

# Reconciliation News

Stories about Australia's journey to equality and unity

## Truth-telling

Why we must look back  
to move forward

## Licence to thrive

Driver training helps  
tackle over-incarceration

## NPY Women's Council

Putting culture at the  
heart of governance

## MONTANA AHWON

KIMBERLEY GIRL HEADS TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS

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RECONCILIATION  
AUSTRALIA

***Reconciliation News*** is a national magazine produced by Reconciliation Australia twice a year. Its aim is to inform and inspire readers with stories relevant to the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their 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.

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 image:

Montana Ahwon (by Landi Bradshaw)



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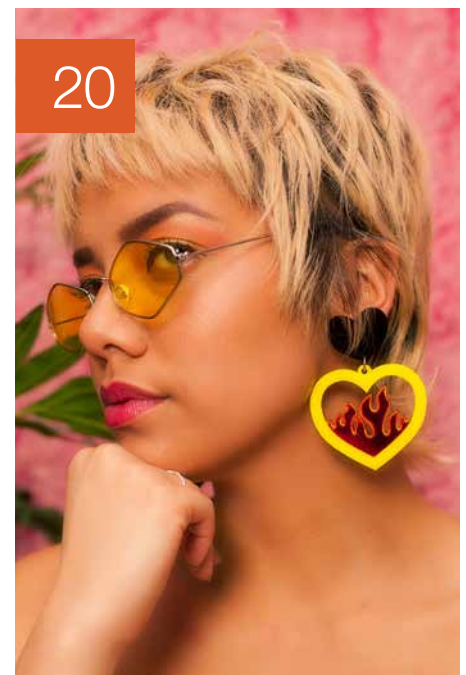
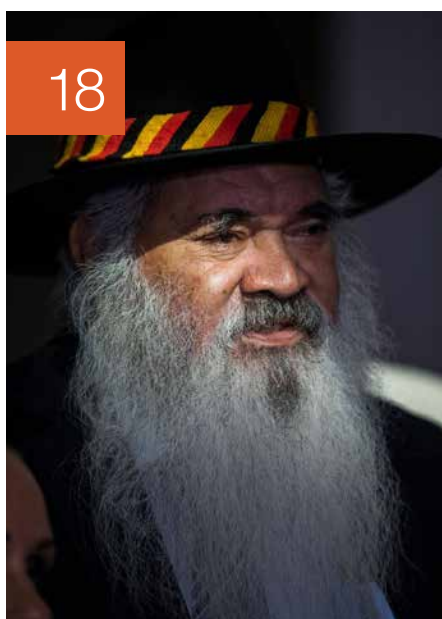
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# RECONCILIATION RECAP

## SIX MONTHS IN REVIEW

**27 November 2017**

Reconciliation in  
education awards



Queanbeyan Public School and Explore and Develop Penrith South took out the inaugural Naragunnawali Awards for excellence in reconciliation within the education sector. Singing songs in First Nations languages, learning to tackle racism, and blogging about the use of Indigenous practices in the classroom were among the host of reconciliation actions celebrated at the awards ceremony at the University of Canberra. The Naragunnawali Awards – held in partnership with BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities – celebrate the efforts of an outstanding school (and two finalists) and an outstanding early learning service (and two finalists), as selected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts.



**15 December 2017**

NT Royal Commission  
Final Report

The Royal Commission's final report on youth detention and child protection in the Northern Territory was released, outlining a range of measures necessary to correct the disturbing flaws in the Northern Territory's child protection and youth detention systems. Reconciliation Australia welcomed the recommendations and called on the federal and state governments to take a justice reinvestment approach to urgently needed reforms. Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine said that a shift in policy and spending, away from incarceration and towards prevention and early intervention, was needed to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in youth detention.



**25 January 2018**

Australian of the Year  
Awards celebration

A particularly strong field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander finalists for the 2018 Australian of the Year Awards was recognised at a coinciding national event to celebrate Indigenous success. Reconciliation Australia's annual Australian of the Year Awards breakfast recognised the efforts of seven Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander finalists, including three of the eight finalists for the main award category. Their contributions span fields such as health, education, justice and cultural engagement.



## 6 February 2018

### First Indigenous Winter Olympian



Harley Windsor became the first Aboriginal man to represent Australia at a Winter Olympics when he competed at the 2018 Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Windsor is from Sydney and has Ngarrable, Weilwyn and Gamilaraay roots. He and his partner, Ekaterina Alexandrovskaya, fell short of the medal competition in the pairs figure-skating program but finished ahead of entrants from Israel, Austria, Japan and hosts South Korea.

## 8 February 2018

### Closing the Gap 10-year review



The Close the Gap campaign released a highly critical 10-year review of the 2008 Council of Australian Governments' Closing the Gap strategy. The strategy was created under the Rudd government to reduce inequalities in health, education and employment between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. The review – produced by a coalition of non-government organisations – called for Australian governments to rebuild the foundations of the strategy in order to achieve the goal of health equality by 2030.

## 13 February 2018

### Ten years since the Apology



It was 10 years ago today that then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave a historical and deeply moving speech, known today as the Apology. The speech was addressed to the First Nations Peoples of Australia, in particular to the Stolen Generations, for many years of mistreatment and discriminatory policies orchestrated by the Australian Government.

## 19 March 2018

### Committee to investigate constitutional recognition



The Australian Parliament appointed a joint select committee to work towards a successful referendum on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The committee will examine the recommendations of the Referendum Council report, the Uluru Statement, the Committee on Constitutional Recognition's report of 2015, and the 2012 final report of the Expert Panel on Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution. An interim report is due by 30 July, and a final report will be handed down on 29 November.

# CEO COLUMN



It's been a big start to the year. The nation marked the 80th anniversary of the Day of Mourning (26 January) and the 10th anniversary

of the Apology (13 February), and Reconciliation Australia welcomed its 1000th Reconciliation Action Plan partner.

Reconciliation Australia has long advocated for a more inclusive date on which to celebrate our national day. This year, we were bolstered by the scale of public support for changing the date shown at events around the country. We are seeing growing public interest in the history of 26 January and the reasons this anniversary is not one of celebration for all Australians.

On 13 February, thousands of Australians joined events across the country to celebrate one of Australia's most significant public acts of reconciliation – the 2008 National Apology to the Stolen Generations.

