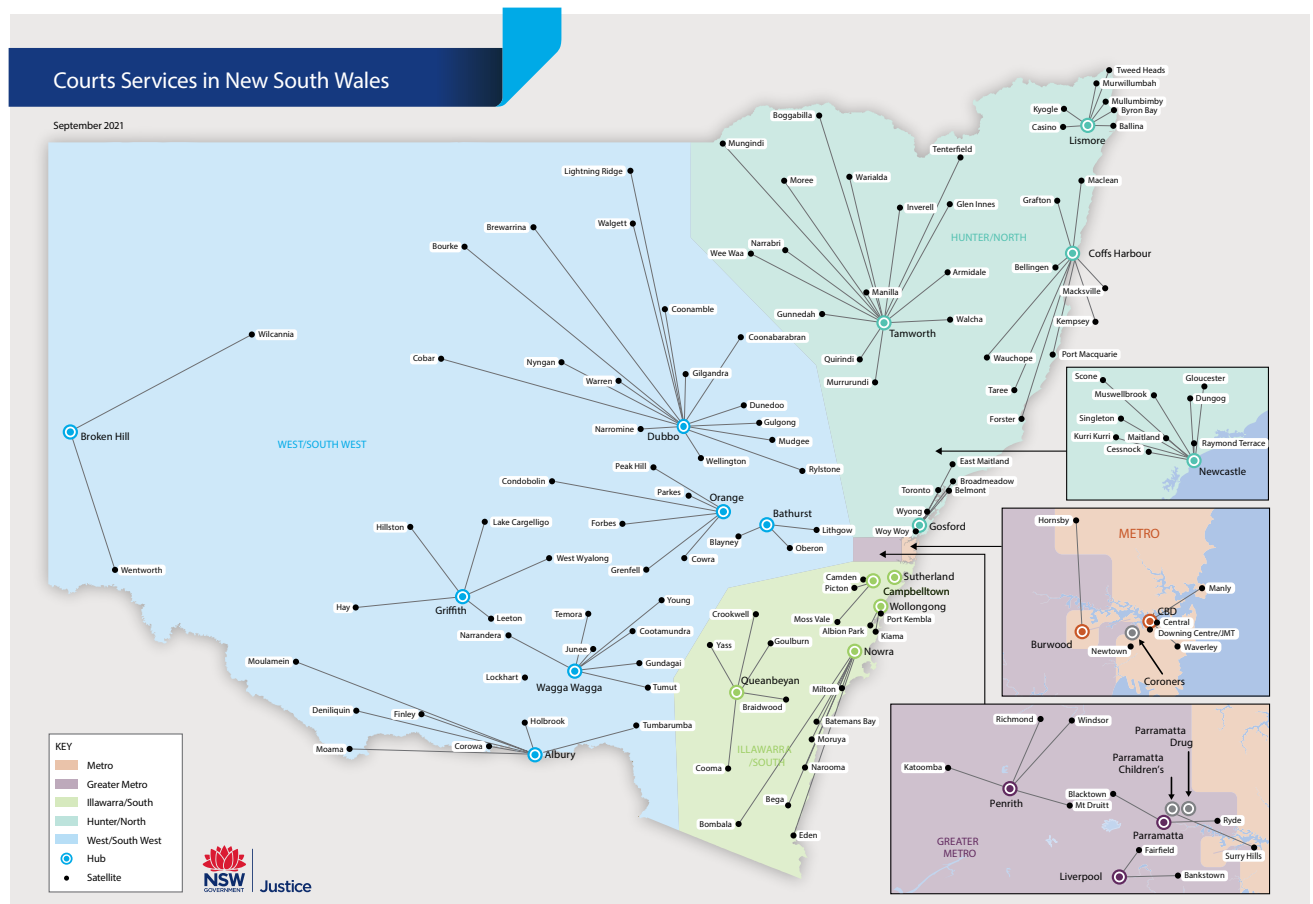
Staff working in the 129 courthouses across the state support the operation of the Local Court jurisdiction and provide frontline services to members of the public and court stakeholders such as Legal Aid NSW, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Ltd, NSW Police Force, Corrective Services NSW, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, among others.

Notable achievements in 2024 are highlighted in the sections that follow.

Court Services Strategic Plan 2024–2027

In August 2024, Court Services launched its *Court Services Strategic Plan 2024–2027*. The Plan is informed by Court Services' mission, vision and values:

- **Mission:** We deliver efficient and effective court services in a safe and respectful environment. Our people work together to facilitate access to justice in our communities.
- **Vision:** We are leaders in providing court services that support the needs of our communities. People are our priority – those who deliver our services and those who use them.
- **Values:** Service, trust, accountability, integrity, respect.



The Plan identifies four key priority areas:



1. investing in our people



2. people-centred services



3. trust, transparency and accountability



4. efficient, effective and sustainable services.

Across all priorities is a commitment to building an inclusive, respectful, culturally capable workforce that supports and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

The *Court Services Strategic Plan 2024–2027* is supported by a rolling implementation plan that outlines key deliverables (including longer-term items) under the four strategic priority areas. The deliverables are monitored to ensure progress.

Employee Initiatives in 2024

School-Based Aboriginal Trainees Program

In December 2024, a cohort of nine Year 12 students from across NSW completed the Aboriginal School-Based Traineeship Program (SBAT) with Court Services.

The students commenced the SBAT program in February 2022 and, over two years, completed 100 days of work experience in Local Court registries while completing a Certificate in Business Administration and undertaking their Higher School Certificate studies.

Undertaking these activities simultaneously demonstrated the students' strong commitment to their own learning and career development. During their time with the courts, the students made valuable contributions to administrative support in the Local Court.

Since graduating, several students have gone on to university. Four have been successful in gaining employment in court registries.

Court Services Aboriginal Inclusion Unit

The Court Services Aboriginal Inclusion Unit was established in late 2022 with one manager. In 2024, it expanded to a unit of three staff.

The Aboriginal Inclusion Unit continued to hold regular monthly Aboriginal Employee Network meetings (under the name 'Walanga Muru' – Follow Your Path) throughout 2024 to support Aboriginal staff working in CTSD. It also continued to facilitate the implementation of initiatives under *Court Services' Aboriginal Cultural Safety and Respect Framework*, including the No Gammin Koori Pathways Program (refer to page 25).

Other initiatives developed in 2024 include the Court Services Cultural Ceremony Program (a program of cleansing courts to make them spiritually safe) and Court Services Cultural Branding project (developing digital Aboriginal cultural artwork and elements that reflect the purpose of the jurisdiction).

No Gammin Koori Pathways Program

In March 2024, 11 Aboriginal candidates entered the No Gammin Koori Pathways program, an ongoing recruitment program designed to increase and maintain the employment of Aboriginal people in CTSD.

The cohort completed a week-long induction program before being placed in areas of CTSD. Seven were placed with Court Services, one with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and three with the Sheriff's Office.

The cohort also began a Certificate III in Business, delivered in-house at the Sheriffs Academy.

To date, eight of the group continue to work in CTSD, and one has taken up a role in another area within DCJ.

In late 2024, recruitment for the next cohort commenced, with seven candidates being selected for placements in Court Services.

Pilot of DCJ Refugee and Humanitarian Employment Program

DCJ operates a Refugee and Humanitarian Employment Program (RHEP) to offer roles and create talent pools for people on refugee or humanitarian class visas who need employment as they re-build their lives in Australia.

Court Services successfully piloted the program in 2024, in collaboration with Settlement Services International Limited (SSI) and other branches of CTSD. Through the program, five temporary roles were filled, and a talent pool was created.

Program participants were provided with job-readiness training that explored working for the NSW Government, Australian workplace culture and Australian culture generally.

Participants were paired with workplace buddies who helped with day-to-day inquiries and on-the-job tasks. They were also matched with a peer support buddy, a person from a similar cultural background, perhaps with lived experience, to provide advice and support on matters the participant might not feel comfortable asking their manager or workplace buddy.

Employee Recognition

Recognising employee achievements is an important part of Court Services' culture.

In 2024, Court Services continued to celebrate and acknowledge the outstanding contributions of employees through recognition activities like the Blue Flags Newsletter, published monthly to highlight employees who have gone above and beyond in their roles.

Court Services also marked Recognition Week from 11–15 November, giving employees the opportunity to come together and celebrate each other's contributions through events such as morning teas and team activities.

After the previous success of the Years of Service award program in the West/South West and Illawarra South regions, the program was expanded throughout Court Services in 2024. Ceremonies were held across all regions to recognise staff who achieved a decade of service with Court Services.

Courthouses

In 2024, events were held to mark the centenary of two courthouses: Moss Vale and Manly.

Moss Vale Courthouse

On 12 February 2024, Court Services held an event to mark the centenary of Moss Vale Courthouse. The event was attended by Judicial Officers past and present. Members of the local legal profession and a representative from the Berrima District Historical Society spoke about the history of the courthouse.

Manly Courthouse

On 4 July 2024, an event was held at Manly Local Court to celebrate its 100 years of service to the Sydney and Northern Beaches communities.

The building was officially opened on 4 July 1924, following construction that cost £6,902. Although the building has been updated over the years, it still stands on the original foundation stone laid by then Minister for Justice, the Hon Thomas Ley.

The centenary event was attended by then Chief Magistrate of NSW, Judge Peter Johnstone; Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council member, Michael West; Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, Dr Hugh McDermott MP; and President of the Northern Beaches Law Society, Phillipa Grant.

Sheriff's Office

The NSW Sheriff's Office, established in 1824 by the Third Charter of Justice, is Australia's oldest law enforcement agency and an integral part of the NSW justice system. Its diverse group of specially trained Sheriff's Officers, Court Officers and administrative staff operate from 58 locations around NSW, providing services to more than 180 court and tribunal locations statewide.

The Sheriff's Office mission is to uphold the integrity of the justice system by ensuring equal access to justice. Its responsibilities include civil law enforcement, court security, and jury and courtroom support. Civil law enforcement responsibilities include executing court orders and warrants and serving legal documents. Its security management ensures the safety and welfare of Judicial Officers, jurors, court staff, legal representatives and members of the public across NSW court and tribunal locations. Jury and courtroom support involves managing jury rolls, summoning jurors, processing exemptions and ensuring jurors are compensated for their civic duty. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office supports the efficient operation of District and Supreme Court courtrooms by assisting Judicial Officers, parties, witnesses and jurors.

