Episode 17 Study Guide   
Circle Sentencing with Maree Jennings

Background

1. Explain what is meant by the term “restorative justice”.
2. How did Maree get involved in Circle Sentencing?
3. Explain the structure of Circle Sentencing.

Assessment and eligibility

1. What types of offences come before a Circle?
2. Explain the assessment process, including:
   1. the role of the Aboriginal Community Justice Group, and
   2. what happens if an offender is determined to be suitable or not suitable for the Circle.

Process and roles

1. Describe how the Circle operates once it is formed.
2. How long is usually allowed for a Circle hearing?
3. Describe the roles of the following members of the Circle Sentencing Group:
   1. magistrate
   2. offender
   3. respected community members, and
   4. victim/s (if present).
4. Who are the respected community members on a Circle? How are they selected? What informs this choice?
5. Describe the role of the Project Officer in organising the Circle.
6. Community members in Circle Sentencing are volunteers. What do you think are the pros and cons of this?
7. How does Circle Sentencing contribute to the sentencing purpose of rehabilitation?
8. How is a sentencing recommendation made? Who makes it? Is the Magistrate bound to accept the sentencing recommendation?

Circle Sentencing outcomes and expansion

1. Once an offender goes through a Circle, is there any follow-up?
2. What benefits does Maree see from Circle Sentencing? Why does she see community involvement in the criminal justice system as a positive?
3. Maree mentions the 2020 BOCSAR (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) evaluation of Circle Sentencing. What findings from the report did Maree highlight?
4. In Maree’s view, how do Aboriginal communities generally view Circle Sentencing?

Further resources and activities

The 2020 review of “Circle Sentencing, incarceration and recidivism” is available on [BOCSAR’s website](https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_publication/Pub_Summary/CJB/CJB226-Circle-Sentencing-Summary.aspx).