Settling more cases out of court is one of the aims of a conference in Darwin today called *True Talking, Forward Walking*.

The dominant theme of the 7th National Mediation Conference is cross-cultural mediation and future directions for this emerging national profession.

Minister for Justice Dr Peter Toyne said the conference has been timed to build upon the experience of the inaugural “Mawul Rom” project which was held last week.

“The Mawul Rom project was a unique cross-cultural mediation project which was conducted “in ceremony” on Elcho Island with mediator participants, mediator mentors and Yolngu elders,” Dr Toyne said.

“This was the first of its kind in Australia and quite possibly the world.”

“This Government is actively promoting alternate dispute resolution, including mediation, as a key part of our community justice initiatives.”

“We have also recognized and encourage traditional mediation and alternative dispute resolution as part of our Aboriginal law and justice plans.”

“In order to advance community mediation, the Government commenced a trial community mediation service on 2 June 2003.”

“The Community Justice Centre was established in the Northern Territory to provide an accessible, fair, efficient and effective way of mediating and resolving disputes for members of the public outside of traditional courts.”

The Centre has handled neighbourhood disputes, family conflicts, youth issues, workplace conflicts, consumer complaints, tenancy disputes and other matters usually dealt with by the civil court.

A panel of accredited mediators has been formed to conduct mediations for the Centre including our regional areas Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

Community mediation services are well patronised in other jurisdictions and have very high success rates with over 85% of disputes being resolved at mediation.

The conference has drawn delegates from a wide range of professions and backgrounds including barristers, solicitors, conciliators and private mediation practitioners, people from government departments, advocacy services, the business community, interstate Community Justice Centres and community mediation services.