

Youth Koori Court

Fact sheet

The Youth Koori Court

The Youth Koori Court process operates within the Children's Court for young Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders who have been found by the Children's Court to have committed a criminal offence and who choose to be part of the Youth Koori Court.

The Youth Koori Court has the same powers as the Children's Court but uses a different court process to:

- involve your family and the Aboriginal community in the court process
- help you better understand what happens at court
- connect you to services that can help you stay out of trouble with the law.

It is not as formal as the Children's Court. You will have a chance to speak for yourself about what is going on in your life.

Elders or respected persons, your family, supporters and any other person in the court room will also have a chance to talk about you and your offending.

This will help the Magistrate decide on the appropriate sentence.

Can I go to the Youth Koori Court?

To go to the Youth Koori Court you must:

- be an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander
- plead guilty to the offence or be found guilty of the offence after hearing
- be between the ages of 10 to 17 years at the time of the offence

- want to have your matter heard in the Youth Koori Court.

Before you start the program, you will meet with the Koori Court Casework Co-ordinator to see if the program is right for you.

At this meeting you might talk about school or work, where you live and what help you need to stay away from Court. This is called a Suitability Assessment.

What happens in the Youth Koori Court?

The Youth Koori Court is informal. Everyone, including you and your lawyer, sit around a table to talk about your offending.

People at the Youth Koori Court may be:

- your family and supporters
- the Magistrate
- Elders and Respected Persons
- a Juvenile Justice Officer
- a Koori Court Officer
- staff from support services
- the Police Prosecutor.

You will be given a chance to talk about your feelings and why you chose to come to the Youth Koori Court.

If you are accepted into the program you will go to another meeting called Youth Koori Court Conference.

What will happen at the Youth Koori Court Conference?

At the conference everyone, including you, will talk about what help you need and what you can do to stay out of trouble.

A Children's Magistrate will help everyone come up with an Action and Support Plan. The plan might set out ways for you to:

- improve your cultural connections
- stay at school or get work
- have stable accommodation
- sort out any health, drug or alcohol issues.

Once everyone has agreed on a plan you will go back to the Youth Koori Court for the Magistrate to approve the plan.

How long does the program go for?

You have up to six months to complete the program.

You will have to come back to court several times for the Magistrate to check on how you are going with the plan.

What happens when I finish the program?

When you complete the program, a report will be written on your progress and given to the Court.

This report will help the Magistrate decide how to sentence you.

The sentence will depend on the offence, what you have done to complete the Action and Support Plan, your personal circumstances and whether you have committed other crimes.

Further information

If you have any questions, please contact the Aboriginal Client and Community Support Officer on 02 8688 1421.

Where is the Youth Koori Court?

The Youth Koori Court is located at:

Parramatta Children's Court
 2 George Street, Parramatta.
 Phone: 02 8688 1888
 Web: www.childrenscourt.justice.nsw.gov.au
 Email: childrens.court@justice.nsw.gov.au

and

Surry Hills Children's Court
 66-78 Albion Street, Surry Hills
 Phone: 02 8667 2100
 Web: www.childrenscourt.justice.nsw.gov.au
 Email: cc-Surry-Hills@justice.nsw.gov.au

Where can I get help?

You can get legal information and advice at:

- **Aboriginal Legal Service** (www.alsnswact.org.au) provide legal advice and help at court to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Phone: 1800 733 233
- **Legal Aid NSW** (www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au) provide legal advice and help at court.
Phone: 1800 551 589
- **LawAccess** (www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au) is a free government telephone service that provides legal information, advice and referrals for people who have a legal problem in NSW
Phone: 1300 888 529
- Search the **Law Society database** (www.lawsociety.com.au) for legal firms and solicitors in your area.

For alternative brochure formats (audio tape, electronic or Braille versions) contact diversityservices@agd.nsw.gov.au or phone: 02 8688 7507 or TTY: 02 8688 7733.

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