



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **VOLUNTEERS IN LISMORE ASKED TO COME FORWARD**

Lismore Courthouse is offering the pawfect job opportunity for dog lovers as it celebrates the first anniversary of the popular Canine Court Companion Program.

Attorney General Mark Speakman and North Coast-based upper house member Ben Franklin are inviting volunteers to come forward to join the therapy dog program.

“The fab labs Sassy, Indi, Sebastian, Fergus and Frankie provide welcome comfort to victims, witnesses and their families as they prepare for the stresses of appearing in court,” Mr Speakman said.

“The initiative has unleashed an overwhelmingly positive response from local court users, lawyers, police and court staff, with the passionate pups getting the ‘paws up’ from everyone who meets them.”

Mr Franklin said Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is looking for new volunteers to join the Court Canine Companion Program, which operates at Lismore Courthouse 9-11.30am every day except Thursday.

“You would be barking mad to miss your chance to put a smile on the faces of those who need the love of a friendly dog. The labs have been a great asset to Lismore Courthouse and it is pawsome that we can expand the team of canine comforters to provide even more support,” Mr Franklin said.

The new recruits will be required to adopt one of Guide Dogs’ empathetic labradors and will receive plenty of training before visiting the courthouse for the first time.

Dale Cleaver, CEO of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, said the organisation is excited to be working with the NSW Government.

“As a therapy dog handler, you will have a genuine love of dogs, enjoy socialising with people and have an interest in animal assisted therapy. It is a very rewarding program and we know the presence of a dog can significantly reduce stress and help people feel calm,” Mr Cleaver said.

The Canine Court Companion Program is in place in 10 locations across NSW including Lismore. It is also operating at courthouses in Burwood, Campbelltown, Gosford, Goulburn, Nowra, Orange, Sutherland, Wagga Wagga and Manly.

For more information on being a volunteer please call the Guide Dog Centre on (02) 4579 7555 or go to <https://www.guidedogs.com.au/guide-dogs/canine-court-companion-program>

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