

# Reconciliation News

**NRW 2017:**  
taking the  
next steps

**Barometer:**  
the good, the  
bad and the  
hopeful

**Narragunnawali:**  
fostering knowledge  
and respect

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**RECONCILIATION**  
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 respects 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 [reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au) to find out more.

Cover photo: Torres Strait dancer  
(Image by Wayne Quilliam)



**National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is just around the corner and this year we celebrate significant anniversaries of two notable events—the 50th of the 1967 Referendum and the 25th of the Mabo judgement.**

There will be hundreds of opportunities to participate in NRW from high profile events such as The Long Walk and the AFL's Sir Doug Nicholls' Indigenous Round to community gatherings and activities in cities and towns all around the country.

In Canberra, the cultural institutions are jointly presenting the *NRW Trail* comprising an impressive array of exhibitions and dedicated NRW activities. The Royal Australian Mint is producing a special anniversary 50 cent coin, and ABC TV will broadcast *Q and A* live from Parliament House on 29 May.

So I invite you to be part of NRW 2017 in whatever way you choose to celebrate these special milestones and to lend your support for the next important step—the quest for recognition of the First Australians in the Constitution. Together we can make history again.

Earlier this year, a number of positive findings were revealed in our 2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer (the Barometer) survey. In the main, attitudes and perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians towards each other are in good shape, exceeding the markers set two years ago. Also, nearly all of us believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to our nation's identity and that the relationship between us is important.

On the downside, the Barometer shows that experiences of racism are still all too common for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and in fact are increasing.

This reality proves the absolute need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to be supported in providing culturally safe health, education and justice essential services. Without support, there is little hope of achieving the 2030 aspirational target to close the gap.

The goodwill is there, but we need to harness it. Government, businesses and all communities must commit to working in meaningful partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ways to improve our relationship have already been outlined. The Redfern Statement provides an action plan designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. It is a blueprint for structured change; a template to work for, and with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies who know their communities. You can read more about the Barometer findings in this issue of *Reconciliation News*.

The 2017 *Closing the Gap* report released by the Prime Minister earlier this year also showed how much progress is yet to be made with poor results in six of the seven targets. Aboriginal and Torres Strait wellbeing, including infant mortality, health and education are all lagging badly.

No doubt, a contributing factor is the current political uncertainty in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environment. Changing policy approaches inhibit long-term planning while the removal of more than \$500 million from the Indigenous Affairs budget in 2014 is still being felt by many organisations and communities across the nation.

The one bright spot was the Year 12 attainment levels by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. But clearly we need to do much better.

On another matter, Reconciliation Australia firmly believes it's time for a frank and open discussion to find an inclusive national day of unity that is celebrated on a day other than 26 January. It's a perennial issue but one that deserves genuine consideration. Our national day can never be truly inclusive if it reminds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of invasion, dispossession and loss of culture.

Instead, the day should be a source of unity, pride and celebration that reflects the identities, histories and cultures of all Australians. In short, a day that draws us all together. For the First Australians, a national celebration on January 26 is inappropriate, the history that underpins it is simply too painful.

Reconciliation is all about recognising and healing the past and committing to a better future. Opting for an alternative date would indicate an acceptance of past wrongs and move us all to a better place. It's a conversation we need to have.

In the meantime, let's enjoy NRW, and perhaps spend a moment to think about the courage and resilience of those who worked so hard to achieve that stunning result back in 1967. At the same time, we can also remember Eddie Mabo whose successful quest for land rights has had such a far-reaching outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In closing, I enthusiastically congratulate June Oscar on her recent appointment as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Social Justice Commissioner, the first woman to occupy that important position. June is a superb choice, being a strong leader and passionate advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.



**Justin Mohamed**  
CEO, Reconciliation Australia



# NRW 2017: TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

Image by Oliver Strewe.

**Each year, National Reconciliation Week (NRW) celebrates and builds on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians in the journey towards reconciliation.**

The week is embraced by two significant dates: 27 May, the day the historic 1967 Referendum was carried, and 3 June, when the High Court delivered its landmark judgement in the Mabo case in 1992.

This year those dates are especially significant being the 50th anniversary of the Referendum and the 25th anniversary of Mabo. Both these events forever changed Australia and it is fitting that as we continue to push for reconciliation, we reflect on the hard work of so many people before us.

The hundreds of events and activities held in cities, towns and remote communities across the country will highlight those two important

milestones, and demonstrate the genuine desire of Australians to achieve reconciliation.

This year's theme *Let's Take the Next Steps* encourages us all to draw on the dedication and determination of past campaigners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and support the movement for Constitutional recognition.

Whether you accompany Michael Long for *The Long Walk* in Melbourne, attend one of the nine AFL matches in the Indigenous Round, or simply join a gathering in your office, school, boardroom, community centre or local park, you will be taking that next step.



Bill Onus at the Referendum march in Melbourne in March 1967.



Koojay Corroboree.

## THE 1967 REFERENDUM

Often viewed as the event that accelerated reconciliation in Australia, the 1967 Referendum removed those clauses in the Constitution which discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The result meant that for the first time, they would be counted as citizens in the national census.

The overwhelming Yes vote of 90.77 per cent also meant that the Commonwealth Government had the power to make laws on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While the Referendum may not have led to the kind of instant outcomes its campaigners had hoped for, it spectacularly demonstrated the great goodwill of the Australian community.

Fifty years is an awfully long time and not many of the campaigners who led the crusade are still alive today. But the anniversary will present many opportunities to remember and honour those determined activists, people like Jessie Street, Faith Bandler, Pearl Gibbs, Joe McGinness, Pastor Doug Nicholls, Stan Davey and many others. They all share the credit for influencing public opinion through their sustained advocacy for change.

