

# Reconciliation News

OUR HISTORY,  
OUR STORY,  
OUR FUTURE.

Reconciliation  
**in Action**

**The State of  
Reconciliation**  
in Australia

Reconciliation,  
**25 years on**

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**RECONCILIATION**  
AUSTRALIA



**25** Years  
RECONCILIATION  
IN AUSTRALIA

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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

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Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation promoting reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Visit [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au) to find out more.

Please note that Reconciliation Australia are moving towards digital distribution of Reconciliation News.

Digital publication offers new avenues and platforms for the richer delivery and sharing of information. Our digital strategy reflects Reconciliation Australia's transformative role in leading the national conversation on reconciliation, and the needs of our growing online audiences, across Australia.

To subscribe to receive digital copies of Reconciliation News, visit [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au).



**Welcome to the first edition of Reconciliation News for 2016. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation; 15 years since Reconciliation Australia began and 10 years of achievement in our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program.**

These milestones provide a significant opportunity for all Australians to engage more deeply in reconciliation, and to increase understanding of the impact of our shared history and cultures. Together we are all part of driving reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians.

During this year's National Reconciliation Week, our theme - 'Our History, Our Story, Our Future' – speaks to Australia's continued journey towards reconciliation and in this edition of Reconciliation News, we consider more closely 'Our History' – and what these reflections mean for 'Our Story', and 'Our Future'.

### Reconciliation Australia: Our Brand Story

In this very important chapter in the life of Reconciliation Australia - a chapter that sees the nation move forward in its reconciliation journey – we have taken the important opportunity to reinvigorate our brand – a brand that has at its essence 'Strength in our united reconciliation journey'.

You may notice that this edition of Reconciliation News arrives with a new look and feel which reflects this brand essence. Our revised logo is made of a bold single line which visually plots a path for individual, communities and Country to travel united, as we all work together towards reconciliation. The new logo is simpler, clearer and more defined; and the single unbroken line radiates outwards communicating the five interconnected dimensions of reconciliation.

We are proud to see our nation move forward in its reconciliation journey and I trust you enjoy the conversations in this edition of Reconciliation News.

Justin Mohamed  
CEO, Reconciliation Australia



**RECONCILIATION**  
AUSTRALIA





# THE STATE OF RECONCILIATION IN AUSTRALIA

**OUR NATION'S PAST IS REFLECTED IN THE PRESENT AND UNLESS WE CAN HEAL HISTORICAL WOUNDS, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY OUT IN OUR COUNTRY'S FUTURE, WRITES JUSTIN MOHAMED**

**The launch of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, released by Reconciliation Australia, comes at a crucial time in our nation's history.**

The Report highlights the milestones achieved in Australia's reconciliation journey over the past 25 years. It comes at a time when reconciliation is an increasingly important part of the national conversation. The clear message of this conversation is that until we achieve true reconciliation, we fall short of reaching our full potential as a nation.

The Report also comes at a key time in Reconciliation Australia's own history, as in 2016 we celebrate a quarter of a century of formal reconciliation and the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

The State of Reconciliation speaks to our resilience, our survival, and our history. It reaffirms that as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we have inhabited Australia since millennia, our cultures, laws, ceremonies and connection to the land remain strong and enduring. Yet it does not shirk away from some of the more recent, more painful parts of our history, and their impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

As a nation, where we deny history – where we fail to acknowledge the unique place, histories and experiences Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have, and continue to have, in Australia – barriers to our nation's reconciliation remain.

Historical acceptance is a crucial element of the reconciliation process.

Historical acceptance is about accepting the facts about past injustices. It obliges us all to understand and accept how past laws, practices and policies deeply affect generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It challenges us to acknowledge the facts of our shared history – one marred by the dispossession and intentional marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In Australia, this is our history - one that we continue to struggle to acknowledge and understand.

As Professor Patrick Dodson wrote in his introduction to the Report, "there is a discernible lack of appreciation by settler Australia about the grievances and sense of historical injustice that Indigenous people feel."



For some non-Indigenous Australians, that Australia's colonial history has occurred broadly through a history of conflict, resilience and survival - that the wrongs that occurred were a result of European settlement – can be confronting.

There are some others who, as Patrick Dodson writes, “may say that attention on past injustice encourages historic wounds to fester, creating a culture of victimhood; and that modern Australia has no responsibility for past government policies and practices.”

It is only through accepting these facts as a nation, and working toward making changes – to educate ourselves, our children, and our nation – can reconciliation between First Australians and non-Indigenous Australia be achieved.

### **Five dimensions to reconciliation**

We also know that historical acceptance is only one part of the reconciliation process.

The Report highlights the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance - and makes recommendations on how we can progress reconciliation into the next generation.

These five dimensions do not exist in isolation – instead, when woven together, will form the fabric of an Australia where race relations are positive.

In this, we envision an Australia where relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians are free of racism, and built on trust and respect. It is a transformational vision, one which sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating equally in all areas of Australian life, both now and into the future.

