



## Media Release

### **MICK DODSON BACKS NEW CIRCLE SENTENCING INITIATIVE**

Release date: Thursday 22 October; Embargoed until 5.00pm

Australian of the year Dr Mick Dodson AM, has launched a DVD which provides new insight into the practice of circle sentencing.

Aboriginal offenders discuss their first hand experience of circle sentencing and its positive effects in the DVD which was funded by the NSW Judicial Commission.

Circle sentencing is an alternative sentencing programme which involves members of Aboriginal communities in the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders. It was first trialled at Nowra and has been progressively rolled out to other parts of New South Wales.

“The DVD highlights how the system operates in practice and how it can help to reduce the barriers that have existed between the courts and Aboriginal people” Dr Dodson said.

The Chief Executive of the Judicial Commission of NSW, Mr Ernie Schmatt, said that “the experiences of circle sentencing shared on this DVD are overwhelmingly positive and it provides insights and a wealth of knowledge about this important sentencing initiative.”

As well as providing an educational tool for judicial officers, the new DVD will be of great benefit to other participants in circle sentencing, including police prosecutors, defence lawyers, project officers and Aboriginal elders.

The DVD:

- explains what circle sentencing is, how it works and its benefits, in particular, its focus on bringing healing to all involved
- discusses some of the reasons circle sentencing works, including the central role of elders in both holding the offender accountable and helping them turn their lives around
- illustrates the importance of respect in Circle Courts — for elders, for the court and for all people involved in the circle
- contains comments from offenders, victims and elders about their experiences of circle sentencing
- highlights the difficulty of sentencing and the way in which circle sentencing increases confidence in the justice system
- provides useful advice and practical tips for all involved in Circle Courts.

“As will be seen from the DVD, including Aboriginal elders in the sentencing process produces a greater impact upon offenders, as it not only targets offending but also addresses the underlying issues,” Dr Dodson said.

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