This year marked 200 years of the NSW Sheriff's Office. The milestone was commemorated with a series of celebrations, including a Bicentennial Gala at Sydney Town Hall and regional functions at iconic venues like Dubbo Zoo. The Sydney gala featured an exclusive exhibition, which is now displayed at the Downing Centre and showcases historical artifacts and stories from the rich history and evolution of the Sheriff's Office.

A mini documentary titled *Road to the Future* was released, showcasing the history of the Sheriff's Office through the experiences of past and present colleagues. Additionally, St Andrew's Cathedral hosted a Choral Evensong Service to honour the faithful service of the Sheriff's Office.

These commemorative events not only celebrated the rich history of the Sheriff's Office, they also reinforced our commitment to serving the community with integrity by upholding the Sheriff's Office mission to support the justice system across NSW.

Local Court Achievements in 2024

White Cockatoos in Hughie Cameron Park, Hillston. Credit: Destination NSW



Appointment of a Third Deputy Chief Magistrate

In recognition of the complexity of the Local Court's work and its ever-increasing workload, Magistrate Michael Antrum was appointed on 28 October 2024 as the Local Court's third Deputy

Chief Magistrate. The Deputy Chief Magistrates assist the Chief Magistrate in the management of the Local Court, including in listing and rostering, policy reforms and projects, and judicial education.

Six New Magistrate Roles

In June 2024, the NSW Government announced a reform package for domestic and family violence responses. As part of that package, the NSW

Government announced that six new Magistrates would be appointed in 2025, bringing the number of Magistrates in the Local Court to 160.

Change of Title

In recognition of the seriousness and volume of work done in the Local Court, it was announced in November 2024 that the title of Magistrate of the Local Court would change to Judge of the Local Court. Commensurate changes will occur to the other judicial offices in the Local Court, including the Chief Magistrate, Deputy Chief Magistrates, Children's Magistrates, Chief Industrial Magistrate, Industrial Magistrates and Acting Magistrates. Work is currently underway to amend all the relevant pieces of legislation to effect this change, which is likely to take effect in 2025.

Local Court Magistrates make more than 90% of judicial decisions in NSW, and the Court's workload increases in volume and complexity every year. The change in title to Judge will modernise the Local Court, reflect the seriousness and volume of work in this jurisdiction, recognise that Judicial Officers in the Local Court are all legally trained and increase public understanding of the role of Judicial Officers in the Local Court.

Mid-Year Recess

In late 2024, the Local Court announced a change of policy such that there would be no scheduled Chambers Days from January 2025.

In lieu of Chambers Days arrangements, a one-week Local Court mid-year recess will commence

from 2025, to be held each year immediately after the Local Court Annual Conference. Magistrates can use the mid-year recess to support their wellbeing, attend to outstanding judgments and participate in other educational activities.

Regional Coordinating Magistrates and Specialist Coordinating Magistrates

With the increasing workload and complexity of matters within the jurisdiction of the Local Court, and the vast distances across which the Local Court operates, the Court has determined that Regional Coordinating Magistrates and Specialist Coordinating Magistrates be established.

The sitting locations of the Local Court have been divided into eight regions:

- Downing Centre
- Eastern Sydney
- South Western Sydney
- Western Sydney
- Hunter and Mid-North Coast
- Illawarra / South Coast and Riverina
- Northern Rivers and New England
- Western NSW

The Regional Coordinating Magistrates provide support to the Magistrates within their region, advice on the sitting and listing arrangements, and mentorship to Magistrates.

With the complexity of the Local Court's varied jurisdictions, the Court has also determined that Specialist Coordinating Magistrates be created for bail proceedings, civil proceedings, and domestic and family violence proceedings. These Coordinating Magistrates will advise the Chief Magistrate on their relevant policy areas, including on the Court's Practice Notes and the Court's responses to requests for consultation by government.



Murray River, Perricoota – Credit: Destination NSW

Centralised Weekend Bail Courts and the Bail Division

In May 2024, the NSW Government announced reforms aimed at strengthening the justice system to better protect victims of domestic and family violence, including a decision that Magistrates rather than court registrars are best placed to make bail determinations in often very difficult circumstances. This decision required the centralisation of bail decisions from regional communities to Magistrates sitting at a centralised location.

This announcement required the development of the Centralised Weekend Bail Court model. Court Services established the Bail Court Operations Project to develop the new operating model, which redirects regional bail matters, ordinarily heard by a Regional Local Court Registrar, to a Magistrate in Parramatta via audiovisual link. Between 26 October and 23 November 2024, bail applications from regional hubs transitioned into the centralised model. The centralised model provides coverage on weekends, on public holidays, during the court vacation period, during judicial conference periods and on weekdays when a Magistrate is unavailable.

A further model commenced on 28 February 2025 to address weekday bail matters at times when a Magistrate is on circuit or unavailable.

The significant contribution made by Court Services staff to the administration of justice by determining bail applications prior to the recent changes should be recognised. Over many years and across NSW, particularly in rural and regional areas, registrars and other registry staff provided an important service to their communities in performing ‘authorised justice’ functions, including the making of bail decisions on weekends and public holidays and at other times when Magistrates were not available.

Work also commenced in 2024 on the Local Court Bail Division, which will sit in Sydney and will initially encompass a team of six Magistrates. The Bail Division will centralise weekday regional and selected metropolitan first appearance bail matters in 2025. The creation of the Bail Division will modernise and ensure greater consistency in bail proceedings throughout NSW. The Bail Division will also have the effect of easing the workload of regional courts, which will enable local Magistrates to refocus their court hours on lists, reducing hearing delays and coronial work.

Civil Centralisation and the Creation of the Civil Bench

The Civil Jurisdiction of the Local Court is a vital component of our work. The Local Court has a jurisdiction of up to \$100,000, which brings most small-scale disputes within the Court's purview.

The Court recognises that even disputes over relatively small amounts of money can mean a great deal to individuals, families and small businesses. As part of the Court's renewed focus on consistency and access to justice, the Court

has determined that in the General Division, a specialised Civil Bench be established. This will ensure that wherever a litigant is in NSW, they get consistent and high-quality decision-making by Magistrates who are civil experts. The Civil Bench commenced in 2025.

The Court also determined that for small claims matters commencing in 2025, to ensure consistency in the Small Claims Division, all matters will be heard by Local Court Assessors. This reform enables the expertise of Assessors to be best used across NSW and allows Magistrates to dedicate more time to General Division matters and matters in the Court's other jurisdictions.

Temporary New England Circuit

In March 2024, the NSW Government announced temporary funding for additional judicial resources in the Moree Targeted Response.

The Local Court created the New England Temporary Circuit for six months commencing in August 2024 and concluding in March 2025.

This Circuit increased the available sittings in the Armidale, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree and Tamworth Local Courts. The funding for the Acting Magistrate also came with associated funding for required court staff, Police and staff from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service. The additional sittings helped reduce court wait times in the area and boosted court capacity.

Expansion of the Specialist Family Violence List

In 2023, the Local Court began piloting the Specialist Family Violence List, which aims to improve how the Local Court case manages and hears domestic and family violence matters.

The key intention is to increase the voice of the complainant in court proceedings, affording them the opportunity to provide their views to the court during the course of the matter. This is especially important with the commencement of coercive control offences in 2024.

The Specialist Family Violence List expanded to five additional Local Courts in 2024:

- Bankstown
- Liverpool
- Katoomba
- Windsor
- Sutherland.

The Local Court is considering further expansion of the principles of the Specialist Family Violence List.

The Specialist Family Violence List provides a comprehensive package of reforms in a specific Practice Note that establishes:

- a trauma-informed approach to court proceedings
- consistency in staffing across the participants in court at the case management, hearing and sentencing stages
- regular Court User Forums, where the local Magistrate comes together with local service providers, legal practitioners, court staff and Police Domestic Violence Officers to discuss how the pilot is progressing and how to improve local procedures.

All Magistrates involved in the Specialist Family Violence List have received trauma-informed practice training, provided by the Judicial Commission. This training is crucial to the effectiveness of the pilot. Likewise, in partnership with Legal Aid NSW and DCJ, training was provided to stakeholders in the pilot locations, including local legal practitioners, prosecutors, Police Domestic Violence Officers, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service staff, and local domestic and family violence service providers.

Country Service Policy

In late 2024, the Local Court's *Country Service Policy* was reviewed to clarify that Magistrates undertaking country service will be required to primarily live in the local area of their Circuit.

Ongoing fly-in/fly-out arrangements are no longer supported or funded by the CMO. This ensures that Magistrates are embedded in their local communities and understand local issues and priorities.

Review of Circuits

In 2024, all Local Courts were asked to review their sitting and listing arrangements to ensure that any local arrangements or desired changes are reflected in the statewide published arrangements. The Local Court's Sitting and Listing Arrangements are published on our [website](#).

Such reviews are crucial to ensure that local stakeholders and legal practitioners are aware of the court's sittings, so they are able to best represent their clients.

Likewise in late 2024, many regional circuits reviewed their sitting and listing arrangements to incorporate changes that commenced in early 2025. These changes were made in consultation with the Attorney General, local Magistrates, local Registrars, Regional Directors from DCJ and local stakeholders.

Super Callover Proceedings

The CMO identified cases awaiting hearing dates that did not adhere to the NSW Local Court's published criminal case time standards. To address this issue, the Chief Magistrate initiated a pilot project to conduct a special and high-priority callover to review individual matters at designated locations.

The Super Callover proceedings commenced in November 2024 at Bankstown, Penrith, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Burwood, Sydney Downing Centre (including matters from Waverley and Newtown Local Courts), Gosford, Parramatta and Wyong.

The Callover had a maximum of 40 matters per day, however, on average heard 20 matters. In each matter that came before the court, one of the following actions was taken:

- confirmation of the hearing date
- rescheduling of the matter to an earlier date by mutual consent of the parties and subject to court availability, from 1 February 2025
- withdrawal of the charge or charges by the prosecution
- entry of a guilty plea.