Indeed, Australia has a long history of reconciliation. In 1967, we saw nine in ten Australians vote in favour of giving the Commonwealth power to legislate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In 1991, formal reconciliation began with the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation – a year later came the Mabo decision, that led to native title.

In 2008, the Apology was given to the Stolen Generations: a key step in healing the wounds of the past, and an historic step forward for our nation that we can be proud of.

In 2017, we hope to see a referendum that looks to eliminating racial discrimination and historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from Australia's Constitution.

These are all remarkable achievements, brought about by generations of people fighting for change for the better – change for a reconciled, just and equitable Australia.





# JACKIE HUGGINS ON 25 YEARS OF RECONCILIATION: “WE’LL SEE THE HUMAN ESSENCE STILL SHINING THROUGH”

Jackie Huggins is a Bidjara (central Queensland) and Birri-Gubba Juru (North Queensland) woman from Queensland who has worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over thirty years. Jackie is a celebrated historian and author who has documented the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the decades. In 2001, Jackie received the Member of the Order of Australia for services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. A former Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, Jackie now serves as Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

## **Reconciliation Australia spoke with Jackie, reflecting on 25 years of Australia's reconciliation movement – and the next 25 years to come.**

**JH:** “When I started in the reconciliation movement, I was a younger person then – there was real political activity around Native Title, land rights, the Stolen Generation in the nineties. We’ve come a long way in developing and also creating a People’s movement across the country. ‘Reconciliation’ is now very much in the vocabulary and minds of Australians today. We had to define what it was for many – there was a huge impetus to suggest that the communities were not even really speaking with one another.

Since then, there have been incredible partnerships forged together, and much more education – I don’t think you can go to a school without some reference to the reconciliation story. This is very heartening.

We knew that it would be a generational project to bring reconciliation to fruition.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation passed this on to Reconciliation Australia, who I believe are doing great work in the field through their Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) and through their partnerships with corporates and communities across the country.”

**“I feel that human dignity is what is fostered in the reconciliation process.”**

*Given your experience as part of the reconciliation movement, what surprises you most with respect to Australia's reconciliation journey?*

**JH:** “It surprises me to think that people think that reconciliation is a ‘soft issue’. It’s not, it’s really hard work – in terms of developing partnerships, and education, particularly among the broader Australian society. We know that there has been a deficit in our history, in terms of its ability to understand

and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and experience. It does surprise me that people still think of this as an ‘easy road’ – all who work in reconciliation will tell you that it takes a lot of effort and energy to really get these messages out.”

*While not a ‘new’ concept, historical acceptance can be quite confronting for some. What are some of the opportunities and challenges that remain in Australia's own acceptance of the truths of its past?*

**JH:** “We are seeing more education about the past – and of course, it has been twenty-five years since the establishment of the Reconciliation Council. There are now subjects as part of the National Curriculum that need to be taught: I could never have imagined to see this in my lifetime.

our efforts to educate the public about our history, the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ experience in this country.

I don’t think it’s all doom and gloom – we can take the positives that have happened as a benchmark to achieve more, and do better.”

Yet there’s still a long way to go. We have started along the road – in

*This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and in turn the 25th year of Reconciliation Australia. Where do you envisage Australia's reconciliation movement be in twenty-five years from now?*

**JH:** “We’ll be living a very different world, twenty-five years from now: with digital technologies and social media, who can even imagine where we’ll be. Yet the most important development in reconciliation for me is the ‘human’ essence that really goes to the heart of the matter. If we see each other as human beings - not just one race or another, but the human race – our human dignity will be fostered, and developed.

I would hope that, despite these technological advances, we would never lose that kindness for one another. We must maintain this as the basis from which we enjoy our rights, our sense of ourselves as mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. We must walk together with those who would like to share in our journey, without discrimination and negative stereotype. I hope that in the future to come, we’ll see the human essence still shining through.”

I feel that human dignity is what is fostered in the reconciliation process.

# RECONCILIATION IN ACTION

## THE 2015 RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN IMPACT MEASUREMENT REPORT

**In 2016, Reconciliation Australia is proud to celebrate the tenth anniversary of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program.**

RAPs contribute to achieving reconciliation by assisting organisations and communities to develop relationships, respect and opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We know that in improving relationships, respect and opportunities today, we are working to create a reconciled, just and equitable Australia tomorrow.

### **The RAP Community**

The RAP community is a diverse and fast growing collective of organisations turning their good intentions towards reconciliation into action.

Over the past ten years, more than 650 organisations have created a RAP. Together these leading Australian businesses have generated over 3,900 partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. These efforts are working to facilitate understanding, promote meaningful engagement, increase equality and help develop sustainable employment and business opportunities.

Currently almost 4,000 partnerships exist between RAP organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations.

Reconciliation Australia has great ambitions for the RAP program – envisioning RAPs as commonplace in every Australian organisation.

In particular, we are working towards having the majority of the ASX 200, and Australia's largest private firms and multinationals implementing a RAP. As transformational progress often takes place at a person-to-person community level, we also encourage local governments to embrace RAPs so that reconciliation can be progressed within local communities.