*We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.*

– then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd,  
13 February 2008

I, together with other members of the Reconciliation Australia team, was honoured to attend the 10th anniversary National Apology breakfast at Parliament House. That evening we also attended the public 'Apology 10' concert, featuring Archie Roach and other Australian artists. These events provided guests with an opportunity to reflect on what Australia has achieved with the Apology. Additionally, they reminded us that, while there is still much to be done, we have the capacity to fulfil the commitments made in 2008 by creating a future based on mutual respect.

Building a deeper understanding of Australia's history is the aim of National Reconciliation Week 2018. This year's theme is 'Don't Keep History a Mystery: Learn. Share. Grow.' We are inviting all Australians to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, to share that knowledge and to help us grow as a nation.

Historical acceptance is one of five interrelated dimensions that together represent a holistic and comprehensive picture of reconciliation, as outlined in Reconciliation Australia's landmark *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report.

We see historical acceptance as fundamental to achieving progress in the remaining four dimensions – equality and equity, unity, race relations and institutional integrity. Australians need to accept and understand our shared history, and to address the ongoing impact of past wrongs, so we can move forward together.

In the months ahead, Reconciliation Australia will continue to advocate for the aspirations set out in the Uluru Statement from the Heart: truth-telling, agreement-making and a First Nations voice enshrined in the constitution.

Stay with us on this journey. Encourage your friends, colleagues and family to join us too. With your support, we can create a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

**Karen Mundine**  
CEO, Reconciliation Australia



**RECOGNISING RECONCILIATION:** Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine, Narragunnawali Awards judge Peter Buckskin and Boon Wurrung Elder Aunty Carolyn Briggs at the Narragunnawali Awards at the University of Canberra on 27 November 2017.

# CALENDAR

## SPECIAL DAYS

**26**  
May

National Sorry Day

**27–3**  
May June

National Reconciliation Week

**8–15**  
July

NAIDOC Week

**4**  
August

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

**9**  
August

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

## EVENTS

### Australian Aboriginal history and culture tour

**When:** 24 May  
**Where:** Adelaide Botanic Garden, Adelaide  
**Price:** \$32.75  
**Info:** [botanicgardens.sa.gov.au](http://botanicgardens.sa.gov.au)

### Barunga Festival – celebration of remote Indigenous community life

**When:** 8–10 June  
**Where:** Bagala Road, Barunga, Northern Territory  
**Price:** \$54  
**Info:** [barungafestival.com.au](http://barungafestival.com.au)

### Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

**When:** 10–12 August  
**Where:** Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin  
**Price:** Free  
**Info:** [darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au](http://darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au)

### Colony: Australia 1770–1861 / Frontier Wars – exhibition

**When:** Until 2 September  
**Where:** National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, Melbourne  
**Price:** \$4.50  
**Info:** [ngv.vic.gov.au](http://ngv.vic.gov.au)

### Bush Mechanics: The Exhibition

**When:** Until 15 July  
**Where:** Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum, Carlton, Victoria  
**Price:** \$15  
**Info:** [museumsvictoria.com.au](http://museumsvictoria.com.au)

### Bangarra's Dark Emu – contemporary dance

**When:** 15 June–15 September  
**Where:** Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne  
**Price:** \$45–\$99  
**Info:** [bangarra.com.au](http://bangarra.com.au)

### Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

**When:** 13–15 July  
**Where:** Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal, Cairns, Queensland  
**Price:** Free  
**Info:** [ciaf.com.au](http://ciaf.com.au)

### Tower Hill bush walk and wildlife experience

**When:** Until 20 December  
**Where:** Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve, Tower Hill, Victoria  
**Price:** \$22.95  
**Info:** [towerhill.org.au](http://towerhill.org.au)

### Reconciliation Day Eve concert

**When:** 27 May  
**Where:** Canberra Theatre, Canberra  
**Price:** \$34.95–\$54.95  
**Info:** [canberratheatrecentre.com.au](http://canberratheatrecentre.com.au)

### Reconciliation Day – community festival

**When:** 28 May  
**Where:** Glebe Park, Canberra  
**Price:** Free

### NAIDOC Women's Conference

**When:** 11–12 July  
**Where:** University of NSW, Kensington, Sydney  
**Price:** \$175–\$350  
**Info:** [ngiyani.com/naidoc](http://ngiyani.com/naidoc)

### NAIDOC Week Awards Ceremony

**When:** 13 July  
**Where:** International Convention Centre, Sydney  
**Price:** \$185  
**Info:** [naidoc.org.au](http://naidoc.org.au)

### Supply Nation Connect – supplier diversity forum and tradeshow

**When:** 22–23 May  
**Where:** International Convention Centre and the Star Event Centre, Sydney  
**Price:** see website  
**Info:** [supplynationconnect.com.au](http://supplynationconnect.com.au)



# TRUTH-TELLING CENTRAL TO RECONCILIATION PROGRESS

**National Reconciliation Week is just around the corner. In keeping with this year's theme – Don't Keep History a Mystery – *Reconciliation News* takes a look at the role of truth-telling and historical acceptance in moving the nation forward.**

Truth-telling about past injustices has long been used in the international sphere as a starting point for coming to terms with a period of conflict, upheaval or injustice. Formal processes of truth-telling, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, have been used more than 30 times since the 1970s in countries around the world. These processes promote awareness of the historical and ongoing impact of past actions, and encourage all sides to forge ahead in a reconciled and peaceful way.

In Australia, there is growing momentum to establish a truth-telling commission that would result in an honest and full understanding of colonisation, and the dispossession and trauma that First Nations Peoples were subjected to in the following years. The Referendum Council, which was established to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their views on constitutional recognition, highlighted the importance of truth-telling in its 2017 final report. Truth-telling was one of three recommendations supported at each of the council's 18 dialogues – attended by a total of 1200 Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander delegates around the country – as necessary initiatives. As a delegate from Darwin stated:

"Australia must acknowledge its history, its true history ... the massacres and the wars. If that were taught in schools, we might have one nation, where we are all together."<sup>1</sup>

The Referendum Council's proposal builds on a considerable history of advocacy for a process of truth-telling about Australia's history. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation discussed the topic in its final report, delivered in 2000 following a nine-year process of community consultation about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians could move forward together. The report found there was "a strong desire within the Australian community to make amends for the past, to recognise and value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to work towards a future where all Australians enjoy their rights, accept their responsibilities, and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential."<sup>2</sup>

The same report cites former Governor-General Sir William Deane's strong rationale – originally delivered in the inaugural Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture in 1996 – for why coming to terms with the past is fundamental to reconciliation. "The past is never fully gone," he said. "It is absorbed into the present and the future. It stays to shape what we are and what we do."

