



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 23 November

2009 Australian of the Year to visit South Africa

Leading indigenous Australian leader and the Australian of the Year in 2009, **Professor Mick Dodson AM**, will this week be visiting South Africa.

Described by Australian Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd, as ‘**a courageous fighter for reconciliation**’ and for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’, Professor Dodson was presented the award of Australian of the Year in recognition of his lifetime commitment to improving the lives of Aboriginal people and promoting understanding between all Australians.

Professor Dodson, a Yawuru man from the Broome area of Western Australia, has held many roles as an indigenous advocate at community level, with governments, the United Nations and academia, including as:

- Australia’s **first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner** with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission;
- the current **Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia**;
- the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University;
- and currently working with the Federal government on a new national Indigenous representative body.

Mick Dodson is the eighth Aboriginal person to receive the award, which follows the historic apology to the stolen generations by the Australian Government in February 2008.

On **Tuesday 24 November**, Professor Dodson will be presenting on “Beyond the Apology” in a forum on “**Truth and Reconciliation: Parallel Challenges – Australia and South Africa**” featuring former Chairman of the South African Human Rights Commission, Mr Jody Kollapen at **Kutlwanong Democracy Centre, 57 Visagie Street (Cnr Prinsloo), Pretoria**. Media and the broader public are welcome to attend.

Professor Dodson will also:

- attend the **South African premiere of ‘Samson and Delilah’, an award winning Australian indigenous film** on Tuesday 24 November;
- attend a **handover of 1500 Lapdesks to primary school students** at the Masakhane-Tswelelopele primary school in Roodepoort (media welcome to attend);
- give the **keynote address** - “Challenges and opportunities in Australian Indigenous education” - at a **Monash South Africa conference on “Closing the Gap in Education: Improving Outcomes in Southern World Societies”** on Thursday 26 November at 9.30am at the Monash South Africa campus at 144 Peter Road in Ruimsig, West Rand (media welcome to attend).

For further information, please contact William Blomfield on +27 83 409 3619 or william.blomfield@dfat.gov.au.