The success of the vote also reminds us of the importance of bipartisanship in winning broad community support for change – both major political parties supported the Yes vote. Political leadership is an important element in progressing reconciliation.

*'I used to get very emotional about it because it possessed me. I became totally obsessed with that campaign. There were times when I would take as many as three meetings in a day. And I did things that I would never have dreamed of doing: like going into a pulpit, talking to church congregations, and putting up with people whose ideas were totally foreign to me'.  
1967 Referendum Campaigner Faith Bandler AC*

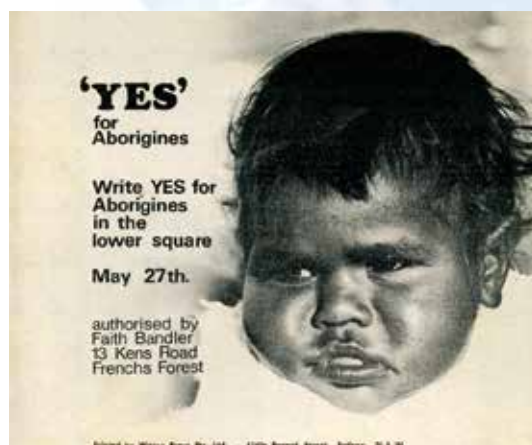
## 1967 REFERENDUM INSIGHTS

- The referendum was about including Aboriginal people in the Census and allowing the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people. It was not, as some people believe, about giving Aboriginal people the vote, that had already happened in 1962.
- To succeed, the referendum needed approval of four of the six states and around 2.5 million votes. It was approved by all six states and received more than five million votes.
- Because citizens of the ACT and NT were not eligible to vote in 1967, around 3,000 to 4,000 Aboriginal people in the NT were not allowed to vote for their own cause.
- With 90.77 per cent of the population voting in favour, it remains the biggest 'yes' vote ever recorded on any Commonwealth referendum.

**Source:** *Creative Spirits and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Information about the main advocates in the campaign, can be found on the AIATSIS website under 'The Campaigners'.*



Jessie Street, one of the main campaigners for the 1967 referendum.



A newspaper advertisement promoting the Yes vote for the 1967 Referendum.



## WHO WAS EDDIE MABO?

- Eddie Mabo's birth name was Eddie Koiki Sambo. He was born on 29 June 1936 and his mother died giving birth. He was raised by his Uncle Benny Mabo as part of a Torres Strait Islander customary adoption.
- Over the years, he worked on pearling boats, cutting cane and as a railway fettler. He married Bonita Neehow, an Australian-born South Sea Islander, and they had 10 children.
- Eddie was also an artist and writer. Some of his art works and writings are held by the National Library of Australia.
- He was an activist in the 1967 Referendum campaign and helped found the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service.
- The issue of land rights became a focus for Eddie in 1974, while working on campus as a gardener at James Cook University and meeting university historians Noel Loos and Henry Reynolds.
- Following his first speech at a land rights conference at the University in 1981, Eddie was approached by a lawyer in the audience who suggested there should be a test case to claim land rights through the court system. And so began a decade of research and preparation.
- Eddie Mabo didn't live to see the decision passed down from the High Court. Eddie died of cancer on 29 January 1992, aged 55. Five months later, the High Court handed down their decision.

**Source:** *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*

*'With the Mabo decision, the Australian law has taken a major step away from this injustice and has finally entered the mainstream of world opinion.'*  
**Prime Minister Paul Keating**

## THE MABO DECISION

Eddie Mabo's successful claim of land rights for the Meriam people—the Traditional Owners of the Murray Islands, including Mer, Dauer and Waier in the Torres Strait—overturned more than two centuries of the accepted doctrine of *terra nullius*.

The concept of *terra nullius*, meaning 'nobody's land', in international law describes territory which has never been subject to the sovereignty of any state, or over which any prior sovereign has expressly or implicitly relinquished.

What began as a claim against the Queensland government went all the way to the High Court of Australia where six of the seven justices found in favour of the plaintiffs and the doctrine of native title was born.

The 1967 Referendum and the Mabo decision were hard fought landmark events that helped to address some of the blatant injustices felt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Now, in 2017, it's up to all of us to further advance reconciliation as we take the next steps together.

## CANBERRA'S NRW TRAIL

During National Reconciliation Week 2017, a dozen of Canberra's major institutions have banded together to present the *NRW Trail*, a diverse array of dedicated NRW activities and events.

Visitors will be treated to exhibitions, displays, lectures, tours, films and stories focusing on the 1967 referendum and the Mabo judgement.

Venues include the National Gallery, National Library, Museum of Australian Democracy, Australian War Memorial, National Museum, National Archives, Portrait Gallery and National Film and Sound Archive.

The Royal Australian Mint will also issue a commemorative 50 cent coin to mark the anniversaries and the ABC will broadcast Q and A from the Great Hall in Parliament House on Monday, 29 May.

**You'll find dates and times on each institution's website and a consolidated list of all the *NRW Trail* events at [reconciliation.org.au/nrw/events](http://reconciliation.org.au/nrw/events).**

## REGISTER YOUR NRW EVENT

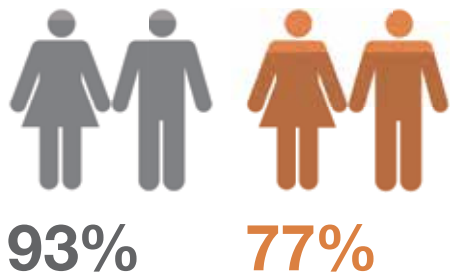
If you're arranging an NRW event be sure to enter it on our website calendar. The calendar is also the best place to discover just what's happening near you: [reconciliation.org.au/nrw/events](http://reconciliation.org.au/nrw/events).