Approximately 22% of the matters previously listed for hearing had their hearing date vacated as a result of the callover. Based on the assumption that one hearing or callover day is equal to five hours' hearing time, 95:00 callover hours were held during the pilot, and the callovers resulted in 180:39 hearing hours being saved, which equates to approximately 36 hearing days .

The object of the Super Callover was to reduce hearing delays. For every hour of callover time held, 1.9 hours of hearing time were saved.

Court Programs

Multicultural NSW

Multicultural NSW is committed to promoting community harmony and social cohesion. An effective approach to achieving this objective is to deliver responsive and quality interpreting and translation services to the people of NSW.

Multicultural NSW has been the main provider of specialised legal interpreting services to NSW courts for more than 40 years. Through this partnership, almost all state courts work with Multicultural NSW, ensuring a consistent level and quality of service for everyone in need of an interpreter or translator statewide.

NSW is recognised as one of the most multicultural states globally, with 29.3% of the state's population born overseas and 26.6% of households in NSW speaking a language other than English at home.²

Interpreters in the Local Court support the judicial process and help ensure equity and procedural fairness for people who may not be fluent in English. Interpreters bridge language gaps to ensure someone who cannot communicate fluently in English can be present at proceedings and be in the same position as an English-speaking person.

Multicultural NSW Language Services provides face-to-face, telephone and video interpreting services within the justice system across metro, regional and remote areas of NSW. Interpreting services support sight translation of legal documents and all types of court proceedings, including but not limited to mentions, hearings, committal proceedings and bail applications.

Multicultural NSW Language Services manages a nationwide workforce of qualified interpreters and translators who specialise in more than 120 languages and dialects. To ensure the provision of high-quality legal interpreting services,

Multicultural NSW places a strong emphasis on the development of its workforce through an extensive professional development program. This program encompasses skills enhancement, court-specific training, and mentoring to support the growth of new interpreters.

Services Delivered

In 2024, Multicultural NSW delivered interpreting services in more than 80 Local Courts in NSW. Multicultural NSW provided:

- 20,856 interpreting assignments in the Local Courts
- interpreting services for 91 languages, with Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Persian (Farsi) and Spanish being the most requested languages.

Multicultural NSW and the Local Court continue to work closely to implement continuous improvements in the provision of court interpreting. These efforts include:

- making court hearing loops available to interpreters so they can access the best audio input, enabling greater accuracy in interpreting
- improving current practices in interpreter booking and courtroom processes to better utilise the professional workforce
- ensuring interpreters have context on the assignment to allow them to better prepare and understand language in context
- Multicultural NSW investing in portable simultaneous interpreting equipment for longer hearings, to support the seamless flow of communication without interrupting the speaker while improving physical conditions for interpreters during proceedings.

2 ABS census data 2021.

Key Initiatives

Civil Courts Pilot – Extending Interpreting Services in the Civil Jurisdiction

Multicultural NSW, at the request of the Chief Magistrates Office, explored the possibility of extending fee-exempt interpreter services to the Civil Jurisdiction of the Local Court. This involves Multicultural NSW providing NAATI-certified interpreters. Fee-exempt interpreter services apply to Small Claims and General Division matters.

This request addresses the issue of individuals who may not be fluent in English being reliant on friends or family members to provide interpreting support during court proceedings. Bridging these language gaps is crucial for ensuring that all parties can effectively participate in legal processes and have equal access to justice.

Through a collaboration among Multicultural NSW, the CMO and Court Services, a fee-exempt interpreting pilot program was launched on August 14, 2023. It is ongoing. To date, the program has been operating very effectively and demonstrates the strong collaboration between the Local Court and Multicultural NSW to provide better services for the people of NSW.

Senior Practitioner Pilot

The Senior Practitioner pilot is a significant initiative developed through collaboration among Multicultural NSW, the CMO and Court Services.

In 2024, Multicultural NSW launched a six-month pilot program with senior interpreters certified in Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese. This initiative was implemented across six courts: Downing Centre, Parramatta, Burwood, Liverpool, Fairfield and Bankstown. The primary objective

of the program was to improve visibility and collaboration among all professionals, including Judicial Officers involved in the provision of interpreting services. It also offered support and mentorship to interpreters at those locations, while strengthening assistance for Judicial Officers and court staff and improving the efficiency of court processes.

The pilot is now in its second phase, which engages full-time interpreters to provide interpreting services at key court locations to assist court staff and actively contribute to continuous improvement in service delivery.

Increasing Awareness and Education about the Role of Interpreters and Courtroom Technology

Courtroom technology helps Judicial Officers and legal professionals conduct proceedings similarly to how they are conducted when parties are proficient in English. It also provides for more seamless proceedings with reduced interruptions, such as whispering noises, associated with interpreting services.

In 2024, Multicultural NSW developed an educational video resource for Judicial Officers and other legal professionals that focused on the role of interpreting services and courtroom technology in supporting the work of courtrooms – including in complex cases. This initiative was supported by the CMO and Court Services, and the video was disseminated to Judicial Officers and court staff to enhance their understanding.

MERIT

The Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Program (MERIT) is a voluntary, pre-plea, Local Court diversion program that allows Local Court Magistrates, Police officers and lawyers, and others, to refer adult defendants with problematic substance use to a 12-week rehabilitation program while on bail.

NSW Health coordinates Local Health Districts and local services to deliver MERIT across NSW.

The MERIT program has been operational since 2000. MERIT was originally established as a pilot program in the North Coast of NSW based on recommendations from the NSW Drug Summit of 1999. Following promising results from the pilot, the program expanded into 62 Local Courts across NSW, comprising 55 sites with drug treatment services and seven sites with drug and alcohol treatment services. The MERIT program is currently undergoing an expansion (see below) and is available at 75 Local Court as at December 2024.

Expansion

In response to the Special Commission on Ice Inquiry, the MERIT program is undergoing an expansion designed to increase coverage to 93% of all eligible defendants. The expansion project is being rolled out over four years (FY 2022/23 to FY 2025/26). In 2024, Phases 1 and 2 of the expansion were completed. The MERIT program is now available in 75 of the 129 Local Courts.

With the expansion of MERIT comes the expansion of MERIT-funded beds in withdrawal and residential rehabilitation facilities. The grant funding comes through the NSW Health Ministerially Approved Grants Scheme, which has been in place for 20 years, and is used to purchase priority access to beds for MERIT clients. The expansion of MERIT-funded beds was determined by the NSW Ministry of Health based on the anticipated beds needed around new MERIT sites.

Evaluations

In September 2024, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Council (NDARC), BOCSAR and the NSW Ministry of Health published a [cost-benefit analysis \(CBA\)](#) that found the MERIT program’s criminal justice benefits exceed its costs, with a benefit-cost ratio of 1.14.

The same agencies collaborated in 2024 to complete a quantitative evaluation, which focuses on key health and justice outcomes for MERIT participants. Positive findings are expected, and that research will be published in the International Journal of Drug Policy early in 2025.

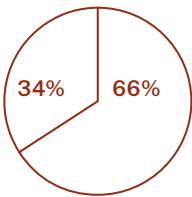
2024 data (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024)

During 2024,

3,309 defendants were referred to MERIT, of which:

2,180 (66%) were **accepted** into the program

1,129 (34%) were **not accepted** into the program



835 (25%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



561 (67%) of those who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were accepted into the program



1,500 (69%) of accepted participants successfully completed the program, of which:



333 (22%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



660 participants did not complete the program for the following reasons:



- 414** (63%) did not comply with the program conditions
- 119** (18%) withdrew voluntarily
- 73** (11%) were removed by the court
- 54** (8%) were exited for other reasons

Acceptance and completion rates for all participants have been relatively steady over the past three years. However, completion rates for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants did decline by 4% in 2024, down to 59% of those accepted into the program.

SCCLS

Statewide Community and Court Liaison Service


The Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (Justice Health NSW) is a Statutory Health Corporation established under the *Health Services Act 1997*. It delivers health care to adults in contact with the criminal justice system, operating across community, inpatient and custodial settings in NSW.




















The Statewide Community and Court Liaison Service (SCCLS) was established by Justice Health NSW in 1999 as a court-based service to assist Magistrates with the diversion of people with mental health illness, mental disorder and/or cognitive impairment who have been charged with a summary offence or an indictable offence dealt with summarily. The aim of the service is to assist in diverting these defendants away from the criminal justice system to civil inpatient or community mental health services or other supporting intervention options under ss 14, 19 and 20 of the *Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020*.

At each SCCLS location a Court Liaison Officer (an experienced mental health clinician) provides the following services:

- screens and identifies newly charged, remanded and out-of-custody defendants who have or are suspected to have mental health illness, mental disorder and/or cognitive impairment
- undertakes a comprehensive psychiatric and risk assessment of the defendant's mental state
- obtains collaborative medical information to confirm a defendant's psychiatric history and diagnoses
- liaises with treatment providers to ascertain current treatment (or lack of) and treatment needs and to develop feasible treatment plans

- seeks clinical supervision from the SCCLS Forensic Psychiatrist to ensure the provisional diagnosis is correct and that the treatment recommendations are appropriate and will mitigate any identified risk factors
- provides a court report to the Magistrate summarising the defendant's clinical needs and available treatment options
- ensures the defendant is formally referred to a treatment provider following the Magistrate's determination of their matter, whether in the community or in custody.

The SCCLS currently operates in the following 42 courts. **Those marked in orange**  have been newly established following funding to expand mental health court diversions services.

Albury 	Lithgow 
Bankstown 	Liverpool
Bathurst 	Milton
Blacktown	Mount Druitt 
Blayney 	Newtown 
Broken Hill*	Nowra
Burwood	Oberon 
Campbelltown	Orange 
Central Sydney	Parkes*
Coffs Harbour	Parramatta
Corowa 	Penrith
Dubbo	Port Macquarie
Fairfield 	Queanbeyan 
Forbes*	Sydney Downing Centre
Forster 	Tamworth
Gosford	Taree 
Goulburn 	Wagga Wagga
Holbrook 	Waverley 
Katoomba 	Wollongong
Kempsey	Wyong
Lismore	Yass 

*Courts in which the SCCLS provides audiovisual linkage (AVL) court diversion service in partnership with the DCJ Aboriginal Support Unit.

In the 2024 calendar year, the SCCLS screened

15,645 people appearing before the Local Court for mental health illness.

