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## Walking the talk on reconciliation: next step constitutional recognition!

**Media Release**

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The movement for reconciliation has never been stronger said Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer Leah Armstrong on the eve of National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2014.

Ms Armstrong said the more than 800 events taking place during the week were evidence of the Australian community's embracing of reconciliation and justice for Australia's First Peoples.

"The theme for this year's NRW, **"Let's walk the talk"** is fitting as Australians are being urged to do more than just talk reconciliation but to take action in their communities, families and workplaces," she said. "The theme implies that it is not good enough to just talk about reconciliation and justice for Australia's First Peoples; action is also required."

"We want people talking about reconciliation, but while talking about reconciliation and justice is good change only happens when it is backed up with real action.

"To do something to break down the barriers of ignorance and racism and bring your friends, families and neighbours closer to the aspiration of an Australia that is reconciled, prosperous and equitable," she said.

Ms Armstrong said the responses from football fans to the racist abuse levelled at 2014 Australian of the Year, Adam Goodes, and Melbourne's Neville Jetta was also a positive sign of real change.

"The support that Adam Goodes received from Essendon supporters and the quick and decisive action taken by the Essendon Club against the abuser, and the similar support received by Neville is further evidence that Australia increasingly rejects and condemns racism.

"The incident confirms that while Australia still has a problem with racism, it also demonstrates that we are changing and the efforts to reduce racism are having an impact."

Ms Armstrong said the next step towards reconciliation will be the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. "There are some serious steps that we need to take as a nation before we can say we have achieved reconciliation; these are closing the equity gap in health, education, employment and incarceration rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians," said Ms Armstrong.

"Another prerequisite is constitutional change to recognise the unique place the First Peoples have in modern Australia and to remove clauses which are racist and do not reflect Australian reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"As part of a new national commitment to reconciliation I urge all Australians to sign up for the Recognise campaign and do their bit to increasing community awareness."

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