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE HOPEFUL

**Reconciliation Australia's Australian Reconciliation Barometer (the Barometer) is a national research study measuring attitudes and perceptions towards reconciliation in both the general Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

The recently released 2016 Barometer provides a timely update on our successes and shortcomings. Comprising 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian respondents and 2,277 Australians in the general community, the 2016 Barometer survey again tracked the progress we have made towards a stronger relationship.

On the positive side, findings show that almost all Australians (97 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and 89 per cent of Australians in the general community) believe the relationship between us is important. Australians also believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to our national identity (93 per cent and 77 per cent respectively).

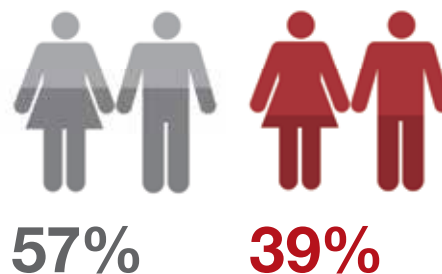


Pleasingly those percentages have all increased since the 2014 survey.

But the results also show we still have high levels of prejudice and low levels of trust. Almost half (46 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have experienced recent

racism (up from 39 per cent in 2014), a figure two and a half times higher than Australians from the general community.

Another negative finding is that almost 57 per cent (up from 48 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and 39 per cent (up from 35 per cent) of Australians from the general community believe Australia is a racist country.



Clearly there is work to be done to address these gaps between Australian attitudes, perceptions and behaviours when it comes to reconciliation.

The CEO of Reconciliation Australia, Justin Mohamed, said that with 10 years of data to drill down on, a clearer picture of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the general community is emerging.

"While the considerable goodwill generated by the National Apology to the Stolen Generations has been maintained since the first survey in

2008, we obviously aren't moving fast enough on issues of racism and trust. These hurdles are holding all Australians back from having positive relationships with each other," Mr. Mohamed said.

"Importantly, our *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report revealed last year that we aren't addressing racism at an institutional level. The current attempts to weaken legal protections under the *Racial Discrimination Act* are obviously unhelpful and Australia is yet to implement its international obligations under the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"And meanwhile, the Australian Constitution still allows for racial discrimination.

"Overall, the Barometer's mixed findings indicate that unless goodwill is followed through with significant reform at an institutional level, Australia will continue to fall short of its full potential as a reconciled nation."

**You can read the full report on our website [reconciliation.org.au/resources](http://reconciliation.org.au/resources).**





# IN CONVERSATION: SISTER ANNE GARDINER AM

Senior Australian of the Year, Sister Anne Gardiner AM with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the Australian of the Year Awards. (Photo courtesy of the National Australia Day Council).

**In January this year, Sister Anne Gardiner AM was named Senior Australian of the Year in recognition of her lifetime's work with the Tiwi people.**

Her Tiwi story began in 1953, when Sister Anne, then a 22-year-old member of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, was asked to move to Bathurst Island. Little did she know then that she would still be there 64 years later, all the while enriching community, enhancing opportunity and supporting the Tiwi culture.

An advocate of peace, love, local decision-making and Tiwi language and culture, Sister Anne has worked tirelessly to educate generations of children while also establishing community groups from mothers' clubs to little athletics. Since her retirement as principal of the local primary school, Sister Anne has run regular prayer meetings, founded an op shop and established a coffee shop to support her much-loved community.

Sister Anne's most recent project was working with community members to establish the Patakajivali museum preserving Tiwi history, culture and language for future generations. A key member of the community, Sister Anne is much loved and respected by the Tiwi people and has earned an enduring place in their hearts.

We recently caught up with this remarkable woman for a chat about her six decades on the Tiwi Islands.

*How did it come about that you found yourself in the Tiwi Islands all those years ago and what were your first impressions of the people and the land?*

Belonging to a religious congregation, The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, I was sent to Bathurst Island on November 23rd 1953. Already there were four other sisters working here with the Tiwi people.

My first impressions were and still are, that the Tiwi people are an outgoing, extroverted group. They made me feel welcome from the moment I stepped from the plane. Their Island is beautiful, and as I walked around the Mission area, I grew to love every tree, plant and especially the Apsley Strait.

*What was your primary role when you first arrived on Bathurst Island and how did that expand over the years?*

My primary role was that of a teacher. Here I found myself very vulnerable, as I was young, just out of teacher training school and it was my first time working with Indigenous people. I learnt much from the two Tiwi ladies who worked with me. Many years later I became the Principal.



*What are some of the significant changes you've seen in that time, particularly in the wellbeing and expectations of the Tiwi people?*

Changes are good, changes have to happen. The first big change was when Father Cosgrove was able to build the first decent houses and people moved from their humpies on the beach. Then came the next change when alcohol was permitted. This had a very negative outcome for the people. 1969 was a great year when the Tiwi people achieved self-determination. They said leave the sisters in the school and clinic and we will have a go at the rest.

*Of all the projects and activities you've been involved in during your time in the Tiwi Islands, what has given you the most satisfaction and why?*

This is hard to answer. As each project came to mind I gave it my all. The first big one was when I handed the school over to the first Tiwi Principal. This gave all concerned great satisfaction. I guess the project that has given me the most fulfilment is creating the Patakiijali Museum. The icing on it all happened on March 17th when I handed the running of the museum into the hands of four Tiwi ladies.

*How important do you think events like the 1967 referendum, the Mabo judgement and the Apology are in uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians?*

Very important. More and more I realise the gulf between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I feel strongly more has to be done in all schools to educate students about our First Australians. This became more evident to me when I received the Senior Australian of the Year Award and spoke with the media.

