MEDIA RELEASE

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MIXED MESSAGE SENT TO GIRLS IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

In his summing up of a recent case held in Yarralin, Chief Justice Brian Martin said he has a duty to protect women and girls in Aboriginal communities.

However, the Chief Justice's sympathy for the offender obviously outweighs any sympathy he has for the 14 year old victim.

Loraine Braham, Independent Member for Braitling, said "In taking the case to an open court the Chief Justice said it must have been difficult for these 'private matters' to be aired in the community with public shaming of the offender".

"But in spite of the fact that this young girl was sodomised, assaulted with a boomerang, and held against her wishes, he fails to recognise the difficult position in which he has put this young girl in the eyes of her community".

"I welcome the sentence of two years' gaol but to suspend this to one month trivialises the result".

"How can Aboriginal women and girls have confidence to come forward about such an assault if this is the outcome?"

The Chief Justice has announced the establishment of a committee to look at improving public confidence in courts.

"I say bring it on! I also ask the Chief Justice to ensure members of the public have representation on this committee".

"It's about time the community's voice is heard in questioning decisions such as that made by the Chief Justice".

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