### **Reconciliation = Action**

Across the nation, we're seeing RAPs having a clear and decisive impact on improving relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

At the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), partnerships with Nggunawal community groups – as part of the Reconciliation Action Plan program - have seen local Indigenous languages taught in pilot programs in primary-level classrooms. As such, children can gain a greater understanding of local Aboriginal culture and customs and the importance of the local Aboriginal language, and work towards broader reconciliation outcomes.



“These dimensions must be woven together to make up the fabric of reconciliation.”

Reconciliation Australia’s inaugural *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report defines reconciliation as having five dimensions.

These dimensions must be woven together to make up the fabric of reconciliation. A key way in which we will advance these dimensions is through the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program. Through RAPs, organisations from all sectors make meaningful change to improve relationships, respect and opportunities.

**Historical acceptance:**

widespread acceptance of our nation’s history, and agreement to stop the wrongs of the past from being repeated

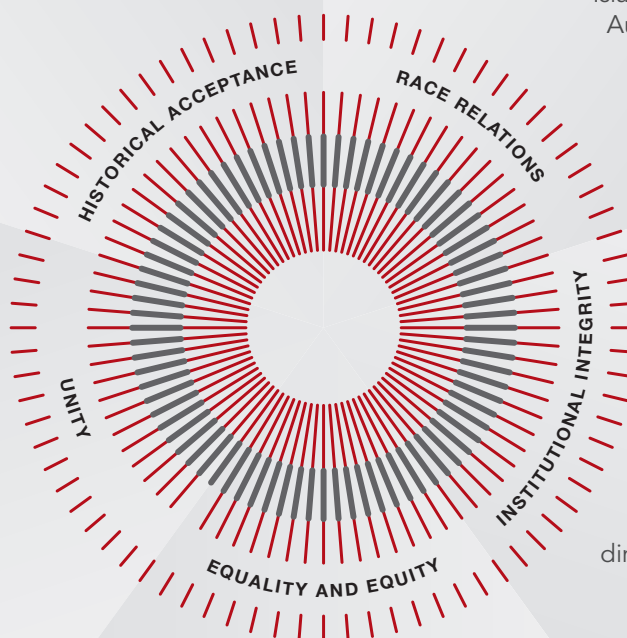
**Race relations:**

positive relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians that are built on trust and respect

**Unity:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights are valued and recognised as part of a shared national identity

**Institutional integrity:** political, business and community institutions actively support all dimensions of reconciliation

**Equality and equity:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians participate equally and equitably in all areas of life





**No matter where your organisation is on its reconciliation journey, there is a Reconciliation Action Plan to suit. We can help you to develop one of four types of RAP – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch or Elevate.**

### **REFLECT**

A Reflect RAP is for organisations just starting out on their reconciliation journey and who need to build the foundations for relationships, respect and opportunities.

A Reflect RAP will give your organisation the time and opportunity to raise awareness and support for your RAP inside your organisation. This also assists organisations to develop a solid RAP governance model and build the business case for future commitments to cultural learning, and practising cultural protocols considering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

### **INNOVATE**

An Innovate RAP is for organisations that have developed relationships with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and are ready to develop or implement programs for cultural learning, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and supplier diversity.

An Innovate RAP will give your organisation the freedom to develop and test new and innovative approaches, and embed the RAP in your organisation.

### **STRETCH**

A Stretch RAP is for organisations ready to challenge themselves by setting targets for the actions outlined in their RAP.

A Stretch RAP will give your organisation the opportunity to focus on tried and tested strategies and programs and set clear and measurable targets to deepen its impact.

### **ELEVATE**

An Elevate RAP is for organisations with a long, successful history in the RAP Program; a current Stretch RAP and a willingness to significantly invest in reconciliation.

Elevate RAP organisations are among an elite group of leaders driving reconciliation in their sector.

**To find out more, visit [reconciliation.org.au/raphub](http://reconciliation.org.au/raphub).**

# “INDIGENOUS HEALTH LEADERS HELPED GIVE US A PLAN TO CLOSE THE GAP, AND WE MUST BACK IT”

**THERE IS A STAIN ON AUSTRALIA THAT  
PAST GENERATIONS HAVE FAILED TO  
REMOVE, WRITES RECONCILIATION  
AUSTRALIA CO-CHAIR, PROFESSOR  
TOM CALMA AO.**

It is the entrenched divide between non-Indigenous Australians and our First Peoples, who continue to be denied the most basic human right to health equality and old age.

The unacceptable health and life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is what led me to establish the Close the Gap Campaign ten years ago.

## Gaining traction

When I presented the 2005 Social Justice Report to Parliament, the health indicators for Indigenous people were terrible, right across the board.

The life expectancy for the First Peoples of one of the richest countries in the world was at a third-world level. With a gap of 17 years, we were ten years worse-off in life expectancy terms than our Indigenous brothers and sisters in New Zealand, Canada and the US, where the gap was only six to seven years.

There was also a disconnect between government commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the inadequacy of the funding and resources provided to meet those commitments.





“It is not credible to suggest that one of the wealthiest nations in the world **cannot solve a health crisis affecting less than 3% of its citizens.**”



The words I said ten years ago still resonate today:

It is not credible to suggest that one of the wealthiest nations in the world cannot solve a health crisis affecting less than 3% of its citizens.