Building on the foundations laid by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Reconciliation Australia's 2016 *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report articulated the need for truth to be a pillar of the nation's journey towards unity and equity. The report identifies historical acceptance as one of five interrelated dimensions needed to progress reconciliation. Historical acceptance requires all Australians to acknowledge and accept the shared and often difficult truths of our past, so that we can create a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

1 Final Report of the Referendum Council, 30 June, 2017, p. 17.

2 Final Report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, December, 2000, Chapter 1.



**ULURU STATEMENT:**

Mutitjulu elder Rolley Mintuma and Pat Anderson from the Referendum Council with a piti holding the Uluru Statement from the Heart, during the closing ceremony in the Mutitjulu community of the First Nations National Convention held in Uluru, on Friday 26 May 2017.

Many Australians are open to taking this step, according to the findings of the 2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer. The survey, which Reconciliation Australia conducts biannually to measure progress towards reconciliation, found that 68 per cent of Australians accept that government policy enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be removed from their families without permission until the 1970s. Similarly, 64 per cent of Australians accept that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were subject to mass killings, incarceration, forced removal from land, and restricted movement throughout the 1800s. While these statistics have grown since the 2014 Barometer, they indicate that about a third of Australians are yet to accept fundamental aspects of our shared history and the treatment of First Nations Peoples.

Separate yet related to formal truth-telling processes is the role of public space in raising awareness of historical facts. Until recently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history had been all but absent from the public landscape, in terms of monuments, memorials and statues. Placemaking plays an important role in our collective memory: it reminds us of our history, our values and our identity. While our public spaces are full of statues that depict colonial figures, they have been mostly silent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait leaders and contributions to our nation. However, this has started to change in recent years.

This year, 'Wirin' statue in Perth's Yagan Park was installed to commemorate Aboriginal warrior Yagan, who was a Whadjuk Noongar leader and a resistance fighter during the early years of the Swan River Colony in Western Australia. This followed the 2015 erection of the 'Yininmadyemi – thou didst let fall' monument in Sydney's Hyde Park, to pay tribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who served in the military.

Across the country there are many other examples of local councils and communities highlighting in public space the histories, cultures and contributions of First Nations Peoples.

Also important are efforts to establish the historical facts of our past – such as University of Newcastle Professor Lyndall Ryan's research project on frontier violence between 1788 and 1960. Professor Ryan has recorded and – for the first time in the world – uncovered corroborating evidence of more than 150 massacres of Aboriginal people, which are now documented in an online digital map.

The importance of the growing movement for truth-telling and historical acceptance is perhaps summed up best by Professor Pat Dodson. The founding chairperson of the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation and current Australian Labor Party Senator for Western Australia wrote in the foreword to the 2016 *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report that there is a "schism" between how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians understand the impact of our nation's history on the current circumstances of Indigenous communities. He concluded:

"There is a discernible lack of appreciation by settler Australia about the grievances and sense of historical injustice that Indigenous people feel. This must be addressed for Australia to be reconciled."<sup>3</sup>

**National Reconciliation Week is a great opportunity to engage with the theme of historical acceptance and better understand how truth-telling can play a critical role on our journey to become a reconciled nation. To learn more or to find a National Reconciliation Week event near you, visit [reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week](http://reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week).**

3 The State of Reconciliation in Australia report, 8 February, 2016, Foreword.



**SKY'S THE LIMIT:** Montana Ahwon takes a break near her home in the Kimberley region a few days before jetting off to attend the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Image by Landi Bradshaw.

# YOUTH ADVOCATE FROM THE KIMBERLEY TACKLES THE BIG ISSUES

**In the face of adversity, Montana Ahwon is doing everything she can to create opportunities for young people in Australia's remote north-west corner.**

It was a few days before her 20th birthday when Montana Ahwon received an invitation to attend the pre-eminent forum on issues facing Indigenous peoples from around the world. The humble youth advocate from Kununurra, in far northern Western Australia, says she was shocked to receive an email from the Australian Government inviting her to be one of a handful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to participate in the 17th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues, to be held at United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

"When I first saw the email, I thought it was a scam," she tells *Reconciliation News* a few days before she is due to fly out.

"It still hasn't sunk in."

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is the UN's central coordinating body for matters relating to the concerns and rights of the world's Indigenous peoples. The forum holds a high-level session once a year, providing the opportunity for Indigenous peoples and member states to share knowledge and discuss issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The forum is committed to working with governments and Indigenous peoples to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



*“It made me question: why isn’t there much out here for our youth or our people?” she says.*

Ahwon says she was thrilled to get the call and jumped at the chance to attend.

“I’ll soak up as much knowledge and as many stories as I can,” she says.

“And [I’ll] see if I can have some yarns.”

Despite her surprise at being invited to attend the forum, there are plenty of reasons why Ahwon stands out as an advocate for First Nations Peoples. In the past few years she has won the NAIDOC Apprentice of the Year Award, worked as a social worker with Save the Children and advised state and federal governments on issues affecting youth in the Kimberley. What makes her efforts even more impressive is the adversity she has overcome along the way.

Just a few years ago, Ahwon was in a very different place. After stints at four boarding schools, she dropped out for good at the age of 15. She enrolled in a hospitality pre-employment program, but withdrew after the death of the man she calls ‘dad’ – her adoptive father. He was a family friend and raised Ahwon from the age of two, following the death of her biological mother.

“On [my mother’s] deathbed, she asked dad if he could look after me. He wasn’t too sure about it at first... but they were gonna send me to a group home, so dad raised his hand,” Ahwon says.

They were an unlikely pair – she a Miriwong Gajeroong girl and he an Italian man who drove taxis in Kununurra – but over the years they formed a deep bond.

“It was just me and him growing up. So I was really lost [after he died].”

“And then finally I woke up to myself and said ‘I gotta do this’.”

Somehow finding the strength to get back on track, she re-enrolled in the hospitality pre-employment program and got excellent results. She went on to secure a traineeship at the Hotel Kununurra and complete a Certificate II in Hospitality. In recognition of her professional success in the face of adversity, Ahwon won the 2016 NAIDOC Apprentice of the Year Award. She says she was shocked to hear her name called out but managed to deliver an impromptu speech that received a standing ovation from the audience.

“They called my name. I thought, ‘this doesn’t sound right’,” she says.

