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MEDIA RELEASE

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CIRCLE SENTENCING TO CONTINUE IN NOWRA

Attorney General Gabrielle Upton, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier - Illawarra and South Coast Gareth Ward and Member for South Coast Shelley Hancock, today announced the appointment of Rebecca Phillis as coordinator of Nowra's groundbreaking Circle Sentencing and Care Circles programs for Aboriginal people.

"Nowra is the birthplace of Circle Sentencing and Care Circles – which are important programs giving Aboriginal communities a stronger voice in the justice system," said Ms Upton.

Ms Phillis is a Nowra local who previously worked for Corrective Services NSW at the South Coast Correctional Centre and as a training coordinator at Habitat, which helps Indigenous people find employment.

"Having grown up in the area, I understand the problems facing my community and I am looking forward to working on solutions in my role as Aboriginal Community and Client Support Officer," said Ms Phillis.

In addition to organising Circle Sentences and Care Circles, Ms Phillis will provide support to Aboriginal people attending court in Nowra.

"Ms Phillis will ensure these programs continue to thrive, steering Aboriginal offenders back onto the right path and achieving better outcomes for vulnerable Indigenous children and their families," said Mr Ward.

Circle Sentencing has had a life-changing impact on many Aboriginal offenders since it began in Nowra in 2002. It now operates at eight locations across the state.

Together, the circle determines an appropriate and culturally relevant sentence that would typically include programs to help the offender address underlying issues, such as alcohol and drug dependency.

"The program compels Aboriginal offenders to discuss the impact of their crime with an intimate circle that includes community Elders, a magistrate, police prosecutor and in many cases the victim," said Ms Hancock.

Care Circles encourage more culturally sensitive decision making and care plans for Aboriginal children and families. The process gives Aboriginal families and communities a larger role in making decisions about their children and young people.