

Media Release

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Meeting of the ODPP's First Nations Advisory Group

A new advisory group with First Nations members from across New South Wales has convened to advise the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW) on important First Nations issues.

The First Nations Advisory Group was established as part of the ODPP's commitment to a reconciled Australia and to improving the experience of First Nations people in the criminal justice system, including within the ODPP. The group is the primary consultation body for First Nations issues relating to policy decisions at the ODPP and in the criminal justice system more broadly.

The group's 16 members were selected by the Director of Public Prosecutions after an extensive EOJ process. They represent a broad cross-section of First Nations communities from metropolitan and regional areas around the state and include members early in their careers, as well as those in very senior roles.

The full group convened for the first time on 30 May 2024 in Sydney. The meeting was co-chaired by Wiradjuri man Brendan Thomas, the CEO of the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, and Wiradjuri woman Taylah Gray, Legal Aid defence solicitor and the first Aboriginal person to undertake a PhD in Law at the University of Newcastle.

Other members include registered psychologist Vanessa Edwige, a Ngarabal woman and Chair of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association, and Ruth Shinn, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Witness Assistance Service (WAS) Officer with the ODPP. She is one of nine First Nations WAS Officers providing culturally appropriate support services and information to vulnerable victims and witnesses through ODPP offices statewide.

Priorities for the First Nations Advisory Group include enhancing the ODPP's engagement with First Nations communities and changing the perception of the ODPP within community. The group will advise the ODPP on promoting cultural safety at the ODPP, as well as on strategies to recruit and retain First Nations staff.

Damian Beaufile, proud Gundungurra man, is the first Aboriginal Crown Prosecutor in NSW and a member of the Bugmy Bar Book Project Committee. He said he was thrilled to be selected for the First Nations Advisory Group.

"In my time at the ODPP I have seen a committed effort by the Director to not only improve the experience of First Nations people who come into contact with the criminal justice system, but also to create a safe place for First Nations people to work," he said.



The Director of Public Prosecutions, Sally Dowling SC, said the ongoing effects of colonisation, dispossession and the Stolen Generations have inflicted significant disadvantage on First Nations Australians, particularly in the criminal justice system.

"The ODPP will benefit from the experience and expertise of members of the First Nations Advisory Group as we work to address that disadvantage," she said.