“I got up there and I really surprised myself because I didn’t prepare a speech... I got up in front of probably 1500 people, and my speech put people to tears. I got a standing ovation. It was one of the best moments of my life.”

It was receiving the award that made Ahwon realise that she “had to make a difference”, she says. She then completed the Kimberley Aboriginal Youth Leadership program, which she credits as a formative experience. The program gave her the chance to learn about culture, history and politics, and got her thinking about the issues in her town.

“It made me question: why isn’t there much out here for our youth or our people?” she says.

“There wasn’t anything that was helping, or working as well as it should be.”

After losing her cousin to suicide, Ahwon helped organise the Kimberley Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Forum in 2017. Suicide rates among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley are among the highest in the world, according to the World Health Organisation. Alarming levels of

youth suicide in the region prompted a multi-stage coronial inquiry in 2017. Ahwon and fellow forum participant, Jacob Corpus, delivered the forum’s report – including a series of recommendations – to the federal government. Ahwon and Corpus were then invited to sit on a working group overseeing the three-year Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial.

Ahwon had another opportunity to highlight issues affecting youth in her region when she was selected as a youth delegate to the federal government’s Indigenous Advisory Council earlier this year. Asked about the issues affecting young people in her town, she identified a lack of education and employment opportunities as key concerns. She hopes these issues will be addressed in the government’s ‘refresh’ of its Closing the Gap framework.

When it comes to longer-term aspirations, Ahwon isn’t sure yet what the future holds. But as long as she is advocating for young people in her region, she knows her dad would be proud.

“My dad, he always passionate about our people, and I remember him always saying to me [that] he wanted to have a big block of land with a big house and all the kids could come and stay,” Ahwon says.

Her work exposes her to distressing and unjust situations, but the memory of her dad’s love – and the ongoing support of others in her community – keeps her strong.

“My dad was my inspiration,” she says.

“It was a strong love he gave me... Because of that, I know who I am.”



# PUTTING CULTURE AT THE HEART OF GOVERNANCE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

**DESERT ART:**  
Tjanpi Desert Weavers Naomi Kantjuri (from Amata, South Australia) and Marinka Burton (from Indulkana, South Australia) harvesting minarri grass. Image by Rhett Hammerton.

**Aboriginal leader Andrea Mason speaks to *Reconciliation News* about the importance of Indigenous governance and the work of Indigenous Governance Award-winner Naanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council.**

Naanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council is a prime example of what can be achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations have the opportunity to put culture at the heart of their governance. The organisation works to improve the social determinants of health in central Australia and has become a major provider of human services since it was established almost 40 years ago. It operates across the NPY lands, which span the 350,000-square-kilometre tri-state central desert region where Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory converge. It's an area where traditional Indigenous practices "dominate thinking and decisions in homes and organisations", according to NPY Women's Council CEO Andrea Mason.

Tjanpi Desert Weavers is probably the most widely known initiative of the women's council. The social enterprise was set up more than 20 years ago to enable NPY women to earn a regular income from selling their fibre art. Today, Tjanpi represents more than 400 Aboriginal women artists from 26 remote communities and homelands. The women's multi-coloured woven baskets and quirky animal sculptures are exhibited in national galleries around the country and have won several awards, including the major prize in the most prestigious Indigenous art competition in Australia – the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award – in 2005.

Tjanpi may be the best-known project of the women's council, but it is only one of many initiatives they coordinate to strengthen the cultural, economic

and social wellbeing of women and families in the region. Their work has been instrumental in key developments, including the introduction of non-sniffable Opal fuel in central Australia and improved access to protective measures for victims of domestic violence. Today, the women's council delivers a range of services, including a domestic and family violence service, programs for youth, child and family wellbeing services, family support, aged and disability services, a cross-border respite service and the award-winning Ngangkari traditional healers project.

Key to the organisation's approach is that its directors and members put culture at the centre of everything they do. In Australia today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live under two forms of governance: their own and that of non-Indigenous Australia.



By balancing these ways of working, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can maintain cultural identity and self-determination, while ensuring their governance models accord with the requirements – such as financial and legal accountability – of the wider society.

“Before white fellas came to Australia... the NPY people, they had their own governance and business models,” Mason explains.

“And so what we have is a modern iteration of that happening. So some things have not changed, but the women have incorporated the new ideas that have come in [since colonisation].

“An example of this is the increasing understanding of trauma and its impact on individuals and families, and the women thinking of how they can empower their communities to prevent and reduce the impact of trauma, using a strengths-based approach, including leveraging cultural knowledge”.

NPY Women's Council adheres to six guiding principles that are drawn from women's law and culture. The guiding role of the principles – of shared values and culture – was a primary reason the women's council won the 2012 Indigenous Governance Award (IGA) (Category A). Established in 2005, the IGAs publicly recognise and celebrate outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and projects that use effective governance to make extraordinary contributions to communities and the nation by

practicing effective two-way governance. The judging panel noted that the guiding principles enabled the women's council to be driven by and preserve traditional values, while improving living standards through the provision of direct services in NPY communities.

Since winning the award, the women's council has become a lead organisation in the Empowered Communities initiative. It has also partnered with Jawun, a non-profit organisation that enables corporate and government partners to send skilled staff for up to three months to help build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Cultivating this partnership with Jawun has become a critical activity in their business model, because it enables the women's council to tap into skillsets that it doesn't have within its staffing structure.

While external support can help grow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations, Mason says it is essential to recognise the primary role of local people in developing their own solutions. This approach is reflected in the principle of subsidiarity: that action should rest at the closest level possible to the people or organisations the action is designed to benefit.

“There's no better model than someone from their own community who is an example of the change that you're seeking to create in those communities,” she says.



**LEADING LADY:** NPY Women's Council CEO Andrea Mason. Image by Hannah Millerick (Business Chicks).

The importance of subsidiarity is not only about improved outcomes in the near term, but also about demonstrating to potential future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders that there are opportunities for them to contribute and make a difference in their communities.

“We have to always seek to increase the number of Aboriginal people leading and delivering in local communities,” she says.

“This is because of the principle, ‘until you see it, you can't believe it’. Young people are inspired in this way, and we want them to say, ‘that's where I'm going to be, because I see it – it's happening and it's possible’.”