The formation of the Close the Gap Campaign in March 2006 has provided ongoing focus and scrutiny on the health inequalities faced by Indigenous Australians.

The campaign has since grown. A steering committee comprised of more than 40 Indigenous and mainstream health peak bodies and advocacy organisations – all committed to creating change and using their own resources, not governments' – now works to achieve it.

The Council of Australian Governments' response to the 2005 Social Justice Report in December 2007 was welcomed – as was the pledge of A\$1.6 billion in funding to fight chronic disease in November 2008.

The campaign continues to provide advice to governments through its Progress and Priorities report. This is independent of the Prime Minister's *Closing the Gap* report.

As outlined in this year's report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have a life expectancy of 69.1 years, which is nearly ten years less than for non-Indigenous men. Indigenous women have a life expectancy of 73.7 years, which is nearly 9.4 years less than for non-Indigenous women.

For those dismayed by a seemingly slow pace of change, the report cautions against impatience. Due to lead times between the design and roll-out of programs, measurable improvements to Indigenous life expectancy should not be expected until at least 2018.

This achievement will only be realised if policy stability, funding certainty, long-term commitments and meaningful and respectful engagement and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prevail.

### **Glimpses of hope**

Despite recent pessimism, there is reason for hope and optimism. Since 2009, we have seen improvements in infant and child health outcomes, a gradual reduction in smoking rates, significant increases in the number of health checks conducted and increased access to medicines.

We are also seeing improved outcomes in Year 12 completions and higher education commencements – both key determinants of health.

We have the building blocks in place to see the health outcome gaps close in the next 15 years. But we need to redouble our efforts if we are to achieve existing targets and include additional targets for justice and mental health.

Over the past ten years, governments have certainly shown good faith in terms of making new commitments, including specific targets to focus efforts, and backing that up with some new and significant funding. However, all governments must re-commit and re-energise their efforts to the Closing the Gap initiative.



Australia's key health services and programs – particularly those from the community-controlled health sector – are still crying out for funding certainty to allow them to deliver the services they are best placed to provide. In uncertain economic times, when governments face pressure to adequately support all the services we demand in our modern democratic society, we must remember that health is a basic and fundamental human right.

In order to achieve a complete closing of the life expectancy gap by 2030, we require a renewed, redoubled and quarantined commitment to the cause. We demand of parliament long-term, bipartisan support and a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples. Indigenous Australians must continue to lead this process, with support from government.

The implementation plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (2013-2023) is a good policy plank to provide impetus and direction. The plan was developed in collaboration between Indigenous health leaders in the National Health Leadership Forum and the government.

The partnership approach to developing the plan is a positive model for policy engagement with Indigenous people. It is a model that can be translated to address all the determinants of health, across all portfolios of government.

The groundwork of the implementation plan must now be furnished with the right resources. We need strong commitment from government and policy stability to see the plan through.

Australia is a great country with a lot of promise and potential. While a stain remains in the form of health inequality, this generation certainly has the opportunity to remove it. The resilience and the strength of Indigenous peoples will not be fully appreciated and realised until we give them a fair and equitable shot at leading full and healthy lives.

**This article was first published at The Conversation.**

## NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2016

27 MAY TO 3 JUNE

### *'Our History, Our Story, Our Future'*

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2016 is 'Our History, Our Story, Our Future'.

This asks all Australians to reflect on our national identity, and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights in our nation's story.

'Our History' reminds us all that historical acceptance is essential to our reconciliation journey. Historical acceptance will exist when all Australians understand and accept the fact that past laws, practices and policies deeply affected the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, often having devastating immediate impacts and causing much of the disadvantage that exists today. It is also a commitment to ensuring these wrongs are never repeated in the future.

'Our Story' reflects the fact that the journey towards reconciliation forms a significant part of Australia's story, as do the stories of both trauma and triumph told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'Our Future' reinforces that reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, in the knowledge that we believe in fairness for everyone, that our diversity makes us richer, and that together, we are stronger.

National Reconciliation Week is a great opportunity to take part in Australia's reconciliation journey. To find out more, visit [www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw).

NAKRA  
GUNNA  
WALI

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF TRUTH

## THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS IN HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

**Australia's education system has a fundamental part to play in our reconciliation journey. Within this system, teachers and educators have a unique responsibility to ensure all Australian students and children understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.**

Reconciliation Australia's recent report, *the State of Reconciliation in Australia*, tells us that reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians will not take place until there is historical acceptance. Historical acceptance refers to all Australians understanding and accepting the fact that past laws, practices and policies have deeply affected the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It requires acknowledgement of the immediate and devastating impact of these actions and the intergenerational trauma they have caused, including their effect on the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians today. Historical acceptance also includes a commitment to ensuring these wrongs are never repeated in the future. In essence, historical acceptance is about telling the truth and is essential to justice and healing.

