

STATE OF RECONCILIATION **DISCUSSION GUIDE**



CONTENTS

How to Engage with this Guide

1. RACE RELATIONS

Let's Talk: Race Relations

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension
Discussion Questions and Activities
Quick Stats

Let's Walk: Race Relations

Case study: The Freedom Ride
Case study: Joint Statement on Racism directed at Adam Goodes
Ideas for Action
References

2. EQUALITY & EQUITY

Let's Talk: Equality and Equity

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension
Discussion Questions and Activities
Quick Stats

Let's Walk: Equality and Equity

Case study: The Wave Hill Walk-Off
Case study: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Soldiers
Ideas for Action
References

3. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

Let's Talk: Institutional Integrity

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension
Quick Stats

Let's walk: Institutional Integrity

Case study: Glenelg Aboriginal Partnership Agreement, 2011-2020
Case study: Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group
Ideas for Action
References

3 4. UNITY 29

Let's Talk: Unity

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension 30
Quick Stats 31

Let's Walk: Unity

Case study: Yabun Festival, Share the Spirit Festival and Survival Days 34
Case study: The Marruk Project 34
Ideas for Action 35
References 36

5. HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE 37

Let's Talk: Historical Acceptance

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension 38
Quick Stats 39

Let's walk: Historical Acceptance

Case study: Myall Creek Memorial 41
Case study: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures 41
Ideas for Action 42
References 43

The State of Reconciliation in Australia 44

About Reconciliation Australia 45

Annual Days and Weeks of National Significance to Reconciliation in Australia 46

Reconciliation Timeline 48

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THIS GUIDE

This guide has been compiled as a simplified summary of Reconciliation Australia's landmark [State of Reconciliation in Australia report \(2016\)](#). Its purpose is to enable users to expand their level of comfort, confidence and competence in understanding and acting on the report's content. The guides are designed to make the Report's findings more accessible, and to assist users to meaningfully think about, talk about, and take action towards reconciliation in their personal and professional lives.

This guide has been developed, to align with the five critical dimensions of reconciliation as identified in the *State of Reconciliation in Australia*:

1. **Race Relations**
2. **Equality and Equity**
3. **Institutional Integrity**
4. **Unity**
5. **Historical Acceptance**

The nation's progress towards reconciliation is only as strong as the least advanced dimension. Of course these five dimensions do not exist in isolation. They are interrelated, and Australia can only achieve full reconciliation if progress is made in all five areas. For example, greater historical acceptance of the wrongs done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can lead to improved race relations. They, in turn, lead to greater equality and equity. This guide will help users to develop a deeper understanding of each dimension and how they interact together.

Please note that the Australian Reconciliation Barometer is conducted every two years. While the 2016 State of Reconciliation report drew on findings from the 2014 Barometer, these Discussion Guides draw on statistics from the more recent 2016 Barometer. So, when engaging with these guides, it would be beneficial to compare and reflect on those two sets of statistics, as well as the statistics from future Barometer reports.

Each of the five dimensions will be addressed in two-part chapters. The 'Let's Talk' section encourages users to effectively learn and think about the dimension, while the 'Let's Walk' section is designed to inspire users to appropriately act on the dimension.

Let's Talk sections will include:

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension:

a breakdown of definitional and background information of the dimension, its history, and its current state.

Quick Stats: a summary of relevant statistics stemming from the biennial [Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#) survey used to inform the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report. These stats highlight progress made and the current state of the dimension.

Discussion Questions and Activities: a list of suggested questions and activities to spark critical thinking and reflection, feed into conversations, and encourage new or useful ways of learning about the dimension. Users may approach these questions and activities either individually or as a group—at home, among friends, or in the workplace.

Let's Walk sections will include:

Case Studies: historical or contemporary examples of important actions carried out to raise awareness of and/or address the dimension.

Ideas for Action: A list of suggested actions that individuals can take in their personal or professional lives to better achieve the learnings of the dimension. Included in this list are links to relevant resources that may help to support users to effectively carry out these actions.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Australia's reconciliation journey—where we are and how we got here. As you'll discover there are important steps you can take to help shape respectful race relations, achieve equality and equity, maintain institutional integrity, foster unity, and bring about historical acceptance.

Should you have questions about the information or ideas contained in this guide or how to best engage with it, please contact Reconciliation Australia:

Old Parliament House, King George Terrace, Parkes ACT
PO Box 4773, Kingston ACT 2604

T 02 6273 9200

F 02 6273 9201

E enquiries@reconciliation.org.au

1. RACE RELATIONS

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be connected with their own families, communities and cultures. We must also feel connected to the rest of society. Racism cuts that connection. At the same time, racism cuts off all Australians from the unique insights and experiences that we, the nation’s First Peoples, have to offer. Seen this way, recognising and tackling racism is about creating a healthier, happier and better nation in which all can thrive.”¹

– Pat Anderson, Chairwoman of Lowitja Institute.