**This year, Reconciliation Australia and the BHP Foundation are proud to run the awards for the first time in partnership with the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, a national centre of governance excellence. Applications for the 2018 Indigenous Governance Awards can be made online at [reconciliation.org.au/iga](https://reconciliation.org.au/iga) until Saturday, 30 June 2018.**

## Indigenous governance

Indigenous governance involves:

- Indigenous-led solutions developed in response to local conditions and circumstances;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the driver's seat and making decisions;
- culture as a source of strength and innovation;
- flexibility to tailor responses to local conditions;
- innovation to find new paths forward; and
- long-term, sustainable solutions.

## NPY Women's Council guiding principles

The guiding principles of the NPY Women's Council are:

- *ngapartji ngapartji kulinma munu iwara wananma tjukarurungku*: respect each other and follow the law straight
- *kalypanyangu*: conciliatory
- *piluntjungku*: peaceful and calm
- *kututu mukulyangu*: kind-hearted
- *tjungungku*: united
- *kunpungku*: strong



**WINNING SCHOOL:** Queanbeyan Public School students with kindergarten teacher Alanna Raymond in front of a mural created by an Aboriginal artist and the school community.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WORK TOGETHER ON RECONCILIATION

The winner of the schools category in the inaugural national awards for reconciliation in the education sector is demonstrating the power of positive relationships between school staff and local Aboriginal communities.

The classroom was often a frightening place for Aunty Louise Brown. The Ngunnawal elder grew up on Erambie mission in Cowra. She remembers walking long distances to get to school, only to experience indifference and contempt once she was inside the school gates. It was common for Aboriginal children to experience racism in school at the time, she says, which led many to drop out early.

"The teachers weren't very good back in those days," Aunty Louise says. "We were actually scared of them."

"And that's why a lot of kids left school even before they got to high school."

Aunty Louise gets teary as she describes these difficult memories to *Reconciliation News*. But she says they also serve as her inspiration to help make sure school is a more positive experience for Aboriginal children growing up today.

"I just want the best for our children... because you didn't have that when you were young. You just got, 'sit down over there'," she says.

"I think a lot of the others can relate to that too. We had hard times, but we got through it.

"And now we want to see our children carry on and be someone, so they can show the rest of Australia that they can do it."

Aunty Louise volunteers her time as an advisor to Queanbeyan Public School. The school – which launched its Reconciliation Action Plan earlier this year – strives to encourage unity by building relationships based on mutual understanding. By sharing her knowledge with staff and students, Aunty Louise helps the school understand cultural protocols, demonstrate respect for traditional country and work towards reconciliation.

"I always say to non-Aboriginal people, come along on the journey with us and learn," she says.

"Because it's not just our culture, it's all Australians' culture."



In 2017, Queanbeyan Public School topped the schools category in the inaugural Narragunnawali Awards for reconciliation in the education sector. The judging panel praised the school for forging strong relationships with Aboriginal community members. These relationships help to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures are an integral part of the school environment. School principal Kym Hawes agrees that “being able to listen” is key to the school’s approach.

For the past decade or so, the school has been on a journey that has grown its approach to reconciliation. Hawes says it was a conversation with her colleague Rosemaree Whitehead that made her realise the school should do more than give children access to Aboriginal cultural experiences.

“She said ... ‘what about the past, what about history?’. Rosemaree asked us to go back so that we could go forward,” she says.

“It is harder to do that ... but we’re all the better for it. We really are a better school for having done that.”

Whitehead says Hawes provided the leadership that was necessary to steer the school through this transition period.

“I loved what I did ... but I was quite isolated,” she says.

“I was looking for staff members to support me to promote Aboriginal education.

“We had our disagreements [within the school] and there were tears. And that’s what happens when change happens. But Mrs Hawes was backing me.”

Today, the school strives to advocate reconciliation by embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into its daily practice. Cultural perspectives are integrated into learning across the curriculum, and students learn about current affairs and issues that are of particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the most popular initiatives is the daily acknowledgement of country that two or three students deliver over the school’s public address system each morning. The students enjoy it so much that some want to write their own acknowledgements, Hawes says, instead of using the version they’ve been provided.

The school has worked hard not only to increase knowledge and awareness among all students, but to build positive relationships with Aboriginal students and their parents. Aboriginal children at the school participate in regular meetings where they talk about their responsibilities and the importance of looking out for each other. This environment makes Aboriginal children feel proud of who they are, according to Janelle Foster-Britton, whose daughter, Mia, is in year five.

“She is so proud and so happy to come to school,” she says.

“Everyone is wonderful and it really makes you proud to be a part of this school.”

Schools interested in getting more involved in reconciliation could consider joining their local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, according to kindergarten teacher Alanna Raymond. Teachers, parents and interested community members can attend their local group meetings, where Aboriginal community members provide advice on education and training from an Aboriginal perspective. Raymond says anyone who wants to get more involved in reconciliation should start by simply having a conversation.

“Don’t be afraid to reach out,” she says.

“Sometimes taking that first step is the biggest and most important step.

“And you don’t have to change everything all at once.”

For Aunty Louise, being involved with Queanbeyan Public School has made it clear how much has changed since she was young. She says she is heartened by the progress and reckons the country is heading in the right direction.

“It’s all different today,” she says.

“Everybody’s trying to contribute and that’s the way to go.

“It’s all happening now. It’s gotta just keep going.”



**LEADING THE WAY:** Queanbeyan Public School principal Kym Hawes has led the school’s reconciliation efforts.

**Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali program supports all schools and early learning services in Australia to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. Narragunnawali’s online platform is free to access and provides learning and curriculum resources to support the implementation of reconciliation initiatives.**

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



# ON THE ROAD TO OPPORTUNITY

**IN TRAINING:** Kamilaroi woman Paula takes part in a driving lesson through the NRMA Learner Driver Mentor Program.

**Driver training programs not only improve access to the opportunities that mobility brings. They can also play a part in reducing the disproportionately high imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, NRMA Group CEO Rohan Lund tells *Reconciliation News*.**

Getting a driver's licence is about more than just being able to drive a car. A licence enables a person to help their family, contribute to their community, and access opportunities for education, training and employment. But Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face systemic barriers that can prevent them from obtaining and holding a driver licence. And when people feel compelled to drive without a licence, they risk coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

To help address these issues, the NRMA partners with community organisations to provide licensing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The NRMA Learner Driver Mentor Program reflects the NRMA's commitment to supporting Indigenous communities, as part of its Reconciliation Action Plan.

## THE NEED TO DRIVE

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in regional and remote areas where public transport is either limited or non-existent. Kamilaroi woman Paula – whose last name has been withheld for privacy reasons – says it took her an hour and a half to walk the distance between her two workplaces before she completed the NRMA program and obtained a driver licence. Paula, of Wagga Wagga, says it was expensive to get a taxi from one job to the other, but she was left with no choice whenever there was only a short break between her shifts.

