



New South Wales Government
Attorney General's Department

What we do

Attorney General's Department of NSW
Serving the Community



Attorney General's Department of NSW

What we do

The Attorney General's Department of New South Wales (NSW) works towards a just and safe society by administering the courts and delivering many community programs.

We promote social harmony by:

- promoting human rights
- preventing crime
- supporting community justice
- administering the courts and tribunals
- promoting Aboriginal justice
- supporting diversity
- promoting ethical practice.

We also assist the Attorney General as the main adviser to the NSW Government on legal, constitutional and legal policy issues.

The Department manages the largest court system in Australia which is consistently rated among the best in the country in meeting time standards.

Our staff are hardworking, trustworthy, well-informed and are committed to public service and the justice system.





Our agencies

The Attorney General's Department has a broad range of operations which offer support to the NSW community.

These include:

- Anti-Discrimination Board
- Community Justice Centres
- Courts and tribunals
- LawAccess NSW
- Office of the Protective Commissioner
- Office of the Public Guardian
- Office of the Sheriff
- Privacy NSW
- Public Trustee of NSW
- NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages
- Victims Services.

A full list of the Department's agencies is provided on the inside back cover.

Promoting human rights

The Department plays an important role in promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of all people in NSW. The right to live free from discrimination is recognised internationally and within Australia as a basic human right.

With the right to live free from discrimination and in peace comes the responsibility to ensure others enjoy the same lifestyle regardless of their race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.

Access to conflict resolution

Community Justice Centres provide mediation and conflict management services to people who want to resolve disputes without going to court.

Disputes between neighbours, within families, in workplaces and in larger communities can be addressed through this service.

The service is free, confidential and voluntary.

There is also a Community Justice Centre conflict resolution service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.





Support of diversity

Diversity Services is a unit within the Attorney General's Department that helps managers and staff improve services to people with disabilities as well as those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

This work is guided by our *Disability Strategic Plan* and our *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities' Access Plan*.

The unit works to improve access to services, programs, courts, interpreters and employment policies.

To help improve services the unit's team consults with various community representatives and other justice agencies.

Preventing crime

The Department is an important part of the government's strategy to better understand crime and its causes and determine ways to actively prevent crime from occurring.

Our agencies have been recognised as experts in the field of crime prevention and support for victims.

The Department's agencies:

- provide statistical information on how crime is changing and whether crime prevention programs are working
- advise on how crime and crime prevention activities affect targeted groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women and victims of crime
- educate and support the community in crime prevention activities
- amend and develop laws to improve the way we deal with crime in NSW
- coordinate the range of services available to victims of crime
- provide compensation to victims of crime.





Promoting Aboriginal justice

The issues Aboriginal people face in dealing with the criminal justice system in NSW are complex and significant. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent two per cent of the overall NSW community, Aboriginal men make up 18.5 per cent of our prison population. Almost 30 per cent of women in prison and 47.5 per cent of juveniles in detention are Aboriginal people.

The Department has a key role in addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. To meet the Department's commitment to Aboriginal justice, a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve the quality of community services and staff support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Department also has an Aboriginal Programs Unit to support managers and staff to improve the provision of services to Aboriginal people.

Administering the courts

The Attorney General's Department is responsible for managing most courts and tribunals across the state.

Each year our courts and registries manage millions of customer transactions which range from telephone calls, internet and counter enquiries, to court lodgements in person and online.

The NSW justice system is made up of different courts and tribunals which hear matters depending on the seriousness of the case.

The **Local Court** deals with most criminal charges against adult offenders.

The **Children's Court** deals mainly with young offenders (aged 10-17 years) and hears matters where a decision has to be made about a child's welfare.

A magistrate conducts Local Court and Children's Court proceedings. There are no juries in these courts.

The **District Court** deals with serious offences committed by both juveniles and adults. The District Court hears civil matters, trials, sentencing matters and appeals against decisions made in the lower courts.





In most cases where the accused person pleads not guilty, trials are held before a judge and jury. When a person admits guilt there is no jury trial and the matter goes straight to sentencing.

The **Supreme Court** conducts civil and criminal trials before a judge and jury for offences that are more serious than those heard in the District Court, such as murder. The proceedings are presided over by a Supreme Court judge.

The **Court of Criminal Appeal** hears appeals against convictions or sentences from the District Court and Supreme Court. An appeal is conducted in the presence of three Supreme Court judges. The Court of Criminal Appeal is the ultimate court of appeal for criminal matters in NSW.

The **Industrial Relations Commission** resolves serious workplace disputes, sets conditions of employment and creates industrial awards, approves enterprise agreements and decides on claims of unfair dismissal.

