



## DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

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### ABORIGINAL LIAISON TO OPEN DOORS AT PARLIAMENT

Aboriginal communities in NSW will have a dedicated contact at the Parliament of NSW for the first time, following the appointment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly Jonathan O’Dea said the appointment of Steven Collins, a Pitta Pitta man originally from far western Queensland, is deeply significant as the first ever for the Parliament of NSW.

“People may understandably be surprised that such a position has not previously been a part of Australia’s oldest parliament,” said Mr O’Dea.

“This historic appointment will help to break down some of the barriers that have traditionally been in place for Aboriginal people seeking to understand, access and engage with the Parliament of NSW.

“Equally, we recognise that the introduction of an avenue for the Parliament to better understand and engage with the Aboriginal people is long overdue.”

President of the NSW Legislative Council John Ajaka said the Aboriginal Liaison Officer will be a valued advocate within parliament for Aboriginal interests.

“The Aboriginal Liaison Officer will play an essential role in supporting Members of Parliament, their staff and the community on understanding Aboriginal interests and significant events, as well as providing advice on cultural protocols,” said Mr Ajaka.

“Parliament is the people’s house, including and especially our First Nations people. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which it stands and welcome our Aboriginal people and communities into the Parliament of NSW.”

Mr Collins, who has worked in the NSW public service for six years, said his upcoming priorities include establishing outreach programs and training to facilitate more effective engagement with Aboriginal communities, and commemorating important dates and events within the Parliament of NSW.

“As a descendant myself of the Stolen Generations, I am proud and thankful to be offered the chance to build better relationships between the NSW Aboriginal community and the Parliament,” said Mr Collins.

Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and former NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Leslie Williams welcomed the appointment of Mr Collins.

“We look forward to Mr Collins’ expert counsel and advice as someone dedicated to the interests of the Aboriginal community,” said Mrs Williams.

Deputy President of the NSW Legislative Council and Chair of NSW Parliamentary Friends of Reconciliation Trevor Khan said the appointment signalled the high priority placed on Aboriginal relations.

“It is wonderful to see the Aboriginal people of NSW receive a dedicated point of contact at the Parliament of NSW, and not before time.”