Cairns to star in National Reconciliation Week launch

Far North Queensland’s profile as a centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, culture and opportunity will be highlighted at today’s launch of National Reconciliation Week.

National Reconciliation Week is being launched concurrently in Cairns and Melbourne at 12.30pm today and a flash mob at the Cairns celebrations will be live streamed onto the huge screens at Melbourne’s Federation Square.

The Cairns event will hear from Jackie Huggins, Patron of Reconciliation Queensland and Gail Mabo, daughter of the late Eddie Mabo, and Cairns Regional Mayor Bob Manning will launch the city’s second Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Reconciliation Australia CEO, Leah Armstrong will tell the launch that Cairns is a city well advanced on the journey to reconciliation.

“The people of Cairns have embraced reconciliation and understand better than most the critical importance of the rich and ancient cultures of Australia’s First Peoples,” said Ms. Armstrong. “Cairns is a tourist town and one of the key reasons tourists want to come here is to experience the beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

“This important relationship between the regional economy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is perhaps one of the reasons why Cairns Regional Council has developed a very comprehensive RAP,” she said. “I congratulate Cairns and the Mayor for playing a leading role in the reconciliation movement in regional Australia and look to other regional centres to follow suit.”

“Through its RAP this city is respectfully recognising its First Peoples and that is largely what reconciliation is all about.

“Let’s talk recognition is the theme for this year’s week and constitutional recognition of Australia’s First Peoples is a national priority; Cairns has formally recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in its RAP and now is the time for the country to do the same via our constitution.”

“Australia prides itself on being a place of fairness, but under the Australian Constitution; while racial discrimination is no longer accepted in our community, in our workplaces and in our daily lives, the Constitution permits laws that discriminate on the basis of race.

“Australia’s founding document does not recognise the first chapter of our national identity and it’s about time that was changed,” said Ms Armstrong.

The Cairns Regional Council RAP is one of only two local Government RAPs in Queensland and provides commitments from Council to creating better relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community and how it can better contribute to ‘closing the gap’ on disadvantage and create a community and society that is more equal and equitable.
The Cairns Launch will be followed by a free concert by local Murri hip-hop pioneers, The Last Kinection.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey:

- May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum in which over 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national census.

- On 3 June, 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship to the land—that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today. This recognition paved the way for land rights called Native Title.

Vision of Cairns launch highlights including flash mob will be available to all television news outlets on request through ABC Brisbane after 2pm. **Contact David Thompson at Visionworkz 0408225 889 for more information.**

Vision of Melbourne launch highlights including flash mob will be available from Moira Conway at SBS television. **Contact Ollie West at Satchel Media 0432 770 500 for more information.**