"It was just so stressful," she says.

NRMA Group CEO Rohan Lund says there is a strong link between driver licensing and access to education, employment, health care and other essential services, as well as important social interactions.

"A licence is a life-changing tool that helps break the cycle of unemployment, social isolation and disadvantage," he says.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who hold a driver licence have a higher chance of getting full-time employment or graduating from university, and are twice as likely to have a trade or certificate."



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under-represented among licence holders and can face significant challenges to gaining a licence. This is largely a result of the licencing system being unresponsive to the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It can be difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access supervised driving instruction because of a lack of unrestricted driver licence holders and registered cars in some communities. Other prohibiting factors include the cost of lessons, a lack of access to customer service centres, poor literacy, and difficulty accessing identification documents.

For Paula, the costs associated with graduated licencing – designed to reduce road trauma and deaths by expanding learner and provisional licence requirements – presented major hurdles. Some form of graduated licencing is in place in all Australian jurisdictions. Under the NSW graduated licencing program, new drivers must pass multiple tests and accumulate up to 120 hours of supervised driving practice during the learner phase, which can cost several thousand dollars in petrol and training fees.

“I couldn’t afford to get my [learner] licence and to go for my Ps as well,” Paula says.

## UNLICENCED DRIVING

Unlicensed driving is a significant contributor to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the prison system. Often it starts with a person’s licence being suspended or cancelled for not paying a fine, before snowballing into a conviction for driving while disqualified, which can result in a prison term. In NSW, for example, unlicensed driving accounts for one in 20 custodial sentences imposed on Aboriginal people and is the sixth most common reason for imprisonment, according to data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in 2015.

The Law Council of Australia has recommended that sentences of imprisonment for relatively minor offences, including driver offences, should be abolished. These laws disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and can result in punishment that is disproportionate to the offence, the council wrote in a 2017 submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Lund says driving training programs can play an important part in reducing incarceration for driving offences, while also making our roads a safer place for everyone.

“The NRMA believes there is a significant opportunity to reduce the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through driver training programs,” he says.

“Ensuring people are equipped for the driving task is also key to delivering on the NRMA’s commitment to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.”

## DRIVER TRAINING

The NRMA Learner Driver Mentor Program assists learner drivers to access registered vehicles and volunteer driving supervisors, accrue driving hours, and gain the experience and knowledge needed to get a P1 licence. More than 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have graduated from the program so far, and 92 per cent of these graduates have transitioned into employment. The NRMA is currently partnering with the Australian Red Cross to provide licensing support to another 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Paula says gaining her licence through the program has been “life-changing”. “I was happy and I was crying,” she says of the moment she found out she passed her test.

“I yelled out... ‘Yes, I passed!’ And [I remember] the lady beside me going, ‘shhh’, and I said: “Don’t shhhh me. Praise the lord, I got my licence!”,” she says.

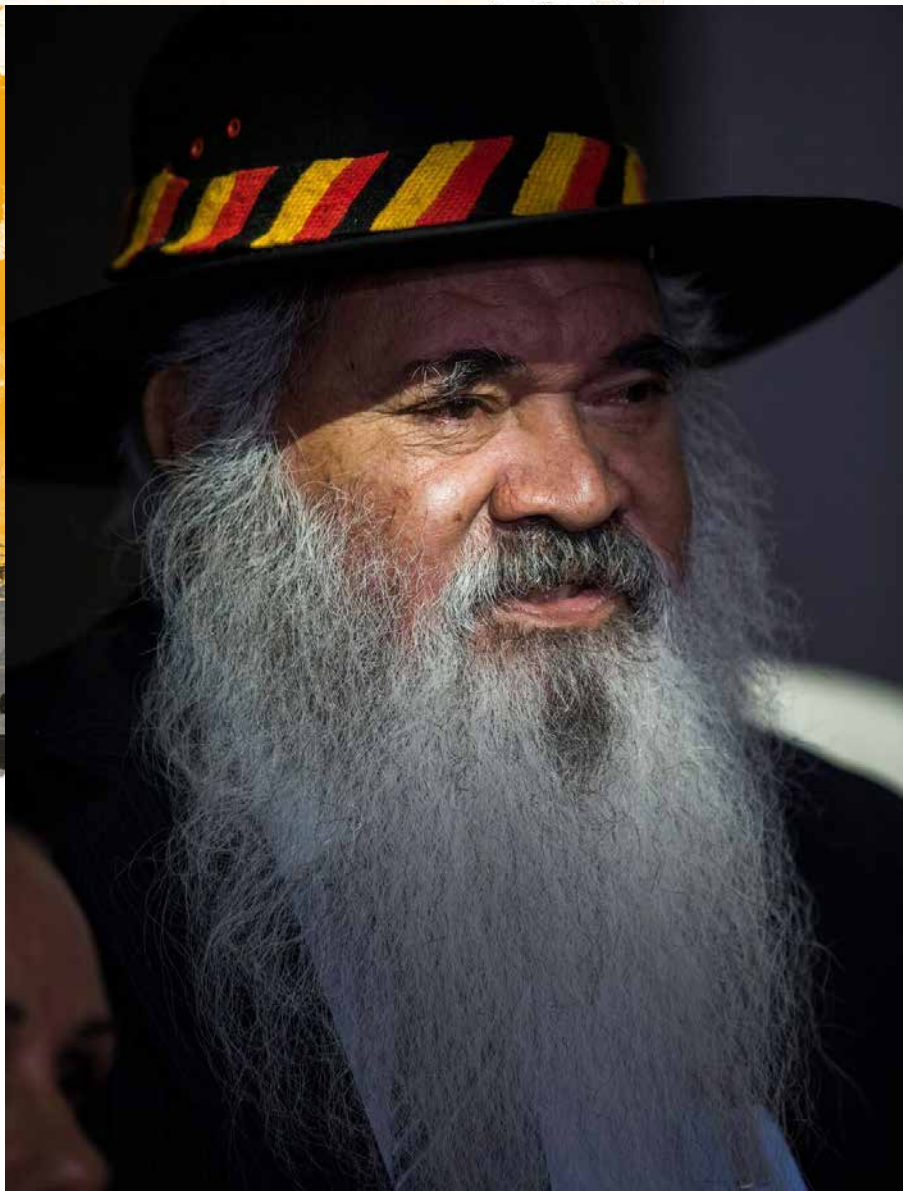
Paula says getting her licence opened up many new opportunities. Most importantly, it allowed her to travel to Orange more frequently to see her family.