Critically, the Report reveals that only 39 per cent of Australians report having a high level of knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, and only 30 per cent report having a high level of knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Fortunately, good intentions and keen interest indicate this knowledge gap can be narrowed, as over 80 per cent of Australians agree that it is important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Reconciliation Australia's *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning* program is designed to support the more than 21,000 early learning services, primary and secondary schools in Australia to foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Primary school teacher and *Narragunnawali* General Manager, Alex Shain, believes it is imperative that reconciliation activities, particularly those relating to historical acceptance, are implemented across the education system.

"In order to continue Australia's journey of reconciliation, current and future generations of Australians must learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures than previous generations," Mr. Shain says.

Mr Shain also emphasises that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures within schools and early learning services is by no means a novel or fringe concept.

"Historical acceptance is not a new idea," he says. "It is embedded in national education frameworks from early learning to Year 12, obliging educators to engage in conversations around history and cultural respect with children and students. These frameworks ensure all students, particularly non-Indigenous students, will have



# “Narragunnawali works to assist teachers, collectively and as individuals, to understand themselves what it is to be an Australian.”

greater understanding, respect, and ultimately an increased sense of shared pride in Australia's First Peoples,” Mr. Shain explains.

## **Supporting reconciliation in action: *Narragunnawali***

The teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures can be daunting for teachers and educators, especially if they are non-Indigenous. *Narragunnawali* was developed in recognition of this uncertainty and desire from teachers and educators for more direction. It provides key support through a series of resources, including an online Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) developer, curriculum resources and professional learning opportunities.

“The vast majority of teachers and educators in Australia are non-Indigenous people, so they are a keen audience. We have to support them to develop the strong and respectful relationships that will lead to successful teaching and learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures,” said Mr. Shain.

“*Narragunnawali* works to assist teachers, collectively and as individuals, to understand themselves what it is to be an Australian, and how that fits in to understanding and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.”

## **A measure of progress: Australian Reconciliation Barometer**

The importance of personal reflection, as well as exposure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures through formal education, is supported by the findings of Reconciliation Australia's *2014 Australian Reconciliation Barometer*. The Barometer found that when people learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures through personal experience or

education, they are more likely to believe the relationship is very important compared to when people learn from the media.

Unfortunately, the Barometer also revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have less positive relationships with education staff than their non-Indigenous peers. Some relationships are undermined by racism and low levels of trust, with 14 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents experiencing racial discrimination from a school teacher or principal—five times as many as the general community. Additionally, ten per cent of Indigenous respondents felt there was low trust with education staff—double that reported by the general community.

Improving all Australian children and students' knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures has long been discussed as a crucial step in our nation's reconciliation journey. It is clear that this journey must begin by first increasing Australian teachers and educators' own knowledge and understanding. It is also clear that more respectful and trusting relationships need to be developed between education staff and Indigenous students. Only under these conditions will Australia's schools and early learning services be able to truly acknowledge history, tell our story and celebrate the future. Improved educational outcomes for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will surely follow.

**Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride website is an accessible and engaging resource that shows key events in our nation's history that can help you start or continue your journey of reconciliation, particularly through historical acceptance.**

**Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride website**  
[www.shareourpride.org.au](http://www.shareourpride.org.au)

# THE 2016 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AWARDS:

## THE ANCIENT PRACTICE AND DISCIPLINE OF GOVERNANCE

**The most viable solution to overcoming the social, economic and political issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia is self-determination - ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are in charge of making and implementing the important decisions about their lives and futures.**

This year's Indigenous Governance Awards (IGAs) celebrate the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that are practicing self-determination, by developing local solutions to local problems with culture as a source of strength and innovation.

For tens of thousands of years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have held and practiced culture-based lore, traditions, values, processes and structures. In other words, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have always had their own governance.

These ancient practices continue to shape clans, families and the nation to this day, and also provide the foundation that allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to drive real and lasting change.

Since 2005, the IGAs have told and celebrated stories of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led

organisations making a difference by drawing upon innovative governance models to respond to contemporary challenges.

Previous IGA finalists the *Institute for Urban Indigenous Health* and the *Marruk Project* are just two examples of projects that have demonstrated best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance.

The *Institute for Urban Indigenous Health* was only in its fifth year of operation when it became a finalist for the IGAs in 2014. Its key programs, 'Work it Out' and 'Deadly Choices' were making a tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in south east Queensland. IGA Judge Gary Banks said that the projects had "a clear sense of mission, a high degree of competence and a governance model that provides an effective blend of community and technical expertise."







Photo credit: Marruk project

It is by drawing on, and strengthening community and technical expertise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations are so effective.

These innovative governance models encompass complex social relationships and networks, and both rely upon and feed back in to the community in which they operate.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to live under two sets of laws: their own and those of non-Indigenous Australia. This requires skilful negotiation - satisfying external stakeholders at the same time as considering community issues is no easy task.

For many, this balancing act may seem daunting, but it's actually what makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations so effective—their governance models are rooted in culture, yet entirely modern in their efficiency, legitimacy and accountability.

The winners of the non-incorporated category for the IGAs in 2014, the *Marruk Project* from Swan Hill in Victoria, used performing arts to strengthen culture and create opportunities for elders, young people, artists and cultural leaders to share their histories.

