



Mark Speakman
Attorney General

MEDIA RELEASE

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EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY (IN COURT)

Comforting canines are on the way to more NSW courts after an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the therapy dog trial at Manly Courthouse, Attorney General Mark Speakman announced today.

“A visit to court can be among the most stressful experiences a person can endure. During the course of this year, placid pooches will be offering a pat and a paw to help reduce the anxiety of court users at 10 courthouses around the NSW,” Mr Speakman said.

An evaluation of the nine-month trial of therapy dogs at Manly showed support from all participants who provided glowing reports on the benefits of having a friendly animal in the courthouse.

“During the trial, these helpful hounds have assisted hundreds of victims of crime and witnesses who’ve enjoyed the benefits of the scientifically observed ‘pet effect’. It is exciting to see such a positive response to the program, not only from participants but also lawyers and court staff as well,” Mr Speakman said.

Manly MP James Griffin thanked the hardworking Delta Therapy Dog volunteers who made the Manly trial a success.

“Feed-bark we have retrieved from the trial at Manly clearly shows having a dog to talk to, and pat, in the courthouse helps to calm people who are feeling anxious and nervous,” he said.

“Behind every great local community program, there is a team of dedicated and passionate volunteers that make it all paw-sible. Since April, they have generously brought along a variety of dogs from a Miniature Poodle to a giant Bernese Mountain Dog and a Golden Retriever.”

The Commissioner of Victims Rights is consulting with Courts and Tribunal Services to identify suitable courts. When courts are selected, therapy dog providers will be invited to lodge expressions of interest.

Therapy dogs are quiet, specially trained, friendly and happy to interact with strangers. More importantly, the trial showed having dogs in the courthouse had no impact on the efficient running of the court. The animals will be located in foyers, waiting rooms, safe rooms and witness rooms as required.

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