“Before I had my licence, I would probably see my family once or twice a year,” she says.

“Nothing is better than being face-to-face with your family, and that’s a big thing for me.”



**BEHIND THE WHEEL:** Paula says learning to drive has changed her life.



## IN CONVERSATION: PAT DODSON

**Professor Pat Dodson is often described as the 'father of reconciliation'. He has dedicated his life's work to improving relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.**

A Yawuru man from Broome in Western Australia, Professor Dodson became Australia's first ordained Aboriginal Catholic priest in 1975.

He was instrumental in the inception – and was the founding chairperson – of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the first statutory body set up to promote a process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider Australian community. He also served as a Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and Co-Chair of the Expert Panel for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. He is a winner of the Sydney International Peace Prize.

In 2016, he was appointed as an Australian Labor Party Senator for Western Australia.

He was recently nominated as the co-chair of a joint select committee on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which will deliver an interim report by 30 July and a final report on 29 November 2018.

*You were born to an Aboriginal mother and non-Indigenous father in Broome in 1948. How did your experience of growing up in these circumstances inform your views and motivations?*

Firstly, I was born prior to the 1967 referendum and so the question of the views that people had about Aboriginal people were very draconian overall in the society. They were very much still the 'dying race concept' and if they weren't the dying race then somehow Aboriginal peoples were seen as inferior. Not only inferior intellectually but inferior in terms of skill development, in terms of acquisition of the complexities of a Western society and relegated to some position lower to the worst white fella in society.



*You've spent much of your adult life advocating for reconciliation. What do you consider to be the single most pivotal stride toward reconciliation in that time? Why?*

I think the setting up of the Council for Reconciliation was an acknowledgement that unless the Australian public had some way of interfacing and engaging with Aboriginal peoples beyond what they read in the newspaper ... then there would be very little progress ... So [the Council] was trying to build bridges around that; trying to build understanding of the human matters that were in common between people and not just the things that divided us – and that gradually led to the more complicated discussions around terra nullius, conquest, land rights, compensation and those issues.

*What do you think is the most crucial advancement toward reconciliation that is yet to be accomplished?*

The most crucial matter that needs to be resolved these days is how to recognise First Peoples in the Constitution and how to give that recognition some practical expression either through national legislation or some other means.

*Since becoming a senator in 2016, have you found it more possible to affect change from inside the political system (as opposed to lobbying from the outside)?*

Not really. Being a senator of a party, that doesn't inhibit you, but it does mean that you're now part of a political party that has a bigger and broader agenda beyond just First Nations affairs. What we've been able to do is set up a First Nations Caucus Committee, which has the capacity to influence the Labor Party's policies and strategies and goals when it comes to our responses to government legislation and government approaches to First Nations people; and also to promote positive policies to our party around the bigger issues like treaty-making, agreement-making, truth and reconciliation issues that come out of Uluru and about possible national entities and constitutional change.

*What is one thing you wish more Australians knew or understood about the road to reconciliation?*

I think the one thing I'd like is for people to overcome the fear: the fear of each other, the fear of difference and the fear of change ... It would be a great thing if we changed our mindsets about each other... and if we did try to find common ground with people rather than simply being defensive or overly sensitive to criticism at times, but also only offering criticism and condemnation isn't very helpful either. So finding ways to work together around developing the best interest for the development of human beings and the creation of a decent civil society.

*What advice would you give to the next generation of Indigenous leaders?*

Don't lose sight of why reconciliation is a critical factor. Don't just see it as a task – it's got to become a mission of people's lives, and people have got to work for it across many fronts: at the very practical levels, at the institutional levels, at the club levels, work levels, but also at the political level. In the meantime, try and enjoy life because if you don't enjoy life then you're not going to be much good to anyone else. You've got to enjoy life but be constructive, disciplined and focused as you try to get things done – don't despair about not achieving them.

*What is the best way for non-Indigenous Australians to support the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?*

You've got to go out and make those connections with Indigenous people, understand that they're human beings and that their aspirations for a good life are not that different to anyone else's. But understand that they also have these historic grievances against the Crown because of the way they have been treated and their ancestors have been treated. Let's resolve those and then look forward as to how we re-express our relationship.

*Where do you think reconciliation will be in 20 years? How much further will we have come?*

In 20 years' time, I think we will have gone a lot further than where we are. I think sometimes you think that everything is dark and dismal and the right will get hold of this and take us into some intolerant type of society. I think the better side of human beings will always rise to the fore and stand up against fascism and dictatorships and intolerance and injustices. I think people will become more aware of why the historical legacies need to be resolved in order for contemporary outcomes to be improved.



**CELEBRATING CULTURE:** Reconciliation Australia co-chair Professor Tom Calma, Arnold Bloch Leibler partner Peter Seidel, Professor Pat Dodson and Indigenous leader Noel Pearson at the 2015 Garma Festival in Gulkala, near Nhulunbuy in north-east Arnhem Land.