*In your experience, what is the single most important thing that governments should do to address Indigenous disadvantage?*

From Government down LISTEN. I have seen over the years, too many non-Indigenous people who come into remote places, carrying their own agenda.

*Although you have now retired, you are still very active in the Tiwi community. What projects have you tackled since retirement and what are your plans now?*

Yes, I have retired. The projects I have commenced with the help always of Tiwi women are the op shop, the coffee shop and the museum. Now I have handed over the museum I intend to take time to be with the students on the playground, listening to their needs. Also I plan to go down town and mix with the younger members of the Tiwi. To me they seem to be lost, perhaps I can be of assistance in remembering the past with them.

*Is there anything you particularly wish to accomplish as Senior Australian of the Year?*

Yes. As I move around to the various functions that I will be invited to attend, my message and wish is that we as Australians, no matter as to colour, belief or culture, can live together and respect each other.

*One last thing, you have devoted the greater part of your life working with the Tiwi people and are much loved and highly respected in the community. But what about you? In what ways have you been rewarded and blessed by your time on the Islands?*

I have had the privilege of living side by side with the Tiwi people for over 50 years. I have been blessed by their acceptance of me and loyalty to me. In my younger years I made many mistakes. I was insensitive in many ways to their beliefs and culture. Yet these people accepted me with my many failings and were paramount in my growing up to become the woman I am today.

My rewards, all of them have been given to me solely because I am part of them. My AM medal, my latest award as Senior Australian, were both given because of my involvement with the Tiwi. My biggest and best award is that of being a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. My gratitude goes to my Congress for allowing me to stay here with the Tiwi, and gratitude to the Tiwi people for allowing me to live and work here with them. I would have to add that the creation of the museum is my final reward.



# NARRAGUNNAWALI: FOSTERING KNOWLEDGE AND RESPECT

Narragunnawali library image by Hilary Wardhaugh.

**Education is a vital tool for progressing reconciliation in Australia. In 2014, that belief led Reconciliation Australia to establish *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning*. Its purpose is to enable all schools and early learning services in Australia to foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.**

The timing is perfect. The curriculum framework for schools and early learning services in Australia now requires teachers and educators to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives across all learning areas. *Narragunnawali* supports teachers and educators to find the best way to embed this content in their practice.

This framework accords with the *State of Reconciliation In Australia* report last year which declared ‘an education system that uses a cross-curriculum focus to foster respectful understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories is crucial to becoming a reconciled nation’.

Excitingly, teachers and educators across Australia continue to sign up to the reconciliation movement. Since the launch of *Narragunnawali* in 2014, over

1,000 schools and early learning services, and over 4,000 teachers and educators around Australia, have demonstrated their commitment to reconciliation by joining the *Narragunnawali* community. Hopefully over the next few years, a significant proportion of schools and early learning services across Australia will have formalised their commitment to reconciliation through the *Narragunnawali* program.

*Narragunnawali* is supporting the growing number of teachers, educators, students, children, families, and community members that work together to increase knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The program continues to innovate with new components to further empower schools and early learning services, together with their local communities, to take action for reconciliation.



## ONLINE PLATFORM

*Narragunnawali's* interactive online platform is the ideal resource for anyone committed to increasing knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions in Australian schools and early learning services.

The platform enables schools and early learning services to formalise their commitment to reconciliation through the self-guided development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The recently launched update includes a number of new features and functions to strengthen the RAP development process, and allows RAP working groups to set detailed goals and deliverables to drive sustainable change.

Members of the *Narragunnawali* community can also now connect with other schools and early learning services with RAPs all across the country by viewing the new *Who has a RAP?* interactive map.

The updated platform includes hundreds of new curriculum and professional learning resources sourced from across the country. Collated by a team of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous educators, all curriculum and professional learning resources are aligned to the appropriate curriculum frameworks and professional learning standards, enabling straightforward integration into programming cycles in schools and early learning services.

Access to the platform or to join the *Narragunnawali* community is not restricted to those in a RAP Working Group for a school or early learning service. Anyone (teacher, student, parent or community member) can now access the resources and contribute to progressing reconciliation in schools and early learning services. So sign up now and spread the word!



## NARRAGUNNAWALI AWARDS

Reconciliation Australia recently launched the inaugural *Narragunnawali* Awards, recognising reconciliation excellence in the education sector.

Two awards, one for early learning services and one for schools will be awarded to recognise exceptional commitment to reconciliation in the classroom, around the school or early learning service, and with the community. The judging panel will comprise both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous education experts.

Any school or early learning service that has commenced or completed a *Narragunnawali* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) can be nominated for the Awards. Nominations must be supported and endorsed by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Award winners will receive a fully funded celebratory event in their school or early learning service for the whole community to enjoy. Reconciliation Australia will work with the winning school and early learning service to plan the event which might include a presentation ceremony, performances, catering, and creative workshops led by artists, dancers and musicians.

Nominations for the *Narragunnawali* Awards will be open until **9 June 2017**. Be sure to nominate schools or early learning services that are doing inspirational work to increase knowledge and respect for the histories and cultures of Australia's First Peoples.

**For more information, visit**  
**[reconciliation.org.au/](http://reconciliation.org.au/narragunnawali)**  
**[narragunnawali](http://reconciliation.org.au/narragunnawali).**

*Narragunnawali* is made possible through the support of BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities.

# LOOKING AFTER LANGUAGE

Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs (Yirrkala School Co-Principal) and Mònica Pereña (Linguapax International President) engaged in a ceremony of Stringy-bark leaves falling at the Linguapax Award celebration. (Image by Quyen Nguyen).