Of this number:

4,210 received a comprehensive mental health assessment, of which:



4,157 (99%) were found to have a mental health illness


3,396 (82%) were diverted from the criminal justice system.

*In July 2022, the NSW Government announced its investment of **\$13.4 million** over four years to expand the SCCLS to a further **35 courts** across the state and at the Police cells at Surry Hills.*

Thus far, SCCLS has opened mental health diversion services in Albury, Corowa, Holbrook, Bankstown, Mount Druitt, Orange, Bathurst, Oberon, Blayney, Queanbeyan, Yass, Goulburn, Waverley, Newtown, Fairfield, Katoomba, Lithgow, Taree and Forster courts.

Expansion is underway, and SCCLS will roll out services to the following locations (in addition to those listed on the previous page) in the 2025 calendar year.

Albion Park	Moree	
Armidale	Moss Vale	
Byron Bay	Mullumbimby	
Casino	Murwillumbah	
Cessnock	Muswellbrook	
Grafton	Newcastle	
Griffith	Picton	
Inverell	Singleton	
Leeton	Tweed Heads	
Maclean	Wentworth	
Maitland	Wilcannia	

 Courts where the SCCLS will provide AVL court diversion service in partnership with the DCJ Aboriginal Support Unit.

The expansion of SCCLS will also include the appointment of two Aboriginal Court Liaison Officers to promote the diversion of people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to culturally appropriate community-based mental health services. They will also promote a culturally safe service by providing ongoing education and support to the SCCLS team.

JAS

The Justice Advocacy Service (JAS) supports people with a cognitive impairment who are in contact with the NSW criminal justice system. JAS is delivered by the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) and has two service components: JAS Advocacy, which commenced in 2019, and JAS Diversion, which commenced in July 2022. JAS also provides training and capacity-building to justice agency staff to help them better identify, work with and respond to the needs of people with a cognitive impairment.

JAS Advocacy is a statewide service that supports victims, witnesses, suspects and defendants who may have a cognitive impairment to participate in Police, legal and court processes

by providing a support person and other reasonable adjustments. A person does not need to provide evidence of cognitive impairment to access JAS Advocacy.

JAS Advocacy is delivered by Justice Advocates and volunteers who can support clients to: Understand their rights, criminal justice processes, and legal advice; participate in criminal justice processes; communicate with Police, lawyers, court staff, Magistrates and Judges; access legal advice (including free legal advice while in Police custody); understand and adhere to bail and court-ordered conditions; access other support services to address their needs; and attend and remain at court.

JAS Diversion provides targeted case coordination for defendants with a cognitive impairment who are seeking a diversion order under s 14 of the *Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020*. JAS Diversion is available to defendants:

- who are appearing at Downing Centre, Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith, Gosford and Lismore courts
- with a confirmed cognitive impairment
- who are eligible for a diversion order under s 14 of the *Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020* and whose lawyer considers an application for diversion appropriate
- who voluntarily agree to participate in the service.

JAS has continued to build strong relationships with NSW Local Court Registry staff to:

- increase awareness among court users of the service JAS provides
- enable court staff to better assist JAS clients where possible (e.g., helping clients find quieter areas at court)
- help court staff better identify people with a cognitive impairment, which in turn increases referrals to JAS.

JAS has continued to develop meaningful working relationships with Aboriginal Client and Community Support Officers (ACCSOs) to support Aboriginal court users who have a possible cognitive impairment. Close collaboration between JAS and ACCSOs leads to the best possible outcomes for shared clients.

JAS has built and maintained a strong relationship with the SCCLS across the state, particularly at courts that provide JAS Diversion. JAS Diversion and SCCLS teams have developed localised eligibility / referral / combined service support approaches and have formalised quarterly meetings with SCCLS management to support JAS Diversion and SCCLS staff, resolve issues and work together for the best possible outcomes for clients. Collaboration between JAS and SCCLS has provided clients who have co-morbid cognitive impairment and mental health impairment with holistic support that addresses their complex needs.

JAS has received considerable positive feedback from individual Magistrates and Judges who have cited the importance of the service and their appreciation for the work JAS does. JAS also receives referrals directly from Magistrates and Judges, who may adjourn proceedings until support can be provided by JAS.

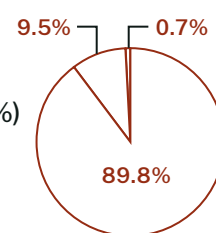
2024 data (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024)

During 2024,

3,067 clients were referred to JAS Advocacy, of which:

1,784 (58.2%) were supported in **2,231** cases as:

- **Suspects/defendants** (89.8%)
- **Victims** (9.5%)
- **Witnesses** (0.7%)



711 (39.9%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

During 2024,

4,142 court supports were provided to clients



During 2024,

354 referrals were made to JAS Diversion, of which:



201 (56.8%) resulted in s 14 applications being made:



- **137** (68.2%) were **successful applications** (33.6% n=46 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
- **64** (31.8%) were **unsuccessful applications** (39.1% n= 25 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)



109 (30.8%) **did not proceed** to s 14 applications (32.1% n= 35 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)

43 (12.2%) **remain pending** (39.5% n= 17 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)

124 (35%) **identified as** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

TOIP

The Traffic Offender Intervention Program (TOIP) is a Local Court– based program targeting offenders who have pleaded guilty to, or been found guilty of, a traffic offence. The goal of the program is to provide offenders with the information and skills necessary to develop positive attitudes towards driving and develop safer driving behaviours.

On application by the defendant or the defendant’s legal representative, or by the court’s own motion, Magistrates may make a referral to an approved traffic course provider. The case may, in the meantime, be adjourned for sentencing, allowing sufficient time for the nominated course to be completed prior to sentencing.

In 2024, TOIP was delivered by the following nine providers:

- ASPIRE Traffic Offender Course Incorporated
- Blacktown Traffic Offenders Program Inc
- Oxley Community Transport Services Inc
- Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW Ltd (PCYC)
- ROAD Awareness Program
- Road Sense Australia Ltd
- Road User Rehabilitation Incorporated
- Scone Neighbourhood Resource Centre (SNRC)
- Sydney Safe Roads Pty Ltd.

2024 data

TOIP participation 2024 calendar year*	
Number of referrals	26,468
Number of participants	24,523
Number of completions	22,259
Number of non-completions	2,264

TOIP participant demographics 2024 calendar year*

Offence Type	Count	(%)
Prescribed Concentration Alcohol (PCA)	6,369	24.11
Prohibited Drug	2,046	7.75
Speeding	7,349	27.82
Licence	4,937	18.69
Regulatory	5,286	20.01
Other	426	1.61
Gender		
Male	17,240	70.30
Female	7,195	29.34
Non-binary	5	0.02
Unknown	83	0.33
Aboriginality		
Indigenous	2,022	8.25
Non-Indigenous	21,712	88.54
Unknown / Prefer not to disclose	789	3.22
Age		
Under 18 years	676	2.76
18–24 years	6,653	27.13
25–29 years	3,603	14.69
30–34 years	3,118	12.71
35–39 years	2,452	10.00
40–44 years	2,237	9.12
45–49 years	1,748	7.13
50–59 years	2,330	9.50
60–69 years	1,307	5.33
70–79 years	330	1.35
80+ years	59	0.24
Unknown	10	0.04

*Please note that this data includes some participants who are referred through the Increased Traffic Offender Penalties (ITOP) scheme who may not appear before the Local Court.

WDVCAS

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) is a specialist, frontline support service for women experiencing domestic and family violence in NSW. The services provide a range of vital supports to women, including:

- information
- safety planning
- referrals to local services for key needs (e.g., housing, counselling, medical assistance or legal advice)
- case management or longer-term, more intensive support for clients with complex needs, such as mental health or drug and alcohol issues
- victim liaison in relation to Safety Action Meetings
- assistance in the Local Court regarding Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVO) and domestic and family violence-related criminal charge matters.

WDVCAS provides support to women across the state, covering every town and suburb, and every Local Court location that hears domestic and family violence matters. In 2023/24, the service assisted more than 64,000 women.

Legal Aid NSW administers NSW Government funding for WDVCAS through contracts with non-government providers.

At court, the primary role of the WDVCAS is to assist women complainants and persons in need of protection to understand and safely engage with the court process, and to obtain legal protection from further harm through an ADVO with appropriate conditions.

In particular, WDVCAS is available at court on dates when domestic and family violence matters are listed for mention to:

- provide information and support to help clients understand the court process
- liaise with Local Court staff and other stakeholders on behalf of clients, for example to help a client access a remote witness room
- advocate with the NSW Police Force and other stakeholders to ensure that clients' wishes are heard and understood
- connect women with legal advice and representation, for example through Legal Aid NSW's Domestic Violence Duty Service where available
- provide a safe and confidential place for clients to wait while at court, where available, away from other parties (e.g., in the 'safe room').

WDVCAS also works to support clients where a matter is set down for hearing in the Local Court. For example, it partners with Police Prosecutions to deliver pre-hearing information clinics for women with an upcoming hearing date. These clinics are an opportunity for Prosecutors to explain the hearing process to women complainants and help reduce their trepidation at the prospect of giving evidence by familiarising them with the courtroom and key court stakeholders.

WDVCAS' capacity to support women in relation to hearings was significantly increased by the creation of the WDVCAS Hearing Support Pilot. The pilot commenced in late 2022 in 14 WDVCAS locations, covering 73 Local Courts, and has since expanded to all remaining WDVCAS locations, covering all Local Courts that routinely hear domestic and family violence matters.

The pilot involves the employment of dedicated WDVCS staff to support women who are involved in a matter set down for hearing, for instance by keeping women informed of key dates throughout the court process and helping women to attend court for the hearing date (e.g., by arranging transport or childcare).

The primary objectives of the pilot are to:

- improve victims' engagement with the court process
- reduce the stress and trauma associated with the court process for victims
- reduce the likelihood that victims may disengage from the court process, either by failing to attend the hearing date or becoming an unfavourable witness
- help victims give accurate evidence when their matter goes to hearing
- help victims obtain ADVOs with appropriate conditions to ensure their safety.

In 2024, WDVCS continued to deliver high-quality support to women involved in domestic and family violence-related matters at all Local Courts. In the most recent client survey:

97% of respondents said they felt heard and understood after engaging with the WDVCS

95% said they felt supported in planning for their safety

94% said they would recommend the WDVCS service to someone if they needed help

83% said they had a better understanding of how the Police and court system works.