Commenting on the initiative, IGA Chair Professor

Mick Dodson said “one of the unique things about this project is its ability to bring the whole town together—it's something beyond belief.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance is the foundation for building and sustaining healthy and prosperous communities. It involves holding true decision-making power and must reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the people it serves. It must also be responsive to changing local circumstances and needs over time, and should be guided by strong, skilled and representative leadership.

If you're part of an organisation or project that is 'kicking goals', or if you know of one, we want to hear from you.

By taking part in this year's IGAs, applicants will be in the running for corporate mentorship, feedback by the judging panel, media and networking opportunities, and a share in \$60,000.

**Applications for the IGAs are open now and close on Friday, 20 May 2016.**

**Visit [www.reconciliation.org.au/iga](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/iga) to find out more.**

Indigenous  
Governance  
Awards 2016



Credit - Jake Anderson

*"I think one of the most rewarding aspects was witnessing the Young family's reactions - in seeing their concepts come to life, engaging with world-class artists and painting large scale murals for the first time."*

## PUBLIC ART THAT MAKES ITS MARK: 'BE DEADLY'

The Be Deadly project is a collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and non-indigenous artists to create public art projects and murals to showcase Australia's rich and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Through the telling of stories about indigenous heritage and culture, the artists will work together to create a mural which exemplifies these stories in what promises to be an exciting and important public art project.

Reconciliation Australia spoke with Jake Anderson of the 'Be Deadly' project to learn more.



## *How did the idea for Be Deadly come about?*

The concept for Be Deadly was first envisioned when I met an inspiring young artist by the name of Shane 'Mankitya' Cook, while filming a documentary series. Over time Mankitya confided with me about his difficult upbringing - later, as he learned more about his Aboriginal heritage, he began turning his life around.

Today, Mankitya is very active in his community. He works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, instilling them with the same sense of pride that he himself felt.

This enlightenment also influenced his approach towards his art – soon, Mankitya began infusing traditional Indigenous techniques with modern street-art styles. This is what got my attention. Each artwork had a special story behind it in a style which was truly unique.

Mankitya and I have become great mates. We often talk at length about the power of culture and art

and how it can be a great tool for reconciliation. We sometimes ask each other, "how can non-indigenous Australians respectfully engage with First Australians and their cultures?" As a non-indigenous Australian myself, I realise that this can be a sensitive issue, so we both felt that the best approach would be through collaboration.

We came up with the initiative 'Be Deadly' with the aspiration to paint Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-themed collaborative public artworks. The artist would conceptualise a theme that would encompass their history, heritage and culture. They would then collaborate with a non-indigenous artist to create an artwork around this theme.

In the project's initial stages, we hoped to have the collaboration showcased in Sydney, but it proved difficult. Thankfully Yarra City Council in Collingwood, Victoria, got right behind the project.

The next step was to engage some local Aboriginal artists. We were lucky enough to discover the Young

family who are Gunnai, Waradgerie, Gunditjmarra and Yorta Yorta people, and who have a deep connection to the area, its people and culture. It was a real blessing as they ensured all the protocols were adhered to. All members of Young family are talented artists in their own right - thankfully they agreed to not only participate, but also curate all the artworks.

All the non-Indigenous artists we spoke with jumped at the opportunity. They understood the importance and the honour bestowed upon them, relishing the opportunity to immerse themselves in the Aboriginal stories, culture and history.

The artist line-up consisted of Aboriginal artists Robert Young, Lyn-Al Young and Mankitya, collaborating with non-indigenous artists Makatron, Heesco, Christopher Hancock, Sid Tapia and CamScale. As you can see by the artworks created, these artists are world-class.