**In the past, knowing more than one language enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to communicate with neighbouring nations. Today, along with its emotional and cognitive benefits, that same bilingual skill helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people straddle the divide between traditional culture and the non-Aboriginal environment.**

However Aboriginal first language bilingual programs are hard to find in Australia today. It wasn't always like this. Forty years ago there were Aboriginal bilingual programs in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. But over time, a lack of Government support has seen these programs drastically reduced despite vigorous community backing for them.

The irony of the ever-increasing number of world language bilingual programs is not lost on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have had their first language bilingual programs defunded and dismantled. In the Northern Territory there are currently only nine bilingual programs with targeted bilingual government

funding and a number of independent schools that provide bilingual and bicultural education.

Yirrkala is one of the communities that has fought to maintain its bilingual/bicultural program, celebrating the 40th year of bilingual education at Yirrkala School in 2013. The occasion was a time for Yolngu to remember the insightful vision and strength of their Elders, but it was also an important marker in the continuing battle for Indigenous language rights throughout Australia.

Last year, Yambirrpa Schools Council and Djarrma Action Group won the International Linguapax Award. This prestigious award was a fitting reward for Yirrkala Yambirrpa Schools long and dedicated resistance to the domination of English language and culture in their children's education.

In making their decision, the Linguapax jury, comprising 40 international experts recognised the 'struggle initiated more than 40 years ago by the community Elders to convey the cultural and linguistic heritage of their people through bilingual teaching programs.'





Länjani Marika-Yunupingu, Mònica Pereña and Djuwalpi Marika at the Linguapax Award celebration. (Image by Quyen Nguyen).

Yolngu Elders have always had a vision for a balanced education, believing their children have a right to learn in their own Yolngu languages and Yolngu knowledge and that English language and Western knowledge will come later, when appropriate for the learners. The Award was a magnificent tribute to the generations of Yolngu who have fought for a proper education for their children.

Many Yolngu have shouldered the work of the School Council and the Action Group over the past 40 years. They have championed Yolngu education and Yolngu empowerment, worked closely with Elders, and drawn upon traditional Yolngu knowledge and philosophy, Yolngu clan languages and Yolngu ways of working.

Yolngu have a deep understanding of the importance of language, having always been multilingual, speaking and understanding a number of Yolngu clan languages. In Yolngu

society, clan language is fundamental to identity. It influences who you are, Dhuwa or Yirritja; which clan you belong to; which lands and seas you belong to; which ceremonies and song lines will be yours.

As Dr M Yunupingu once said, 'Our Yolngu children should not have to leave their cleverness outside the classroom door'.

Yirrkala School continues to develop the Garma Maths and Galtha curriculum (traditional Yolngu knowledge) which support Galtha Rom workshops across all levels in the Yambirrpa Schools. The successful Learning on Country program places these Galtha workshops firmly on Country with Elders and Yolngu Rangers as teachers and students learning at the right time, in the right place, using the right language and with the right people.

The bilingual program at Yirrkala remains vibrant and strong and will continue to shape the future

development of Yolngu education, fulfilling the hope and sustaining the vision for the next generations. Yambirrpa Schools is a living example of multilingual/multicultural education in an Indigenous language in Australia and it is a shining beacon of hope for all minority languages across the globe.



PM's Indigenous Advisory Council Member  
Andrea Mason. (Photo courtesy of the  
National Australia Day Council).

# ANDREA MASON, A WOMAN OF INFLUENCE

Andrea Mason's mobile phone has taken a hammering in the last 12 months as accolades and awards acknowledging her work have meant everyone wants a piece of her time.

As the CEO of Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council, which covers 350,000 sq kms of Central Australia, Andrea already had plenty on her plate. That workload increased last year with the obligations and opportunities that accompanied her selection as Telstra's Business Woman of the Year. And that was before she was announced as the NT's 2017 Australian of the Year and the Centralian Citizen of the Year.

To top it off, she was recently appointed to the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) and has now accepted a nine-month secondment with the Westpac Group in Sydney, an opportunity made possible through Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships and Westpac.



*"I have prepared my whole life for the opportunities I have received in NPY Women's Council. I genuinely believe that if you support the empowerment of women and children, then every member of the community is, in the long run, healthier and happier."*

With degrees in Aboriginal Affairs and Public Administration and in Laws, Andrea is one of the emerging new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. For the past seven years at NPY Women's Council she has influenced Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinking to create employment, support health and wellbeing, and tackle domestic violence and other social challenges.

With deep respect for local language, country, law and family, Andrea is determined to help children and young people realise the same aspirations as their urban counterparts. Andrea is confident that NPY Women's Council has the programs to turn this ambition into action.

She points to such innovative social enterprises as the Council's *Tjanpi Desert Weavers* which represents more than 400 women artists from 26 remote communities and the Ngangkari program that melds traditional healers with the best of western medicine to maximise health outcomes and wellbeing.

"I have prepared my whole life for the opportunities I have received in NPY Women's Council. I genuinely believe that if you support the empowerment of women and children, then every member of the community is, in the long run, healthier and happier."

Telstra Business Women's Awards ambassador and marketing officer Joe Pollard said that Andrea speaks with dignity and leads with humanity and cultural sensitivity.

'She has involved the entire community in her business model and built a blueprint for making a difference. Significantly, Ms Mason has developed a replicable commercial process and relationships to make it sustainable'.

In accepting the placement with Westpac, Andrea says her primary motivation had been to expand her knowledge and understanding of business strategies that work for and with Aboriginal people and their communities.

"If I can assist with interpreting information on my return to Alice Springs, I hope in the long term that we will see across central Australia more Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal women, seeking business opportunities with leaders in the business sector," Andrea said.