In addition, an independent evaluation by Dr Jane Wangmann and colleagues from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) found that the pilot is meeting its objectives and should be funded to continue as a standard part of WDVCS service delivery. During the evaluation data collection phase (the first year of the pilot), WDVCS provided more than 3,000 women across the state with hearing support.

Outside of the Local Court context, WDVCS also continued to partner with the NSW Police Force on a successful pilot involving the co-location of support workers at Police stations. This pilot aims to improve the response provided to women who attend a Police station to report, or seek help in relation to, domestic and family violence.

The Magistracy

*Traditional Aboriginal fish traps in Brewarrina (Ngemba Country), also known as Baiame's Ngunnhu.
Credit: Destination NSW*



Judicial Officers of the Local Court

Chief Magistrate

His Honour Judge Peter Johnstone
(until 5 July 2024)

His Honour Judge Michael Allen
(from 8 July 2024)

Deputy Chief Magistrates

His Honour Magistrate Michael Antrum
(from 28 October 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Sharon Freund

His Honour Magistrate Theo Tsavdaridis

State Coroner

Her Honour Magistrate Teresa O'Sullivan

Magistrates

His Honour Magistrate Imad Abdul-Karim

His Honour Magistrate John Arms

Her Honour Magistrate Jennifer Atkinson

His Honour Magistrate Rami Attia

Her Honour Magistrate Joan Baptie

His Honour Magistrate Michael Barko

His Honour Magistrate Stephen Barlow

His Honour Magistrate Peter Barnett SC

His Honour Magistrate Glenn Bartley

Her Honour Magistrate Geraldine Beattie

Her Honour Magistrate Joy Boulos

His Honour Magistrate Rodney Brender

His Honour Magistrate George Breton

His Honour Magistrate Peter Bugden
(until 9 February 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Jayeann Carney

His Honour Magistrate Ian Cheetham

His Honour Magistrate John Chicken

Her Honour Magistrate Bree Chisholm

His Honour Magistrate Gareth Christofi

His Honour Magistrate Roger Clisdell

His Honour Magistrate Stephen Corry

His Honour Magistrate Daniel Covington

Her Honour Magistrate Sharron Crews

Her Honour Magistrate Kathy Crittenden

Her Honour Magistrate Juliana Crofts

His Honour Magistrate Michael Crompton
(MHRT from 18 November 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Rana Daher

His Honour Magistrate Michael Dakin

Her Honour Magistrate Georgina Darcy

His Honour Magistrate David Day

His Honour Magistrate David Degnan

Her Honour Magistrate Robyn Denes

His Honour Magistrate Stuart Devine

His Honour Magistrate Doug Dick

His Honour Magistrate Hugh Donnelly

His Honour Magistrate Mark Douglass

Her Honour Magistrate Susan Duncombe

His Honour Magistrate Geoffrey Dunlevy

His Honour Magistrate Andrew Eckhold

His Honour Magistrate Gregory Elks

Her Honour Magistrate Elizabeth Ellis

Her Honour Magistrate Clare Farnan

His Honour Magistrate Peter Feather

Her Honour Magistrate Dr Gabriel Fleming

Her Honour Magistrate Catherine Follent

Her Honour Magistrate Carmel Forbes

Her Honour Magistrate Nicole Ford

His Honour Magistrate Caleb Franklin

His Honour Magistrate Richard Funston

His Honour Magistrate James Gibson

Her Honour Magistrate Jennifer Giles

Her Honour Magistrate Claire Giroto

Her Honour Magistrate Harriet Grahame

Her Honour Magistrate Megan Greenwood

His Honour Magistrate Gregory Grogin

His Honour Magistrate Christopher Halburd

Her Honour Magistrate Theresa Hamilton

Her Honour Magistrate Christine Haskett

Her Honour Magistrate Allison Hawkins

His Honour Magistrate Paul Hayes

His Honour Magistrate Stephan Herridge

Her Honour Magistrate Megan Heywood
(from 28 February 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Maryanne Higginson
(from 15 July 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Kevin Hockey

Her Honour Magistrate Keisha Hopgood

Her Honour Magistrate Susan Horan

Her Honour Magistrate Rebecca Hosking

Her Honour Magistrate Julie Huber
(until 12 April 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Ross Hudson
(until 19 April 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Sean Hughes
(from 27 February 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Melissa Humphreys

Her Honour Magistrate Holly Kemp

Her Honour Magistrate Erin Kennedy
(MHRT from 9 September 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Trevor Khan

His Honour Magistrate Timothy Khoo

Her Honour Magistrate Jillian Kiely

Her Honour Magistrate Janine Lacy

His Honour Magistrate Derek Lee

His Honour Magistrate Michael Love

Her Honour Magistrate Debra Maher

His Honour Magistrate Michael Maher

His Honour Magistrate Ron Maiden

Her Honour Magistrate Emma Manea

Her Honour Magistrate Danielle Mansour
(from 16 July 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Shane McAnulty

Her Honour Magistrate Fiona McCarron

Her Honour Magistrate Margaret McGlynn

Her Honour Magistrate Susan McGowan

Her Honour Magistrate Susan McIntyre

Her Honour Magistrate Sally McLaughlin

His Honour Magistrate Don McLennan PSM

Her Honour Magistrate Louise McManus

His Honour Magistrate Alexander Mijovich

Her Honour Magistrate Jacqueline Milledge

His Honour Magistrate Andrew Miller

Her Honour Magistrate Miranda Moody

His Honour Magistrate Gregory Moore

His Honour Magistrate Robert Munro

His Honour Magistrate Scott Nash

His Honour Magistrate Michael O'Brien

His Honour Magistrate Stephen Olischlager

His Honour Magistrate David O'Neil

His Honour Magistrate Michael Ong

His Honour Magistrate Justin Peach

Her Honour Magistrate Kasey Pearce

Her Honour Magistrate Kirralee Perry

His Honour Magistrate David Price

Her Honour Magistrate Karen Jennifer Price

His Honour Magistrate Roger Prowse
(until 30 August 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Margaret Quinn PSM

His Honour Magistrate Daniel Reiss

His Honour Magistrate Mark Richardson

Her Honour Magistrate Robyn Richardson

Her Honour Magistrate Laurie Robertson

Her Honour Magistrate Leanne Robinson

His Honour Magistrate Ian Rodgers

Her Honour Magistrate Elizabeth Ryan

Her Honour Magistrate Catherine Samuels

His Honour Magistrate Albert Sbrizzi

Her Honour Magistrate Tracy Sheedy

His Honour Magistrate Brett Shields

Her Honour Magistrate Te'res Sia

Her Honour Magistrate Gemma Slack-Smith

Her Honour Magistrate Julie Soars

Her Honour Magistrate Karen Stafford

Her Honour Magistrate Lisa Stapleton

His Honour Magistrate Philip Stewart

His Honour Magistrate Robert Stone

Her Honour Magistrate Vivien Swain

His Honour Magistrate Aaron Tang

Her Honour Magistrate Cathy Tawagi

His Honour Magistrate Brett Thomas

Her Honour Magistrate Katherine Thompson

His Honour Magistrate Peter Thompson

Her Honour Magistrate Fiona Toose

Her Honour Magistrate Gina Towney

Her Honour Magistrate Jacqueline Trad

Her Honour Magistrate Elaine Truscott

Her Honour Magistrate Alison Viney

His Honour Magistrate James Viney

Her Honour Magistrate Lisa Viney

Her Honour Magistrate Julia Virgo

His Honour Magistrate Glenn Walsh

His Honour Magistrate Mark Whelan

His Honour Magistrate David Williams

His Honour Magistrate Robert Williams

His Honour Magistrate Gary Wilson

Her Honour Magistrate Jennifer Wong
(from 18 July 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Rachael Wong
(from 17 July 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Pauline Wright

Her Honour Magistrate Julie Zaki

His Honour Magistrate Brian van Zuylen

Children's Magistrates

President of the Children's Court,
Judge Ellen Skinner

Children's Magistrate Michael Crompton

Children's Magistrate Susan Duncombe

Children's Magistrate Andrew Eckhold

Children's Magistrate Nicole Ford

Children's Magistrate Richard Funston

Children's Magistrate Keisha Hopgood

Children's Magistrate Paul Hayes

Children's Magistrate Michael Love

Children's Magistrate Fiona McCarron

Children's Magistrate Louise McManus

Children's Magistrate Robyn Richardson

Children's Magistrate Laurie Robertson

Children's Magistrate Albert Sbrizzi

Children's Magistrate Tracy Sheedy

Children's Magistrate Cathy Tawagi

Children's Magistrate Alison Viney

Children's Magistrate James Viney

Children's Magistrate David Williams

Deputy State Coroners

In 2024, Magistrates holding Deputy State Coroner commissions were:

Her Honour Magistrate Joan Baptie

Her Honour Magistrate Carmel Forbes

Her Honour Magistrate Harriet Grahame

Her Honour Magistrate Rebecca Hosking

Her Honour Magistrate Erin Kennedy

His Honour Magistrate Derek Lee

His Honour Magistrate David O'Neil

Her Honour Magistrate Kasey Pearce

Her Honour Magistrate Elizabeth Ryan

The following magistrates held Deputy State Coroner Commissions but worked as full-time magistrates in the regions:

His Honour Magistrate Caleb Franklin

His Honour Magistrate Robert Stone

Small Claims Assessors

There are two full-time-equivalent positions for Assessors. The Small Claims Assessors in 2024 were:

Assessor Janice Connelly

Assessor Danae Harvey

Assessor Emma Keir

Acting Magistrates

His Honour Acting Magistrate John Andrews

His Honour Acting Magistrate John Bailey

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Helen Barry
(until 28 October 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Larry Brazel
(from 16 December 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Leslie Brennan

His Honour Acting Magistrate Michael Connell
(until 1 August 2024)

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Amanda Coultas-Roberts
(from 16 December 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate John Doohan
(from 16 December 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate John Favretto

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Michelle Goodwin

His Honour Acting Magistrate Ian Guy

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Estelle Hawdon

His Honour Acting Magistrate Geoffrey Hiatt

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Sharon Holdsworth

His Honour Acting Magistrate Michael Holmes
OAM

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Julie Huber
(from 29 April 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Timothy Keady