## *How was the Be Deadly project received by the community? Were there any surprising reactions, positive or negative?*

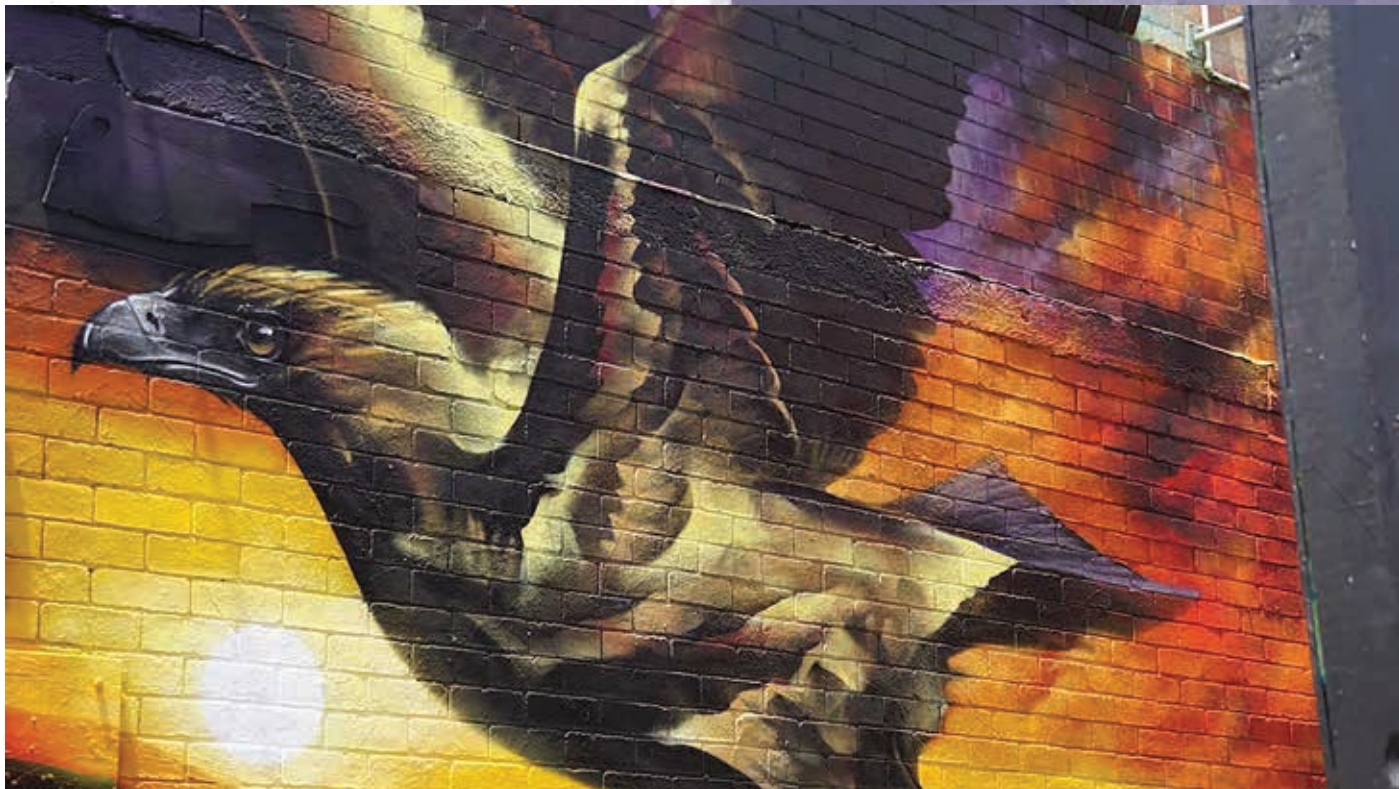
The reaction was overwhelmingly positive. When you have powerful stories, and rich culture and some of the most talented artists in the world, you can create something especially powerful.

I think one of the most rewarding aspects was witnessing the Young family's reactions - in seeing their concepts come to life, engaging with world-class artists and painting large scale murals for the first time.

Wurundjeri Elder, Colin Hunter Jr also visited the laneway and conducted a Welcome to Country ceremony. He passed on his knowledge about the local land, people and history and the history of the Collingwood area. He loved the whole concept and witnessing the artworks coming to life.

We had visits from local Indigenous members who instantly loved what they were seeing. One of the local guys mentioned how he was having a bad day, but upon seeing the artworks it really cheered him up. This was a nice vindication - confirming we were on the right track.

The positive feedback has continued since we released the video (of the project) online. The feedback has been coming in from all over the country. Much of the feedback is coming from non-indigenous Australians who want to be evolved in the reconciliation process, help out in any way they can, but do not know where to start. Hopefully soon we will see some interactions of Be Deadly all over the country.



Credit - Jake Anderson

*Why do you think public art—both in the creation and consumption—is a powerful tool for reconciliation?*

Art alone is a very powerful tool to bring about change. It has the ability to provoke emotions whether they are

positive or negative. When you infuse this with unique cultures, you have something very powerful to contend with.

Having the Young family driving the Be Deadly project helped us to ensure that each of the artworks represented

significant meaning for both artists and participants alike. We were all changed by this process.

*How can non-Indigenous artists respectfully collaborate with Indigenous artists and communities? Do you have some tips about how to kick-off this process and build trusting relationships?*

I feel that many non-indigenous Australians would like to be involved in the reconciliation process but are unsure where to start. I would first

suggest getting in contact with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups, many of which have similar engagement programs. It's especially important to actively encourage involvement from all members of the community. My experience is that local groups are very receptive and always on the lookout for great ideas – best to approach with an open-mind, a willingness to learn, and with respect for the protocols they have in place.

Mankitya and I were always open to the possibility that the Be Deadly project may not have been deemed suitable - inadvertently or unintentionally - by the local community. If that was the case then we were prepared to respect that decision, no matter what.





L-R - Big Kev, Sid Tapia, Heesco, Makatron, Robert Young, Lyn-Al Young, Christopher Hancock and Jake Anderson

*What are your plans for the future? Do you think other cities could benefit from this kind of initiative?*

We would love to see the concept taken up anywhere that the local indigenous community is receptive.

We hope to take the initiative to Sydney as we feel our rich indigenous heritage could be further represented in the city.

We live in one of the richest and unique cultures in the world - what better way to demonstrate this than by showcasing our indigenous culture?

Both Mankitya and I believe that Be Deadly can help to shift perspectives – and help all Australians the impact that these initiatives can have on all Australians.