The **Land and Environment Court** is a specialist environment and planning court responsible for interpreting and enforcing environmental law in NSW.

The **Dust Diseases Tribunal** is a court that hears claims for damages by those who have been affected by dust diseases, including diseases caused by asbestos exposure.

The **Drug Court** targets those offenders entrenched in a life of drug-related crime. The court combines intensive judicial supervision, drug treatment and case management for offenders with drug or alcohol use problems.

The role of the **Coroner's Court** is to determine the identity of a deceased person and the date, place, manner and cause of death.

The **Administrative Decisions Tribunal** reviews specific administrative decisions of NSW Government agencies and resolves discrimination and retail lease disputes.

The **Victims Compensation Tribunal** looks at appeals against, and makes orders for, the recovery of monies from convicted offenders.





Working in the Department

The Attorney General's Department promotes and supports the rights of all employees, particularly those who have been identified as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) target groups. This includes women, people from racial, ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups, Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people, and people with a disability.

The Department has a range of programs and policies to prevent and address unlawful discrimination and harassment in our workplace and help members of the EEO target groups to overcome any past or current disadvantage. The *re:spect* and *Well for Life* workplace campaigns aim to support and actively promote a healthy and supportive environment for staff. We employ more than 5300 staff in rural, regional, suburban and metropolitan NSW. Of these, approximately:

- 3438 are women
- 145 are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 873 are from a racial, ethnic or ethno-religious minority group
- 702 are from a CALD background
- 259 are people with a disability
- 89 are people with a disability who require work-related adjustments.

Promoting ethical behaviour

Our people work within a Code of Conduct and Ethics which outlines the standards of ethical behaviour that must be followed. The code states that an employee must:

- maintain client and colleague confidentiality at all times
- act within and uphold the law
- act honestly, impartially and without discrimination
- act ethically and professionally and maintain integrity
- disclose and take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest, whether real or apparent
- not abuse their official position or connection with the Department by making use of that official position or connection for personal gain
- report any instance of suspected improper conduct through the appropriate channels, as detailed in the Corruption Prevention Strategy.

Employees are not permitted to solicit or accept any money, gift, benefit, travel, services, hospitality, or inheritance of a personal nature. Where offers of bribes, gifts, benefits, travel or hospitality are made, employees are obligated to disclose the details in writing to a senior manager who will determine an appropriate response.





Our future goals

The Department has embarked on a program of transition called **Towards 2010** that will change our internal culture and help us deliver better services to the people of NSW.

This important strategy has several parts.

The first is Courts 2010, a program that will help modernise court services in the years to come. It will also put a greater focus on outreach programs for Aboriginal people and isolated communities, crime prevention initiatives, alternative dispute resolution services, online service delivery and training that will help us deliver better client services.

Another program of transformation involves our head office move to the Parramatta Justice Precinct. This precinct features new courts, a Community Justice Centre and a range of shopfront services including the Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages, Victims Services, Office of the Public Guardian and the Office of the Protective Commissioner.

Feedback

The Department continually aims to improve its services and welcomes your feedback.

For more information visit our website at:
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agd

Department agencies

Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ajac

Administrative Decisions Tribunal

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adt

AGD Law Libraries

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agdlib

Anti-Discrimination Board

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar

Community Justice Centres

www.cjc.nsw.gov.au

Community Relations Unit

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cru

Crime Prevention Division

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd

Criminal Law Review Division

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/clrd

Crown Solicitor's Office

www.cso.nsw.gov.au

District Court of NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/dc

Diversity Services

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/diversityservices

Dust Diseases Tribunal

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ddt

Industrial Relations Commission of NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/irc

Land and Environment Court of NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lec

LawAccess

www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au

Law Courts Library

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lcl

Law Reform Commission

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lrc

Legal Services Branch

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lrb

Legal Management Service

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lms

Legal Profession Admission Board

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lpab

Legal Representation Office

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lro

Legislation and Policy Division

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lpd

Local Courts of NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lc

Office of the Legal Services Commissioner

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/olsc

Office of the Protective Commissioner

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/opc

Office of the Public Guardian

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/opg

Office of the Sheriff

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ots

Privacy NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/privacynsw

Professional Standards Council

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/professionalstandards

Public Defenders Office

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/publicdefenders

Public Trustee of NSW

www.pt.nsw.gov.au

NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages

www.bdm.nsw.gov.au

Reporting Services Branch

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agd

Supreme Court of NSW

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/sc

Victims Services

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Victims Compensation Tribunal

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Victims of Crime Bureau

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc



www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agd

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phone: (02) 8688 8460, fax: (02) 8688 9626
and (02) 8688 7733 (TTY - for people who are
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diversity_services@agd.nsw.gov.au

