



NSW SENTENCING COUNCIL

Public Confidence in the NSW Criminal Justice System

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People are unclear about how sentencing works and want to know more about the process, according to a new report from the NSW Sentencing Council and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

"The clear message from the joint research is that people want to know more about the sentencing process" said John Dunford, retired Supreme Court judge and Deputy Chair of the NSW Sentencing Council.

The survey, based on telephone interviews with over 2,000 NSW residents, found that sections of the community lack confidence in the criminal justice system. This lack of confidence is strongly associated with a lack of knowledge about crime and the sentencing process.

"International research suggests that the more information people have about the sentencing process, the more accurate their views are likely to be. The more informed people are, the more confident they are that the system is working" said Mr Dunford.

"More needs to be done to educate the public about the sentencing process" he stated. "It makes sense to dispel the myths about a process that can be complicated".

Mr Dunford said it is possible that people do not know about or are suspicious of Government publications about sentencing, preferring to get their information from radio, tabloid newspapers and television.

"Our report shows that people are not looking at government reports, official websites or the courts in order to obtain information about sentencing" Mr Dunford said. "So we have to be more proactive in getting information to the people."

The Sentencing Council is currently examining ways in which the public can learn more about crime and sentencing. Some promising prospects it is examining include:

- Supplying Plain English booklets about the sentencing process and what it means to receive a sentence;
- Developing an accessible, user-friendly website to explain sentencing principles; and
- Giving seminars and talks to schools, social groups and community organisations such as Rotary and Probus.

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