

**Paul Lynch MP**  
**Shadow Attorney General**  
**Shadow Minister for Justice**



30 November 2013

**NSW LABOR OPPOSITION COMMITS TO ESTABLISH A NEW DRUG COURT IN WOLLONGONG**

NSW Labor has today committed to establish a new drug court for the Wollongong region.

Addressing a forum at the University of Wollongong organised by the Wollongong and District Law Society, Shadow Attorney General and Shadow Minister for Justice Paul Lynch said it was time the Drug Court was expanded to the region.

"The Drug Court of NSW helps break the cycle of addiction," said Mr Lynch.

"The previous Labor Government established the State's first Drug Court in Parramatta in 1999. A second was opened at Toronto in the Hunter region in 2011, and a third was later established at the Downing Centre in Sydney.

"In Government, Labor will expand the Drug Court to Wollongong.

"Extensive research undertaken by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research shows that the Drug Court program reduced both drug use and reoffending, saving NSW taxpayers more than \$1.75 million per year.

"Drug Courts help end the cycle of drug-related crime which is a positive for the whole community".

"The expansion of the Drug Court to Wollongong will help tackle the problems of drug-related crime".

"It has been proven to work very effectively in the Hunter, Parramatta and Sydney, with a reduction in crime and significant savings for the State".

"It is time Wollongong gets the same facilities as other parts of NSW," added Mr Lynch.

The Drug Court of NSW offers non-violent, drug dependent adult offenders the opportunity to participate in an intensive, supervised program of treatment and rehabilitation. Successful completion of the program, which takes at least 12 months, allows offenders to avoid a custodial sentence.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research's most recent evaluation report (2008) found that participants accepted into the program were:

- 17 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for any offence
- 30 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for a violent offence
- 38 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for a drug offence

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# MERCURY

## Drug court promised

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SHADOW attorney general Paul Lynch has promised to establish a drug court in the Illawarra if his government is successful at the next state election.

Mr Lynch, also shadow minister for justice, made the commitment at a public forum on drug courts which was held at the University of Wollongong on Saturday.

"The introduction of a drug court to the Illawarra will be one of our election commitments at the next state election," he said.

"The proof of the drug court's success elsewhere is really in the reports and surveys that have been done about it - it undoubtedly and very clearly reduces the amount of illegal drug use and the number of people that reoffend.

"To get that outcome in a criminal justice system is pretty rare and if you have a model that works you'd be silly not to use it."

In NSW, drug courts have been successfully established in Toronto near Newcastle, Parramatta and Sydney, and they work by giving offenders convicted of drug-related crimes the option of rehabilitation, rather than prison.

Mr Lynch said the Illawarra would be the best location for the next drug court in NSW due to the volume of criminal offences which occur in the region.

"The largest number of criminal offences are in Sydney, the second highest number are in Newcastle and the third highest are in the Illawarra," he said.

"That's a reflection of the large populations of those regions rather than the criminality of communities, but it means that the Illawarra is the most obvious next place for a drug court to be established.

"The fact there's also been a call by people in the Illawarra - from the law society and other interested parties - the fact that they want it, is another strong argument to support it."

Illawarra solicitor Renata Matyear is a member of the Illawarra Drug Court steering committee, which has been behind the push for a drug court in the region.

The committee organised the public forum on the weekend, which heard from a range of speakers including Drug Court of NSW Judge Roger Dive, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics director Dr Don Weatherburn and Hualapai Nation Court of Appeals Judge Joseph Flies-Away.

"There was a really good turnout, with more than 100 people from the health and legal professions attending, as well as interested community members," Ms Matyear said.

"We had a positive response from those that attended - including people coming up and asking what they can do to help and how they can be involved in this initiative.

"We were really pleased with the commitment made by shadow attorney general Paul Lynch who said the drug courts were 'morally desirable and economically rational'. We now plan to build on the momentum."

# MP backs special Illawarra drug court

By DOMINIC GEIGER

Nov. 1, 2013, 9:13 p.m.



Member for Wollongong Noreen Hay.

Member for Wollongong Noreen Hay has supported calls to establish a court specifically to deal with drug-addicted criminals in the Illawarra.

Ms Hay's push comes as a public forum is to be held at the University of Wollongong on November 30, to inform the community about how drug courts work.

Ms Hay said data from the state's three other drug courts, located in Toronto (near Newcastle), Parramatta and Sydney proved they were an effective way to reduce drug use in the community, while also decreasing incarceration rates.

"The reviews and reports done ... concluded the drug court program reduced reoffending, drug use and the level of imprisonment," she said. "There is the recommendation from the law courts to expand drug courts ... obviously that would be of benefit to the people of the Illawarra and Wollongong and I'm always supportive of anything that can support reduction of drug use, particularly in young people."

Rather than sending someone who had repeatedly committed property offences while dealing with a drug addiction to prison, a drug court would allow the offender to be sentenced to a term of rehabilitation.

In the 12 months to May this year, drug offences increased 22.4 per cent in the Wollongong local government area, bringing the rate per 100,000 of population to 599.1.

However, Ms Hay said she did not believe Wollongong's drug offending rate was any higher than the rest of the state.

"I'm not saying we have any greater problem than anywhere else, but our community feels the impacts of the drug addiction problem, particularly in the CBD," she said.

"Anything we can do to assist those people and reduce their reliance on drugs would be a good thing for us and society."

## UOW Drug Court Forum

### Breaking the Cycle: How Can Courts Help People Overcome Drug Addiction?

Saturday 30 November 2013  
9:00am – 4:00pm  
University of Wollongong, Main Campus  
Building 67 Room 107  
Faculty of Law Humanities and The Arts

#### PROGRAM

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|------------------------|---|
| <i>9.00am</i>          | <i>Registration</i>   |
| 9.30am                 | Opening Address (Renata Matyear) and Indigenous Welcome to the Country (Aunty Barbara Nicholson)                                |
| 9.45am                 | Address by the Member for Castle Hill, Dominic Perrottet on Drug Courts in NSW  |
| 10.05am                | Address by the Shadow Attorney-General, Paul Lynch, on Drug Courts in NSW   |
| 10.25am                | Judge Roger Dive, Senior Judge, Drug Court of NSW<br>"Combining Justice and Treatment to Reduce Crime"                          |
| <i>11.05am-11.30am</i> | <i>Morning Tea</i>  |
| 11.30am                | Dr Don Weatherburn, Director, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research<br>"The impact of the NSW Drug Court on re-offending" |

12.10pm	Amanda Clarke, Drug Court Prosecutor, Parramatta and Downing Centre "Drug Court of NSW: The Role of Law Enforcement"
12.45-1.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	Gail Wallace, Nowra Circle Court and Care Circle Coordinator "What can Circle Sentencing tell us about drug and alcohol issues impacting on Aboriginal Communities?"
2.00pm	Keynote Address: Judge Joseph Thomas Flies-Away, J.D., M.P.A Associate Justice, Hualapai Nation Court of Appeals and private consultant in Indigenous Community & Nation Building "Healing to Wellness Courts: Therapeutic Jurisprudence +"
3.00pm	Panel Discussion/Questions from the floor
4.00pm	Close/afternoon tea

*This event is sponsored by the Faculty of Law, Humanities and The Arts, the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Legal Intersections Research Centre and the Wollongong & District Law Society.*

**UOW<sup>U</sup> Law**

**UOW<sup>U</sup> Psychology**



Law Society  
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