Andrea says she took on the appointment to the Prime Minister's 'refreshed' Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC), because she wants to bring to national discussions the perspectives that she has seen deliver rewards in central Australia.

"I believe I can make a meaningful contribution at the national level. I have done this through my leadership in NPY Women's Council, in my role as a leader in the Empowered Communities Initiative and when I had responsibilities to progress reconciliation during my time in Canberra, so I know the level of effort and energy that is required for such a task," Andrea said.

Andrea has come a long way since her teenage years when sport was her overriding passion. In those days she was always a dedicated team player and nothing has changed.

"Any career goals I've been able to kick over the years have largely been thanks to the people I've worked with. Much like netball or football, everyone on the team plays their part and this also means everyone learns from successes and defeats."

Andrea is confident that true reconciliation is certainly achievable and agrees that in celebrating this year's significant National Reconciliation Week we should all take a moment to think about what each of us can do to further enhance our shared relationships.

"I believe the road ahead for reconciliation in Australia is shaped by what we as Australian citizens commit to do, but it is also weakened by what we fail to do. Because I prefer to live life without regret, I choose to do all I can to progress reconciliation while I have the opportunities to do this."

Before heading off to Sydney, Andrea was grateful to spend a couple of quiet days at home.

"Just switching off that phone and taking some time out to simply think doesn't happen often enough. A little solitude is good for the soul and it also gave me a chance to give my netball knees a rest!"



# RAPS – IT'S ALL IN THE NUMBERS

Each year, Reconciliation Australia tracks and measures the impact of its RAP program. The data used to measure that impact is drawn from annual program reporting provided by RAP organisations themselves.

The results for 2016 are contained in the recently published RAP Impact Measurement Report drawn from the responses of 343 RAP organisations.

It is clearly evident from the Report that in workplaces across Australia, RAPs continue to enhance relationships, drive respect and provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The facts and figures show how RAPs are at the forefront in advancing social change.



Reconciliation Australia CEO Justin Mohamed and artist Chern'ee Sutton at the launch of the Dreamworld Stretch RAP.

## INSPIRING RAP FACTS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS INCLUDE:

**767** 

**organisations** having created a RAP since 2006.

**6,658** 

**partnerships currently existing** between RAP organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



**\$24 million**

**in charitable donations made** to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in this reporting period.

### One of many examples of the benefit of good relationships is St Vincent's Health Australia:


St Vincent's Health Australia created an art work to symbolise the organisation's commitment to reconciliation. The three panelled art work was a collaborative effort involving 50 hospital staff and led by three prominent First Australian artists from Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

*'Our RAP Collaborative Art Project has significance to our organisation on many levels. Most importantly the making of the art work helped us understand what we are trying to achieve. Reconciliation is a big issue for many people working at St Vincent's so we thought this is a way to raise awareness, increase understanding and also create a fabulous and meaningful art work for our RAP.'*

– Monique Silk, Project Curator



## INSPIRING RAP FACTS RELATING TO RESPECT INCLUDE:

**1,579,916** 

**Australians** were working or studying in an organisation with a current RAP.

**51,797** 

**employees** completed online cultural learning.

**46,446** 

**employees** completed face-to-face cultural awareness training.

**3,043** 


**employees** completed cultural immersion experience.

### One of the many examples of how RAPs engender respect comes from Westpac:

During NAIDOC Week 2016, Westpac distributed 300 hampers to selected Westpac branches across the country containing items from 12 First Australian suppliers. This promoted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers, built awareness of Westpac Group's supplier diversity policy, and encouraged teams to celebrate NAIDOC Week.

Recipients were chosen by the Indigenous Business Team, commending teams who supported their visitation program and had high cultural awareness competency. The hamper provider, Global Outback, said it was the first time they had been asked to source all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander products and have gone on to form new supplier relationships as a result.

## INSPIRING RAP FACTS ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

**\$14,613,877** 

**was provided** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education scholarships by RAP organisations.



**\$169,457,556**

**in goods and services** was purchased from Supply Nation certified businesses by RAP organisations.

**19,413** 

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** were working or studying in organisations with a current RAP.



**\$16,322,301**

**in pro bono support** was provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or communities.

### One of many examples of opportunities provided by a RAP organisation comes from the Australian Red Cross:

Australian Red Cross now employs 11 local Tiwi staff who run programs including community capacity building and supporting the elderly and people with mental health worries. Most staff are trained in Mental Health First Aid which many of the youth workers incorporate in their work supporting young people on Tiwi Island. Staff also support the community during the cyclone and wet season so they are ready if disaster strikes. With nearly 40 per cent of the Tiwi population under the age of 24, working with young people continues to be a large part of Red Cross' work on the island.

The full RAP Impact Measurement Report can be accessed through [reconciliation.org.au/resources](http://reconciliation.org.au/resources).

# JUMP START – COLLABORATING TO CONNECT

**It's the Uber of business coaching, the Airtasker for skilled volunteering, and the RSVP for community-minded professionals. When asked 'What is Jump Start?' it is often described in these terms, however the plan is for it to be much more.**

In short, *Jump Start* is an innovative collaboration between Supply Nation, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Commbank) and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) and has provided both Commbank and HPE with an exciting opportunity to engage their people in using their own unique skillset to further reconciliation.

How *Jump Start* came to be is a tale of two journeys that came together.

Supply Nation, established in 2009 to connect Australia's leading brands and governments with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses across the country, boasts 259 corporate, government and community organisations and 1,200 Indigenous suppliers as members. Over the course of its eight-year existence, Supply Nation has supported Indigenous businesses to secure contracts with some of Australia's biggest corporates and government agencies.

But while Supply Nation has successfully connected Indigenous suppliers with its members, enabling them to access business networks and skilled support has proven an altogether more difficult challenge.