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Joanne Keogh
(until 11 April 2024)

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Georgia Knight

His Honour Acting Magistrate Jeff Linden

His Honour Acting Magistrate Christopher Longley

His Honour Acting Magistrate Paul Lyon

His Honour Acting Magistrate Lesley Mabbutt

His Honour Acting Magistrate Paul MacMahon
(until 1 July 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Malcolm
MacPherson

His Honour Acting Magistrate John McIntosh

His Honour Acting Magistrate Ian McRae

His Honour Acting Magistrate Christopher
McRobert (until 28 June 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Carl Milovanovich

His Honour Acting Magistrate Paul Mulroney

His Honour Acting Magistrate Anthony Murray

His Honour Acting Magistrate David O'Connor
(until 5 April 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Raymond Plibersek
(from 16 December 2024)

His Honour Acting Magistrate Robert Rabbidge

His Honour Acting Magistrate Alan Railton

His Honour Acting Magistrate Peter Robinson
(from 16 December 2024)

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Paula Russell

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Mary Ryan

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Beverley Schurr

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Suzanne Seagrave

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Annette Sinclair

His Honour Acting Magistrate Anthony Spence

His Honour Acting Magistrate Garry Still

His Honour Acting Magistrate Michael Stoddart

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Judith Sweeney
(from 16 December 2024)

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Janet Wahlquist

His Honour Acting Magistrate Bruce Williams

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Sharon Wills
(from 16 December 2024)

Her Honour Acting Magistrate Eve Wynhausen

His Honour Acting Magistrate George Zdenkowski

Judicial Appointments in 2024

HIS HONOUR MAGISTRATE

Sean Hughes

Magistrate Hughes was a barrister with almost 20 years at the Bar, mainly in criminal law both defending and prosecuting in NSW Supreme and District Court jury trials. Across almost 30 years, His Honour has worked with NSW Police, Legal Aid NSW, private practice and the NSW ODPP. In 2010, Mr Hughes started prosecuting as counsel for the ODPP and two years later was appointed Crown Prosecutor. His Honour then rose to Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor in 2021, a position he held prior to his appointment.

Magistrate Hughes was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 27 February 2024.

HER HONOUR MAGISTRATE

Megan Heywood

Magistrate Heywood was a barrister with more than 25 years' experience and has dedicated her career to the public administration of justice, spanning NSW and interstate. For most of the past two decades Her Honour has worked with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and NSW, where her focus since 2007 has been appearing in jury trials. Magistrate Heywood was first appointed a Crown Prosecutor in Queensland in 2008 and also co-founded a law firm there before relocating to NSW and commencing with the NSW ODPP in 2018 as a Solicitor Advocate. Magistrate Heywood was appointed as a Crown Prosecutor in the NSW ODPP based in Sydney in early 2022.

Magistrate Heywood was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 28 February 2024.

HER HONOUR MAGISTRATE

Maryanne Higginson

Magistrate Higginson has 35 years' experience in NSW Local Courts and the administration of justice. She has held the position of Senior Manager and Hub Registrar, Illawarra South Region Hub, since 2021. Admitted as a solicitor in 1996, Magistrate Higginson's career has covered senior management roles in the Children's Court, the Sydney Civil Registry and the Downing Centre Local Court as well as policy officer roles.

Magistrate Higginson was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 15 July 2024.

HER HONOUR MAGISTRATE

Danielle Mansour

Magistrate Mansour has two decades' experience in criminal law, most recently as solicitor advocate with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Her Honour commenced her career with the NSW Police, where her roles included work as a liaison officer with diverse communities and as a Police Prosecutor.

Magistrate Mansour was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 16 July 2024.

HER HONOUR MAGISTRATE

Rachael Wong

Magistrate Wong has most recently been a solicitor at the Kingsford Legal Centre. Prior to this Magistrate Wong spent almost a decade with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, worked at the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) in Dubbo and with the NSW Crime Commission.

Magistrate Wong was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 17 July 2024.

HER HONOUR MAGISTRATE Jennifer Wong

Magistrate Wong has spent more than a decade at the Crown Solicitor's Office, primarily with the Child Protection Practice Group. Admitted as a solicitor in 1999, her career spans Victims Services, Women's Legal Services NSW and the Community Legal Service for Western NSW.

Magistrate Wong was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court on 18 July 2024.

HIS HONOUR JUDGE Michael Allen as Chief Magistrate

His Honour Judge Allen has worked in all areas of the law, including family and domestic violence, serious crime, workers' compensation and civil law. Judge Allen is committed to the administration of justice with almost 40 years' experience, including as Deputy Chief Magistrate and most recently as a District Court Judge.

Judge Allen is strongly focused on the Local Court and the role of Magistrates as members of their local communities working with the Police, health and justice agencies to ensure community safety. For almost a decade, he was a Local Court Magistrate before being appointed Deputy Chief Magistrate in 2018 and became an Acting Judge of the District Court in 2022. This work took him all over the state including many years based in Western Sydney and regional NSW.

Since early 2023, Judge Allen has been a District Court Judge at Penrith, and from January this year was the resident list Judge there. His responsibilities included listing arrangements, short matters, sentences, appeals and both jury and judge alone trials. Judge Allen started his career as a solicitor in private practice in 1986. He later worked with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid NSW before becoming a barrister in 2001 and practising across regional NSW for several years. These roles helped him develop skills in defence and prosecution in a broad range of matters.

His Honour Judge Michael Allen was sworn in as Chief Magistrate of the Local Court on 8 July 2024.

HIS HONOUR MAGISTRATE Michael Antrum as Deputy Chief Magistrate

Magistrate Antrum was appointed to the Local Court in 2011 and has presided over a variety of matters at courts throughout NSW including Wagga, Queanbeyan, Gosford and the Downing Centre in Sydney. Since 2022, he has been a Deputy President of the Forensic Division of the Mental Health Review Tribunal, and he has served on the boards of not-for-profits including Anglicare.

Magistrate Antrum completed a Bachelor of Arts (Communications) at the University of Technology Sydney in 1988, followed by a Bachelor of Laws and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice at UTS in 1993 and a Graduate Diploma in Military Law from Australian National University in 2010.

He worked briefly as a journalist before working as a solicitor at RJ Nolan & Co in Dubbo, Sweeney Waterford Lawyers in Narrabri, and North & Badgery in Sydney between 1994 and 2001. He was the Director and Principal Solicitor for the National Children's and Youth Law Centre from 1997 to 1999.

Magistrate Antrum established the Office of University Legal Counsel at the University of Western Sydney before leaving the role in 2004 to practise as a mediator and arbitrator.

In 2006, he was appointed general counsel at the NSW Police Force, a role he held until 2010. He was also a legal counsel for the Transport Construction Authority until he was appointed to the bench.

Since 2005, Magistrate Antrum has been an officer in the Australian Army Legal Corps, a role with many aspects, including offering training in administrative law and international humanitarian law. He has also been a volunteer firefighter for the Rural Fire Service.

Magistrate Michael Antrum was sworn in as a Deputy Chief Magistrate on 28 October 2024.

Judicial Retirements during 2024

His Honour Magistrate Peter Bugden
retired 9 February 2024

His Honour Judge Peter Johnstone,
Chief Magistrate, retired 5 July 2024

Her Honour Magistrate Julie Huber
retired 12 April 2024

His Honour Magistrate Roger Prowse
retired 30 August 2024

Appointments to the District Court in 2024

His Honour Magistrate Ross Hudson was appointed to the District Court on 23 April 2024.

Appointments to the Mental Health Review Tribunal in 2024

Her Honour Magistrate Carolyn Huntsman

His Honour Magistrate Michael Antrum
(until 25 October 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Erin Kennedy
(from 9 September 2024)

His Honour Magistrate Michael Crompton
(from 18 November 2024)

Her Honour Magistrate Harriet Grahame
(from 9 September 2024)

Judicial Education and Professional Development

Warrambungle. Credit: Destination NSW



Partnering with the Judicial Commission of NSW

The Local Court partners with the Judicial Commission to deliver high-quality legal information and education services to help the courts achieve consistency in sentencing and promote the highest standards of judicial performance and ability. This ensures public confidence in the administration of justice in NSW.

Continuing Judicial Education Program

The Judicial Commission's Local Court Education Committee, composed of Magistrates and convened by the Director, Education and Research, met regularly during the year to plan the education program. Magistrates are involved in the design, development, and delivery of the education program to ensure its relevance and acceptance.

The program aims to inform Judicial Officers about: Legislative and common law changes; practice and procedure; social, cultural and environmental issues; developments in science and technology; the art and craft of judging; and communication skills. Orientation for newly

appointed magistrates, a new fundamentals program to further support the transition to the bench, and First Nations cultural awareness – the Ngara Yura Program, are also offered.

Learning is through conferences, seminars, webinars, skills-based sessions and online resources published on the Judicial Information Resource System (JIRS). JIRS is a secure online system that provides hyperlinked modules of reference material designed to support discretionary judicial decision-making, including sentencing.

Continuing Education Offered in 2024

During 2024, Magistrates received specialised training tailored to meet their educational needs:

- Permanent Magistrates attended 881 days of judicial education, an average of 5.8 days per Magistrate (meeting the national standard, which recommends Judicial Officers attend five days of professional development activities each year).
- The Local Court Annual Conference was held over three days in June 2024 for all NSW Magistrates. Topics included evidence, LEPR provisions, AI and the courts, coercive control and civil law. The Annual Conference received an overall satisfaction rating of 89%.
- Smaller metropolitan and regional programs were attended by all Magistrates. These sessions are interactive and structured around discussion and peer-based learning. They aim to facilitate the development of judicial knowledge and skills. Topics included coercive control, circle sentencing, hearing management, domestic violence and sentencing. Recent developments in the Children's Court and Coroners Court were also covered for regional Magistrates. The new coercive control legislation was a major focus for the year.
- The civil webinar series continued in 2024, delivering four practical webinars addressing key topic areas within the Civil Jurisdiction.
- The Judicial Commission conducted tailored JIRS training for newly appointed Magistrates and Acting Bail Magistrates on JIRS generally and how to use this efficiently to assist them in their work on the bench.
- The Court continued a voluntary Magistrates' Observation and Support Program. This observation model is followed in many international jurisdictions, focusing on courtcraft, including management of the courtroom. The focus is on newer Magistrates appointed in the last two years.