*How can interested artists or community supporters get involved in 'Be Deadly'?*

The Be Deadly initiative is not owned by anyone - it is for everyone, and we encourage people to pick up the initiative and add to it. We just ask that you be respectful to the local indigenous community as creating indigenous-themed artworks is very sensitive to the local people and the area. Each depiction may have different meanings to the local tribe,

so keep in mind that this needs to be honoured and respected. This is why we encourage artists to involve local Indigenous artists in their collaboration and curation process.

Others can contribute by helping us to securing a public wall as our canvas - the bigger, the better! This process involves gaining the permission of building owners and often, council permission. We are specifically looking for large-scale walls in a number of different cities, so if you can help out please be in touch.

Be Deadly was humbling, inspiring and empowering - Mankitya and I were completely overwhelmed by the experience. We will never forget the stories we learned, the friendships made and the artworks created. Our rich indigenous culture is an unstoppable force that can transform our society for the better. Remember folks - Be Deadly!

**Find out more about the Be Deadly project at [www.bedeaddy.com.au](http://www.bedeaddy.com.au).**



# 'THEY TOOK THE CHILDREN AWAY'

## REFLECTIONS ON THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL APOLOGY WITH ARCHIE ROACH: RECONCILIATION SA

Reconciliation South Australia's Samara Young reflects on Archie Roach's performance at the 8th anniversary of the National Apology, and what this means for reconciliation, trauma and healing.

Gently strumming his guitar among a large audience, musician Archie Roach shared his story of being forcibly removed from his family at the age of three: the pain of the past, of trauma, and survival. His story serves as one of many among the 'Stolen Generations', that which serves as one of the darkest periods in Australia's recent history.

"Australia needs to love its First Peoples, then our hearts can break and then we can all heal together," Archie explained, before launching into a rendition of his moving song, 'Took the Children Away'.

Joined on stage by South Australian artists Ellie Lovegrove and Nancy Bates and the Port Augusta Aboriginal children's dance ensemble Dusty Feet Mob, "Took the Children Away" is perhaps the most personal of Archie's songs. Its lyrics reveal his experiences of heartbreak and loss, and the very real human implications of a truly inhumane policy. This powerful emotion took shape on stage as the Dusty Feet Mob dancers, aged between six and twenty-nine, retold the survivors' stories through movement. Combining contemporary and traditional dance, the audience saw the decades of trauma, broken families and devastated communities play out before their eyes.

"This story's right, this story's true," he sang. "I would not tell lies to you."







Archie Roach performs  
at the Reconciliation SA  
8th Apology Breakfast.  
Photo Credit - Colleen Raven.

“This story’s right, this  
story’s true,” he sang.  
**“I would not tell lies to you.”**

# Acknowledgement of that history, whether 'good' or 'bad', serves as the foundation of a respectful and inclusive society.

As Archie shared his story of displacement, loss and longing, this allowed for the reflection of Australia's dark past without blame or condemnation. Archie's performance also invited those gathered to experience hope and healing.

2016 marks eight years since Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. To mark this important date, and to continue to turn the spirit of the Apology into meaningful action, Reconciliation SA once again hosted its Apology Breakfast, welcoming Archie Roach as the morning's keynote speaker.

The event served as an important opportunity to honour the Survivors of the Stolen Generations and their extended families. During which time we reflected on Mr. Rudd's words, some eight years earlier, that which spoke to "the hurt, the humiliation, the degradation and the sheer brutality of the act of physically separating a mother from her children."

## The Stolen Generations – part of our history

Our history is what defines us as a country. Acknowledgement of that history, whether 'good' or 'bad', serves as the foundation of a respectful and inclusive society.

The recent State of Reconciliation in Australia report tells us that reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians will not eventuate until there is historical acceptance of the wrongs of the past.

The systematic, deliberate and decades long government policies that led to the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families and placement into institutions and situations where they were subject to ongoing abuse and neglect – this is what we now know as 'the Stolen Generation'. These harrowing events serve among the most glaring stains in our nation's history. For many survivors, this is a wound yet to be healed.

## Hope and healing

Fortunately, some steps have been taken towards ending the cycle of pain and suffering of survivors. The South Australian Government recently introducing the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, in which survivors can now apply for some compensation from the State Government.

The fund sees South Australia as the second State Government to create such a scheme, after Tasmania. It will serve as important step in facing up to past wrongs and to recognising the ongoing anguish of the survivors and their families, in line with recommendations outlined in the *Bringing Them Home* report.

There is no doubt that recognition of and compensation for historical wrongs are a crucial part of the reconciliation process. Only in examining the injustices of the past and sharing them through powerful forms such as music and song, can we genuinely commit to never again repeating them.



# National Reconciliation Week 2016

27 May to 3 June

# OUR HISTORY, OUR STORY, OUR FUTURE

As Australians, we are all here, woven into this country

As part of our reconciliation journey, there are truths to tell, stories to celebrate, and relationships to grow

Reconciliation is at the heart of our nation's future

Join us on our nation's journey at [www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw) and make reconciliation part of your future.



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