Yet from our greatest challenges, some of our best ideas are born.

Early last year, David Whiteing, Commonwealth Bank's Group Executive for Enterprise Services and Executive Sponsor for Reconciliation, took his leadership team to Bawaka in North East Arnhem Land. The trip was an opportunity to not only learn about one of the oldest cultures in the world, that of the Yolngu peoples, but it also provided time for David's leadership team to determine what they would focus on as part of the Group's Elevate RAP.

On returning to Sydney, David sponsored Supply Nation's Indigenous Entrepreneur Tour of Silicon Valley, and it was there, in the world's tech and innovation capital, where the *Jump Start* concept was conceived.

So then, what does *Jump Start* actually do?

In essence it is a technology platform that aims to access resources to the benefit of Indigenous businesses. With the many hundreds of corporates, government departments, not-for-profits and community organisations now having a RAP (many being members of Supply Nation), it means that millions of Australians are working or studying with organisations committed to reconciliation and Indigenous equality. *Jump Start* aims to tap into the skills that sit across these organisations to provide meaningful ways for people – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous – to connect.

Through the *Jump Start* App, skilled volunteers are able to create an online profile, outlining their skills and the times they are available to volunteer. As and when certified suppliers of Supply Nation require specific skills to support them with projects, they are able to create a succinct brief outlining the project for which they seek





Participants at the Jump Start workshop in Townsville.

assistance. For example, this might be around cash flow forecasting, a PR campaign for the launch of a new product or coaching in preparation for a tender pitch.

The project briefs are made available to all registered volunteers, and with the simple press of a button, those with the right skills are connected to the Indigenous business seeking the skills. The platform is a simple to use way to link people, and from there entrepreneurs and skilled volunteers are able to further discuss the brief and arrange a suitable time to connect.

The program has also expanded to include *Jump Start* workshops with the Commbank Innovation team running sessions with Indigenous businesses. The first series of workshops took Indigenous businesses through design thinking and experimentation frameworks that help entrepreneurs better identify customers' needs, de-risk new business ideas and ensure that the products or services they deliver are desirable, viable and feasible.

Successful workshops have been run on the Gold Coast and in Townsville, and as more Supply Nation members join up to *Jump Start*, the workshops will be expanded to other locations and topics.

Since the project started, Commbank's Enterprise Services division has also committed to achieving three per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across the division by December 2026.

**To find out more about *Jump Start* and how your organisation can get involved, contact [jumpstart@supplynation.org.au](mailto:jumpstart@supplynation.org.au).**



# BRINGING THEM HEALING

Healing Foundation heals through its community partnerships.

**This is a significant year for important anniversaries. In addition to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum and the 25th of the Mabo decision, 26 May 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home Report*.**

This landmark document was tabled in Parliament in 1997, following a two-year national inquiry. It was the first to extensively document the experiences of *Stolen Generations* and the ongoing impact in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Report's 54 comprehensive recommendations included the need for an Apology to the Stolen Generations and provision of services to create healing and wellbeing for those affected.

While 11 years would pass before those two recommendations were fulfilled, the majority of the Report's other recommendations have still not been implemented.

The Healing Foundation, which was established a year after the 2007 Apology to members of the Stolen Generations to help address the ongoing trauma, takes a leading role in encouraging all Australians to commemorate the Report's 20th anniversary.

CEO Richard Weston says it's an opportunity to focus on the critical work that still needs to be done to help heal the trauma caused by the forced removal of children from their families and to help create a different future for everyone.

"Failure to act in the past has caused added distress for many Stolen Generations members and created a ripple effect into current generations," said Mr Weston.

"The result is more Aboriginal people in jails, increasing suicide rates, social problems like substance abuse and domestic violence and the ongoing removal of children from their families through protection orders."

Research commissioned by the Healing Foundation has begun to measure the impact of unresolved trauma. It has found that people with parents, grandparents and great grandparents who were taken, are 50 per cent more likely to be charged by police.

"When you consider this statistic in the context that every Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person living today has been affected in some way by Stolen Generations, it creates a frightening picture for our future.





Coota Girls with Archie Roach at the Healing Foundation's 2016 Apology event in Sydney (photo by Julia Charles).

"This anniversary isn't just about reflecting on the past, it's also about building momentum for ongoing change and the sustainable framework we need to properly address the underlying cause of today's major social and health issues.

"We need to remove the barriers to healing, such as ongoing social exclusion, and underpin the services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with a trauma-informed workforce."

The Healing Foundation has commissioned a review of the *Bringing Them Home Report* to establish the key priorities for moving forward. It will be released closer to the anniversary, along with school, community and government initiatives designed to create greater awareness and a better understanding within the broader Australian community.

In the meantime, more than 40 grants have been awarded to schools, councils, community organisations and juvenile justice centres enabling them to host commemorative events across the country.

"Every event will provide an opportunity for Stolen Generations members to tell their story, allowing us to acknowledge this tragic chapter

in our history, but also celebrate the great examples of survival and strength," Mr Weston said.

"Commemoration is an important part of the healing process for members of the Stolen Generations, their descendants and all Australians.

"Two decades on, there are children within Aboriginal communities who don't understand their own link with Stolen Generations and many people in the broader community who have little knowledge of the circumstances and ongoing impacts.

"Educational and cultural activities will bring these people together to focus on sharing the truth of our history and how we can continue to heal together."

Activities will include poetry readings from Stolen Generations members, art activities and displays, youth forums and smoking ceremonies.

Two local events will continue to document the story of large institutions that housed Stolen Generations children – the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home and Kinchela Boys Home.