Focus on Skills Development

- Six newly appointed Magistrates and seven newly appointed Acting Bail Magistrates attended pre-bench training designed to familiarise them with Local Court practice and procedure relevant to their appointment.
- The fundamentals series for newer Magistrates was continued in 2024, following pre-bench, further supporting new Magistrates to transition to the bench. The series was conducted over five weeks with short, focused discussions on sentencing, courtroom documents, courtcraft, bail and a practical aggregate sentencing workshop.
- Seven Magistrates attended an orientation program in September 2024. This is a five-day residential program that focuses on courtcraft and judicial skills for new magistrates.

Cultural and Cross-Jurisdictional Programs

Magistrates continued to participate in the Judicial Commission's Ngara Yura Program, initially established in 1992 in response to the final recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which recommended that Judicial Officers should receive instruction and education on matters relating to First Nations peoples' customs, culture, traditions and society. The following programs were held:

- Ngara Yura site visit to Holsworthy Military Area, 26 October 2024
- Ngara Yura and Frances Forbes Society joint program seminar on history and personalities of the District Court's Walama List, 5 November 2024.

Cross-jurisdictional programs aim to facilitate discussion about current issues and provide opportunities for exchanging ideas between members of different courts. The following were held:

- Cross-jurisdictional seminar, 'A Psychological Perspective of Sovereign Citizens', 20 February 2024

- Cross-jurisdictional webinar, 'Bias in the Jury Room: Understanding Stereotypes about Domestic Violence and What to Do about It', 14 March 2024
- Cross-jurisdictional seminar, 'Lessons Learned from Incarcerated Domestic Violence Survivors', 27 March 2024
- Cross-jurisdictional webinar, 'Memory in a Legal Setting', 9 September 2024

Online Resources on JIRS

In addition to online learning opportunities, resources are available to all magistrates via the JIRS database. These include topic-based videos and recordings of education sessions, podcasts, bench books and other research tools. Compilations of sentencing statistics assist Magistrates in achieving consistency in sentencing.

Bench Books on JIRS

The most important bench books for magistrates are the *Local Court Bench Book* (LCBB) and the *Sentencing Bench Book* (SBB), available online on JIRS. The LCBB Committee, chaired by the Managing Lawyer, Research and Sentencing, Judicial Commission, oversees the updates to these bench books. Six updates to the LCBB were published in 2024, providing important information to magistrates including updates related to:

- the *Bail Act* including s 22B (electronic monitoring) and s 22C (limitation on bail for young persons aged 14–17 inclusive)
- Contempt of Court and disrespectful behaviour in court
- domestic violence offences (new chapter), including the new offence of abusive behaviour towards intimate partners.

Sentencing Statistics on JIRS

The sentencing statistics for offences dealt with in the Local Court were updated on JIRS on four occasions throughout 2024, providing up-to-date sentencing information to Magistrates.

JIRS Training for New Magistrates

The Commission conducted seven individual JIRS training presentations for new Magistrates of the Local Court in 2024 on how to use JIRS most efficiently to assist them in their work on the bench. Two bail-specific JIRS training sessions were conducted to assist the new Acting Bail Magistrates. A further presentation at the Local Court conference alerted the whole court to new features of JIRS.

Magistrate/CMO Inquiries/ Magistrates' Resources

The Judicial Commission also assists Magistrates and the CMO staff with inquiries. The Commission further supports the court with hosting Magistrates-only accessible material for efficient and easy use on the bench.

Legal Education, Speaking Engagements and Participation with External Bodies

DCM Antrum

- Member of NSW Forensic Disability Reform Steering Committee
- ‘Journey to the Centre of the Act: Drilling down into the *Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act*’ [unpublished presentation], *Corrective Services NSW Psychologists Conference*, September 2024
- ‘*The Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act*’ [unpublished presentation], Law Society CPD, July 2024
- ‘Report Writing for the MHRT’ [unpublished presentation], *Trainee and Consultant Psychiatrists*, August 2024
- Coronial Scenario Training, Australian Army

DCM Freund

- Chair of Local Court Education Committee until July 2024
- Local Court Representative of Consent Monitoring and Advisory Group
- Member of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team
- Local Court representative of the Corrective Services Women’s Advisory Council
- Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Notre Dame
- Speaker, DVNSW Annual Conference, September 2024
- Faculty member and presenter, NSW Local Court Orientation Program, September 2024
- Presenter, NSW Local Court February Metropolitan Program, February 2025
- Guest speaker, UTS ‘Courts and Judges’ course, December 2024
- Guest speaker, UTS ‘Gender and the Law’ course, April 2025

DCM Tsavdaridis

- 'Intersection between family law proceedings, family violence and Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders and the Local Court' [unpublished presentation], *Robes & Rosé Series CLE Seminar*, January 2024
- Speaker, NSW Sheriff's Office Judicial Protection Group Training Day, January 2024
- Speaker and facilitator, Toongabbie Legal Centre Inc. Community Advocacy Training Day, March 2024
- 'The Role of the Magistrate and Discretion: Creating Equality, Fairness and Just Outcomes in the Local Court of NSW' [unpublished plenary presentation], *Legal Studies Teachers' Association of NSW Annual Conference*, March 2024
- 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Community Justice Centres: A Pathway to Agreement' [unpublished presentation], *Community Justice Centre Staff and Mediators' Workshop*, April 2024
- Speaker, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCEEW) Investigations and Prosecutions Forum, April 2024
- Presenter, TAFE NSW Certificate III in Legal Services course, April 2024
- Attendee, NJCA Symposium on 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Courts: Master or Servant', Canberra, April and July 2024
- Speaker, NSW Bar Association Bar Readers' 'Local Court Day' course, May 2024
- Presiding Magistrate, NSW Bar Association Bar Readers' Training Sessions, Downing Centre Local Court, May 2024
- Host, court visit by Judge Amir Ramzy (and delegation), President of the Alexandria Criminal Court of Egypt, May 2024
- Presenter, TAFE NSW Diploma in Paralegal Services course, June 2024
- 'Unmasking Coercive Control' [unpublished presentation], *LEAD Continuing Professional Development Seminar*, September 2024
- 'From the Lens of the Local Court: The Response of the Law to Coercive Control' [unpublished presentation] Toongabbie Legal Centre Inc. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) Coercive Control Legal Education Seminar, September 2024
- Speaker, NSW Bar Association Bar Readers' 'Local Court Day' course, September 2024
- Presiding Magistrate, NSW Bar Association Bar Readers' Training Sessions, Downing Centre Local Court, September 2024
- Speaker, City of Sydney Law Society Annual Duty Solicitors' Training Day, November 2024
- Speaker, Liverpool Fairfield Regional Law Society dinner including presentation of Certificates of Achievement to the region's solicitors who had reached 25 years' service in the law, December 2024
- Submission, advisory panel for the review of the HSC Legal Studies syllabus for Year 11 and 12 Legal Studies course, NSW Education Standards Authority draft revised syllabus, November 2024
- Speaker, NSW Legal Studies Teachers' Professional Development Day, December 2024
- Chair and speaker, Toongabbie Legal Centre Inc. Criminal Law CLE Seminars, 2024
- Speaker, Rule of Law Education Centre's Law Day Out Excursions for Legal Studies students, 2024

Magistrate Debra Maher

- Rugby Australia – Judicial Member
- NSW Rugby Union – Judicial Member
- Sydney Rugby Union – Judicial Member

Involving presiding over judicial and Code of Conduct hearings for players and other participants in both women's and men's rugby, including Super Rugby, Super Rugby Pacific, and Shute Shield.

Buddy Judges for Afghan women Judges

Magistrates Jennifer Atkinson, Debra Maher and Pauline Wright, and Acting Magistrates Beverley Schurr and Eve Wynhausen are 'Buddy Judges' for eight Afghan women Judges and their families who were granted refugee status by the Australian Government after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. The eight families arrived in Sydney in February 2022. Buddy Judges provide social support and hospitality for the families as they settle into life in Australia. The Buddy Judges system was set up by the Australian Association of Women Judges.

Assessor Keir

- Law Society Litigation Law and Practice Committee

Magistrate Whelan

- 'Family Violence: Intersection of the Local Court and Family Law' [unpublished presentation with Judge Neville], *Reflections in Law*, Terrigal, March 2024
- 'Representation of Children and Young persons in the Children's Court and Family Court' [unpublished presentation with Louise Coady, Solicitor in Charge Care and Family Law], *Law on the Lounge*, Nusa Dua, May 2024

Magistrate Eckhold

- Speaker, Orana Law Society, February 2024

Magistrate Scott Nash

- 'Domestic Violence Refresher: Legislative updates, bail, defended hearings, ADVOs and sentencing' [unpublished presentation], *Judicial Commission Metropolitan Education Series for Magistrates*, November 2024
- 'Costs in Civil Proceedings: A Guide for Magistrates' [unpublished paper and presentation], *Judicial Commission Civil Webinar Series*, July 2024

Acting Magistrate Paul Mulroney

- Chair, Serious Young Offenders Review Panel
- Member, NSW Law Society Indigenous Issues Committee
- Director, Habitat for Humanity Australia
- Chair, Committee for Discipline Uniting Church in Australia NSWACT Synod
- 'Being a Magistrate' [unpublished presentation], Clovelly Probus, November 2024
- Acted as Magistrate in a mock-court training AUSLAN interpreters, October 2024