# STYLE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designed and crafted fashion, homewares and more

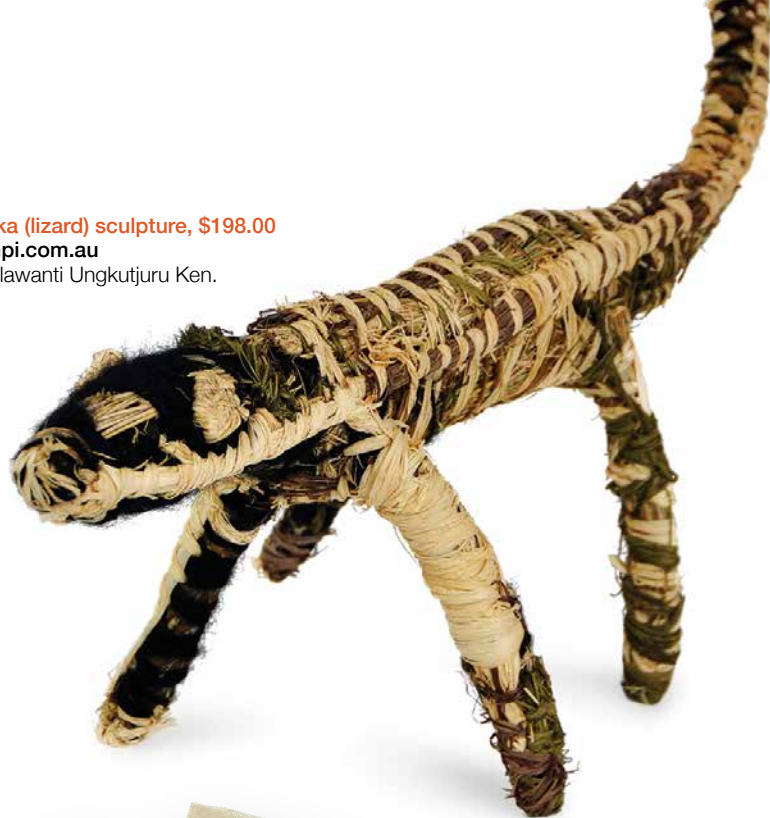


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If you would like your products to feature in the next issue of *Reconciliation News*, please contact us at [enquiries@reconciliation.org.au](mailto:enquiries@reconciliation.org.au)

# 8 PLACES TO LEARN ABOUT COUNTRY, CULTURE AND HISTORY WITHIN REACH OF A CAPITAL CITY

Some of the most famous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sacred sites – like Uluru – are a long way from where most Australians live. But there are plenty of opportunities to learn about country, history and culture a bit closer to home. *Reconciliation News* has compiled a list of sites – one from each state and territory – that are within reach of Australian capital cities. There are many more you can find by doing your own research. When visiting any site, make sure you:

- check whether you need permission from the Traditional Custodians;
- look for signage and follow any instructions;
- be respectful of the laws and customs of Traditional Custodians; and
- follow marked routes, do not remove objects and be careful not to cause damage.

Visiting museums, art galleries, national parks, cultural centres, public monuments and other sites is a great way to expand your knowledge – and have fun at the same time. So grab some friends or family members and go explore.

## Nanguluwurr Gallery

**Traditional Custodians:** Bininj/Mungguy

**Location:** Kakadu National Park, near Jabiru, 300 kilometres south-east of Darwin

**Info:** [parksaustralia.gov.au](http://parksaustralia.gov.au)

The Nanguluwurr Gallery is at the end of short walk on the northern side of Burrungkuy (Nourlangie), a region known for its World Heritage rock art. For thousands of years it was a major camping site for Aboriginal people, as it lies on the main walking route from the escarpment country to the South Alligator floodplain. The small site offers depictions of ancestral spirits and animals, as well as a two-masted sailing ship that represents early contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans.

## Yagan Memorial Park

**Traditional Custodians:** Whadjuk Noongar

**Location:** Lot 39 West Swan Road, Belhus, 30 kilometres north-east of Perth

**Info:** [swan.gov.au](http://swan.gov.au)

The park commemorates the life, death and spirit of the great Ngoongar leader and warrior, Yagan (c. 1795–11 July 1833). Yagan was a warrior and resistance fighter during the earlier years of the Swan River Colony. After Yagan was killed, his 'kaat' (head) was taken to England.

## Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park

**Traditional Custodians:** Nganguraku

**Location:** Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park, near Nildottie, 170 kilometres north of Adelaide

**Info:** [environment.sa.gov.au](http://environment.sa.gov.au)

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park is a dreaming place rich in cultural and archaeological significance. The park is situated along the banks of the Murray River and features a magnificent cliff face that preserves significant Aboriginal engravings, petroglyphs and artefacts. You'll also see ancient campsites and scarred river red gums, which reveal the ancient practice of canoe-making.





## Jelluralg Aboriginal Culture Centre

**Traditional Custodians:** Yugambah

**Location:** 1711 Gold Coast Highway, Burleigh Heads, 90 kilometres south-east of Brisbane

**Info:** [jelluralg.com.au](http://jelluralg.com.au)

The centre is home to an array of culturally significant artefacts and sites, including an ancient midden. Visitors can hear dreamtime stories associated with Burleigh Mountain (Jelluralg) and meet a traditional owner.

## Bulgandry Art Site Aboriginal Place

**Traditional Custodians:** Guringai

**Location:** Brisbane National Water Park, near Kariong, Central Coast, 70 kilometres north of Sydney

**Info:** [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)

The art site, located in Brisbane Water National Park, is home to a range of well-preserved engravings of the Guringai people. The name Bulgandry belongs to the large engraving of a man depicted with a headdress, who is thought to represent an ancestral hero. Other engravings include depictions of animals – including kangaroos, fish, dolphins and birds – as well as hunting activities and a bark canoe.

## Bunjil Shelter

**Traditional Custodians:** Djab Wurrung (Tjapwurrung)

**Location:** Black Range Scenic Reserve, Black Range State Park, near Stawell, 230 kilometres north-west of Melbourne

**Info:** [parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au)

Bunjil Shelter is widely regarded as one of the most significant cultural sites in south eastern Australia because it features the only known rock art painting of Bunjil, the creator and ancestral being. Bunjil appears in many of the creation stories of the Aboriginal people of south eastern Australia and is known by different names across this area.

## The First Tasmanians: Our Story

**Traditional Custodians:** Panninher and Leterrermairrener

**Location:** Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston, 200 kilometres north of Hobart

**Info:** [qvmag.tas.gov.au](http://qvmag.tas.gov.au)

This permanent exhibition presents and explores the history and culture of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It features rarely seen original objects and examines climate change, astronomy and stories of creation, craft, technology and architecture. Visitors can hear 40,000-year-old creation stories and view rarely seen objects such as basketry by Turganini, who lived through the mass killing of Tasmanian Aboriginals.

## Yankee Hat

**Traditional Custodians:** Ngunnawal

**Location:** Namadgi National Park, 70 kilometres south of Canberra

**Info:** [environment.act.gov.au](http://environment.act.gov.au)

Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve are home to the only currently known Aboriginal art sites in the ACT. Carbon dating of deposits from the Yankee Hat rock shelter suggest it was first used by Aboriginal people more than 800 years ago. Some of the Yankee Hat figures represent animals and other have an abstract human-like form.



27 May - 3 June

# National Reconciliation Week 2018



This year during National Reconciliation Week, Reconciliation Australia invites all Australians to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, to share that knowledge and to help us grow as a nation.

Get involved by:

- attending an NRW event
- exploring local cultural sites
- going to a gallery or exhibition
- checking out the Reconciliation Film Club
- learning more about the Traditional Custodians of your area

Learn more at [reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au)  
#NRW2018