Community groups in these areas have joined forces to build awareness about the hundreds of children who

were denied love and parenting, suffered abuse and lost connection with family and culture as a result of their institutionalisation.

**To find out more about the commemorative activities being held during May, and the broader work of the Healing Foundation, visit their website at [healingfoundation.org.au](http://healingfoundation.org.au).**

### About the Healing Foundation

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families. It supports people to better understand their trauma and works with communities to lead their own healing solutions.

Since the Healing Foundation was created in 2009, it has assisted more than 40,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their own individual healing journeys, funded 160 community based projects and established a large body of research and evidence to underpin future work.

# ABORIGINAL IDENTITY IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

by Robert Beattie

**Australia prides itself in being the most successful multicultural nation in the world and how for the most part we all happily coexist in this great land.**

When we hear multiculturalism talked about, the conversation usually focuses on the enormous contribution of the more than seven million migrants who have made their home here since 1945.

However, that focus does tend to mask the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, the First Peoples in Australia's multicultural society.

Scholars and researchers have long acknowledged that there are tensions surrounding Indigenous peoples and multiculturalism that stem from complications in placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities within the cultural melting pot. Such an approach overlooks the unique identity and rights of Indigenous peoples by reducing them 'to the status of just another ethnic group'.

For the first half of the 20th century, the White Australia policy was the political blueprint for immigration and largely dictated who could settle in this country. Those who did come were expected to fit in or, to use the official term, 'assimilate'. For migrants, that meant forsaking elements of their former cultures as they adapted to their new surroundings.

But for the First Australians the struggle has never been about 'fitting in'. It's always been about the pursuit of justice, land rights and self-determination – having the sovereign right to govern themselves.

Having occupied the land for tens of thousands of years prior to 1788, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long maintained a physical and spiritual affinity with their homelands and a deep-rooted connection to their heritage and identity.

In the 1930s and 1940s, when Australia saw an increase in new arrivals following WWI, Aboriginal Australians had already suffered 150 years of racism, oppression and discrimination. Unlike the carefully selected new migrants, they were denied such basic freedoms as citizenship, the right to vote, or even the right to choose where they lived.

For those confined to living on a mission, the assimilation policy also involved the banning of ceremonies, speaking in local languages and the freedom to freely move about.

And the grief endured by families whose children were removed is incalculable and still felt today.

After World War II, the Australian social makeup began to change dramatically. The war had made people wary of racist views and shiploads of European migrants had begun arriving on our shores. Significantly, Australia's largest ever engineering project was also about to have a major impact.

It's widely acknowledged that the Snowy Mountains Scheme which began in 1949 marked the birth of multiculturalism in Australia. The workforce over the 25 years of construction exceeded 100,000 people, 70 per cent of whom were migrant workers from 30 countries. In more ways than one it was indeed a nation-building project...but not for the Aboriginal nations.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continued to press for equality, recognition and land rights. Their prolonged campaign culminated spectacularly in the 1967 referendum when more than 90 per cent of the





It goes without saying that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are intrinsic to Australia's multicultural mix.

Australian voting public agreed that the Commonwealth would have the power to implement laws for the benefit of Aboriginal people and for Aboriginal people to be included in the census.

It was a watershed moment and the enormous goodwill shown by the vote was a positive step in the reconciliation journey.

But change comes slowly and it would be another quarter of a century before the High Court would refute the concept of *terra nullius* and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had rights to the land they had continuously occupied for so many thousands of years. As a consequence of its landmark finding in the Mabo judgement, the *Native Title Act* was passed in 1993.

In the meantime, the wave of refugee migrants from Vietnam who had settled here in the late 1970s and 1980s had added another distinctive layer to Australia's multicultural mix.

By the turn of the 21st century with Australia's migrant intake continuing to power along, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were still seeking the same things – justice, equality and self-determination – not to mention vastly better health and education outcomes.

The Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008 was a symbolic moment in time and added renewed impetus to the reconciliation movement. Now, nine years later, the next step is recognition of the First Australians in the Constitution. And beyond that, agreement on a compact or treaty.

In the meantime, there is still much to be vigilant about.

The constant rumblings about changes to the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) do not bode well. Should section 18c of the RDA be weakened, the protection against acts that are likely to 'offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate' on the basis of race will be erased.

Most affected would be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples along with people of ethnic appearance, particularly Australians of Middle Eastern backgrounds.

All Australians, but particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recent migrants, are entitled to effective legislative protections against racial vilification.

Reconciliation Australia agrees with Race Discrimination Commissioner Dr Tim Soutphommasane who says that the current provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act strike

the right balance between freedom of speech and the need to protect against racial vilification.

In a country that prides itself on its multicultural makeup and is genuine about making amends with its Indigenous peoples, one would expect that the protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and sensibilities would be paramount.


It just may be that shared experiences of racism and cultural insensitivity will sufficiently unite Indigenous and migrant Australians to thwart any threat to their existing rights and protections. Time will tell.

It goes without saying that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are intrinsic to Australia's multicultural mix. Along with the millions of migrants who now call Australia home, they are part of our diverse and dynamic population.

At the same time, they are the First Australians, and their indigeneity confers a unique status that forever sets them apart.

That is the difference.





Referendum	1967
Mabo	1992
Apology	2008
Recognition	

**We need to take the  
next step on this journey.**

It's 50 years since Australians voted overwhelmingly in favour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and set out on the road to reconciliation. The 1967 Referendum was an historic moment where Australians stood together to bring about change. Now it's our generation's turn. We need to change our Constitution to remove racism and recognise the 50,000+ year history of the First Peoples. If you'd like to join the 300,000 Australians who are already on this important journey you can sign up or volunteer by visiting [recognise.org.au](http://recognise.org.au)