Appendices

Wentworth. Credit: Destination NSW



2024 court by court statistics

Court	Criminal Lodgements	Criminal Finalisations	Clearance Ratios (%)
Albion Park	594	587	98.82
Albury	5,520	5,541	100.38
Armidale	2,550	2,400	94.12
Ballina	2,173	2,243	103.22
Bankstown	12,264	12,322	100.47
Batemans Bay	1,922	1,864	96.98
Bathurst	3,015	2,961	98.21
Bega	760	755	99.34
Belmont	3,876	3,814	98.40
Blacktown	10,630	10,748	101.11
Blayney	97	93	95.88
Boggabilla	206	186	90.29
Bourke	1,005	1,119	111.34
Brewarrina	322	344	106.83
Broken Hill	2,948	2,944	99.86
Burwood	15,194	14,356	94.48
Byron Bay	1,654	1,690	102.18
Camden	2	2	100.00
Campbelltown	11,175	10,749	96.19
Casino	1,486	1,561	105.05
Cessnock	2,651	2,710	102.23
Cobar	270	274	101.48
Coffs Harbour	6,913	7,078	102.39
Condobolin	243	217	89.30
Cooma	1,033	968	93.71
Coonabarabran	457	403	88.18
Coonamble	684	702	102.63
Cootamundra	494	475	96.15
Corowa	294	263	89.46
Cowra	968	846	87.40
Crookwell	1	1	100.00
Deniliquin	940	929	98.83

Court	Criminal Lodgements	Criminal Finalisations	Clearance Ratios (%)
Dubbo	7,189	7,234	100.63
Dunedoo	2	3	150.00
East Maitland	1	1	100.00
Eden	238	244	102.52
Fairfield	7,064	7,427	105.14
Finley	353	360	101.98
Forbes	579	591	102.07
Forster	1,998	2,074	103.80
Gilgandra	318	300	94.34
Glen Innes	477	500	104.82
Gloucester	73	47	64.38
Gosford	7,687	7,994	103.99
Goulburn	2,477	2,551	102.99
Grafton	3,101	3,279	105.74
Griffith	3,197	3,072	96.09
Gulgong	2	2	100.00
Gundagai	349	351	100.57
Gunnedah	1,024	1,065	104.00
Hay	276	272	98.55
Holbrook	106	105	99.06
Hornsby	5,407	5,675	104.96
Inverell	1,934	1,882	97.31
Junee	1	5	500.00
Katoomba	1,237	1,253	101.29
Kempsey	3,242	3,269	100.83
Kiama	787	759	96.44
Kurri Kurri	728	692	95.05
Kyogle	182	174	95.60
Lake Cargelligo	152	121	79.61
Leeton	738	766	103.79
Lightning Ridge	484	430	88.84
Lismore	3,867	4,125	106.67

Court	Criminal Lodgements	Criminal Finalisations	Clearance Ratios (%)
Lithgow	1,596	1,548	96.99
Liverpool	13,377	13,881	103.77
Macksville	960	1,029	107.19
Maclean	479	531	110.86
Maitland	4,670	4,889	104.69
Manly	4,828	4,818	99.79
Milton	465	473	101.72
Moama	159	166	104.40
Moree	2,154	2,187	101.53
Moruya	579	561	96.89
Moss Vale	1,463	1,467	100.27
Mt Druitt	9,095	9,619	105.76
Mudgee	1,055	1,080	102.37
Mullumbimby	304	289	95.07
Mungindi	61	47	77.05
Murwillumbah	741	743	100.27
Muswellbrook	1,510	1,551	102.72
Narooma	347	339	97.69
Narrabri	805	852	105.84
Narrandera	389	369	94.86
Narromine	430	467	108.60
Newcastle	12,497	12,985	103.90
Newtown	5,055	5,303	104.91
Nowra	4,683	4,831	103.16
Nyngan	133	142	106.77
Oberon	64	70	109.38
Orange	3,603	3,571	99.11
Parkes	1,533	1,549	101.04
Parramatta	31,887	31,368	98.37
Penrith	11,319	11,234	99.25
Picton	2,060	2,064	100.19
Port Kembla	3,476	3,309	95.20
Port Macquarie	5,236	5,455	104.18
Queanbeyan	2,316	2,315	99.96

Court	Criminal Lodgements	Criminal Finalisations	Clearance Ratios (%)
Quirindi	189	212	112.17
Raymond Terrace	3,346	3,272	97.79
Rylstone	38	38	100.00
Scone	275	276	100.36
Singleton	1,476	1,403	95.05
Sutherland	13,443	13,429	99.90
Sydney Downing Centre	32,892	32,330	98.29
Tamworth	6,009	5,952	99.05
Taree	4,041	4,068	100.67
Temora	191	205	107.33
Tenterfield	303	276	91.09
Toronto	3,346	3,639	108.76
Tumbarumba	85	80	94.12
Tumut	701	681	97.15
Tweed Heads	4,076	4,071	99.88
Wagga Wagga	6,422	6,259	97.46
Walcha	75	86	114.67
Walgett	967	1,018	105.27
Warren	212	242	114.15
Wauchope	16	19	118.75
Waverley	6,510	7,189	110.43
Wee Waa	92	91	98.91
Wellington	561	520	92.69
Wentworth	884	866	97.96
West Wyalong	242	230	95.04
Wilcannia	520	565	108.65
Windsor	2,630	2,737	104.07
Wollongong	11,620	11,944	102.79
Woy Woy	2	6	300.00
Wyong	8,700	9,108	104.69
Yass	499	482	96.59
Young	1,436	1,383	96.31
TOTAL	388,739	391,549	100.72

* Parramatta Includes Weekend Bail Court lodgments

Data includes matters transferred from one location to another in lodgments and finalisations

Statistics for Local Court Annual Review

Criminal Jurisdiction	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Local Court general crime commenced	346,930	354,775	358,109	369,158	376,160	388,739
Local Court general crime finalised	351,852	351,630	351,407	373,904	380,657	391,549
Clearance ratio	101.42%	99.11%	98.13%	101.00%	101.20%	100.7%
Pending Local Court general crime	70,998	77,834	89,753	85,876	89,577	92,326
Percentage of Local Court general crime completed within 6 months of commencement	94.00%	92.99%	91.95%	88.30%	88.94%	89.63%
Percentage of Local Court general crime completed within 12 months of commencement	98.18%	98.65%	98.62%	96.71%	97.67%	97.82%

**Note regarding pending count: Due to the count of cases that are transferred from one location to another as lodgements and finalisation, pending may capture cases that have finalised at one location, but not yet counted at the new location*

Apprehended Violence	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total AVO lodgments	41,442	43,704	46,401	48,971	52,206	55,194
Total AVO finalisations	45,197	45,048	47,797	49,461	56,875	58,381
Total AVO ancillary property orders made	1,217	1,113	1,244	265	1,341	1,464
Total AVO interim orders made	13,444	10,371	8,088	6,759	6,552	20,793
Total AVO provisional orders made	33,806	37,196	40,106	43,337	46,449	49,361

***Note regarding AVOs: Please note that the finalisation categories: 'Orders varied or revoked' and 'Application to vary / revoke withdrawn / dismissed' are a count of orders. There can be more than one order per case number.*

On and from the 19 February 2024 served provisional orders automatically become interim orders on the first return date. S32(2) Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. This explains the rise in interim orders made in 2024

Domestic Violence	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total DV lodgments	34,861	37,054	39,273	41,816	44,537	47,453
DV lodgment category – Application Notice						
DV lodgment category – Provisional Order						
DV lodgment category – Application to vary / revoke	8,303	8,262	8,301	7,858	7,827	9,190
Total DV finalisations	38,983	39,158	41,115	46,034	49,240	50,889
DV finalisation category – Final orders made	28,025	28,826	30,101	33,680	35,621	37,125
DV finalisation category – Withdrawn / Dismissed	5,147	4,792	5,364	6,736	7,686	7,669
DV finalisation category – Dismissed after hearing	442	314	325	476	609	522
DV finalisation category – Application not served	68	35	52	46	43	76
DV finalisation category – Orders varied or revoked	3,766	3,640	3,549	3,344	3,254	3,235
DV finalisation category – Application to vary / revoke withdrawn / dismissed	1,383	1,365	1,484	1,498***	1,729	1,921
DV finalisation category – Other (finalisations not captured in categories above)	152	186	240	254	277	314

*** Please note that the finalisation categories: 'Orders varied or revoked' and 'Application to vary / revoke withdrawn / dismissed' are a count of orders. There can be more than one order per case number.

Personal Violence	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total PV lodgments	6,581	6,650	7,128	7,157	7,669	7,741
PV lodgment category – Application Notice						
PV lodgment category – Provisional Order						
PV lodgment category – Application to vary / revoke	328	255	269	247	305	300
Total PV finalisations	6,214	5,890	6,682	6,866	7,635	7,492
PV finalisation category – Final orders made	3,890	3,784	4,433	4,623	5,199	5,039
PV finalisation category – Withdrawn / Dismissed	1,836	1,749	1,857	1,851	1,940	1,932
PV finalisation category – Dismissed after hearing	96	73	70	96	117	116
PV finalisation category – Application not served	27	12	9	5	14	34
PV finalisation category – Orders varied or revoked	149	111	121	113	136	109
PV finalisation category – Application to vary / revoke withdrawn / dismissed	71	42	58	52	62	102
PV finalisation category – Other (finalisations not captured in categories above)	145	119	134	126	167	160

*** Please note that the finalisation categories: 'Orders varied or revoked' and 'Application to vary / revoke withdrawn / dismissed' are a count of orders. There can be more than one order per case number.

Civil Jurisdiction	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total lodgments	87,210	55,189	43,300	51,770	64,904	67,805
Small Claims Division lodgments	72,070	45,277	33,454	41,716	52,638	55,055
General Division lodgments	11,046	6,601	5,452	6,428	8,313	9,148
Other lodgments (ie. certificates)	4,094	3,311	4,394	3,626	3,953	3,602
Defence lodged (total)	7,608	7,669	6,257	5,703	7,319	7,210
Small Claims Division (defences)	5,495	5,821	4,760	4,238	5,358	5,186
General Division (defences)	2,113	1,848	1,497	1,465	1,961	2,024
Total finalisations	78,941	78,436	47,561	44,765	59,600	67,491
Percentage of Small Claims Division matters finalised within 12 months	95%	94%	91%	94%	95%	95%
Percentage of General Division matters finalised within 12 months	93%	87%	84%	92%	90%	87%
Finalisation pathway - % of cases finalised by finalisation groups						
Court judgment	1%	7%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Settled	8%	7%	11%	6%	8%	7%
Discontinued	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%
Default judgment	34%	26%	23%	30%	28%	30%
Dismissed due to lack of progress (UCPR 12.9)	40%	52%	38%	40%	44%	43%
Other finalisation	13%	3%	21%	18%	14%	14%



Local Court of New South Wales



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