

MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon. Graham West MP
Minister for Juvenile Justice**

**The Hon. Linda Burney MP
Minister for the State Plan
Minister for Community Services**



Tuesday, 23 March 2010

NEW SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS YOUNG OFFENDERS

A new pilot program run by Juvenile Justice and Community Services, will link homeless young offenders to extra supports to keep them out of custody and help reduce their chance of reoffending.

Minister for Juvenile Justice, Graham West, Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney and Member for Parramatta, Tanya Gadiel, today visited the pilot which will run out of Parramatta Children's Court and is supported by Ageing, Disability and Homecare, Justice Health, and the Departments of Health and Education.

Mr West said young people who commit crimes often do so because of other issues in their life, such as homelessness, abuse and neglect in the home, or drug and alcohol misuse.

"Some young people are eligible for bail but are held in custody because they are homeless," he said," he said.

"This program will focus on young people under 16, who are facing custody if they cannot find suitable accommodation.

"Juvenile Justice will conduct an initial assessment of the young person and, if they are suitable, other agencies will be enlisted to help with their case management."

Ms Burney said that Community Services caseworkers will participate on an interagency committee that will work to provide the tailored support a particular young person may need.

"For example the committee will assess whether the young person is attending school, TAFE or work, has any drug or alcohol issues, or underlying mental or physical health needs," she said.

"It is common sense that if someone has a job, an education, a safe home, and medical support they are less likely to be involved in criminal activity."

"Other members of the committee include representatives from Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Justice Health. These agencies will be making sure the young person has all their medical needs met, including if they have an intellectual or physical disability as well as a full mental health assessment if required.

"Juvenile Justice, Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Community Services form part of the Department of Human Services¹. This new pilot demonstrates that when agencies work closely

¹ DHS: Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Community Services, Juvenile Justice, Housing NSW, NSW Businesslink Pty Ltd and the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

together, effective, more integrated services can be provided to children, young people and families.”

Ms Gadiel said the pilot will help prevent vulnerable young people sliding into the juvenile justice system.

“Early and co-ordinated intervention means the underlying issues behind the crimes can be identified and addressed,” she said.

“These kids will get the tailored support they need as a result of collaboration across a range of NSW Government agencies.”

Media Contacts:

Phyllis Sakinofsky 9228 4455/0406 164 034 (Min. Burney)

Cara Davis 9228 4228/0407 219 944 (Min. West)