LET'S TALK: RACE RELATIONS

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension

The *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report defines the race relations dimension as a state in which:

All Australians understand and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous cultures, rights and experiences, which results in stronger relationships based on trust and respect and that are free of racism.

Developing an understanding of the race relations dimension can be strengthened by a critical understanding of the concept of 'race' itself. The concept of 'race' was historically used to attempt to classify humankind according to apparently similar and distinct physical characteristics between groups of people. However, it is important to appreciate that, in actuality, 'race' is simply a socio-cultural construct with no proven biological underpinning. That is, it is an idea based on socially and culturally informed imaginings or assumptions, rather than being inherent in our genetics.

Despite the fact that 'race' is not a biological reality, the pejorative experience of *racism*—prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone based on a belief that one socially constructed 'racial' group is superior to another—continues to be a lived reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indeed, the [2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#) survey showed that 39 per cent of Australians believe Australia is a racist country. It also showed that 37 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had experienced verbal racial abuse sometime in the previous six months.

Racism and racist behaviour can manifest in a number of ways, including from unconscious bias or prejudice, offensive online comments, rude racially motivated jokes among friends, and even physical violence. There are three main forms of racism:

- Direct (overt) racial discrimination, which is usually deliberate and often obvious, and refers to the unfair and unequal treatment of a person or group based on 'racial' grounds.²
- Indirect (covert) racial discrimination, which is usually subtle and difficult to recognise, and refers to a rule or requirement that seems to be equitable, but in fact disadvantages people from particular groups.³
- Institutional (systemic) racism, which describes the forms of racism that are embedded into political and social institutions. This form of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant cultural group and often disadvantages and marginalises other cultural and minority groups in terms of their access to, and participation in, aspects of socio-political life.⁴

Racism, in its various forms, can have severe physical and socio-emotional impacts on those who are targeted, as well as on their wider community. Racism has been linked to depression, anxiety, illicit substance use, psychological distress and poor health status.⁵ It represents a barrier to equitable social, economic and political participation, which can entrench disadvantage even across generations.

At the heart of reconciliation is the relationship between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The imperatives to developing strong relationships are trust and respect, and free of racism. While the 2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer results revealed that there are still high levels of racism and low levels of trust, there are also positive signs of progress.

Almost all Australians believe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is important, and that cultural diversity makes us stronger. However, personal interactions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians are generally limited, so there is scope to increase our exposure to each other and improve understanding and acceptance. While it may not be possible to create direct person-to-person interaction for all Australians, there are other ways to learn more about each other. Schools, workplaces and the media all play a critical role, and the fight to end racism across our society takes place in those spheres every day.

Quick Stats

- Almost all Australians (89%) believe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is important.
- Many Australians (66%) agree that cultural diversity makes us stronger, but some of us (39%) still believe Australia is a racist country.
- The level of contact and interaction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is low. Only 32% of the general community socialise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians is low. Only 24% of the general population believe trust towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is high.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience high levels of racial prejudice and discrimination. Thirty-seven per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had experienced verbal racial abuse in the six months before the 2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer.

Source: Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016

Discussion Questions and Activities

- Can you think of ways in which the race relations dimension can influence, and be influenced by, the four other dimensions of reconciliation?
- Compare the results of the [2012](#), [2014](#), and [2016](#) Australian Reconciliation Barometer survey reports, which are based on a biennial national research study that measures the progress of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. Consider the comparisons that relate most directly to the race relations dimension, such as:
 - The percentage of people who agree that the **relationship** between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians is important.
 - The percentage of people who agree that **trust** between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians is high.
 - The percentage of people who agree that **prejudice** is high.
 - The percentage of people who agree that they have a high level of **knowledge** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
 - The percentage of people who believe that **it is important to learn more** about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
 - The percentage of people who agree that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold a **special or unique place as the First Australians**.

When comparing these results, ask yourself: How would you describe the trend in progress made from year to year? Is the trend steady, increasing or regressing, and why do you think this may be? What trend in progress would you hope or expect to see in subsequent Australian Reconciliation Barometer survey reports, and what factors do you think will influence those results? What do these results tell us about the state of race relations in Australia over time, at present, and looking into the future?

LET'S TALK: RACE RELATIONS

- Reflect on your own relationships with friends and family by asking yourself: What are the essential ingredients of a strong, positive, and sustainable relationship? What kind of values and understandings underpin good relationships? What makes you feel respected, and what happens when you feel disrespected? What do you do to build trust in your personal relationships?

Now put your responses to these questions into the context of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report's race relations dimension: (how) have your personal responses helped you to better understand and value the importance of, and elements necessary for, shaping trusting, respectful and racism-free relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community?

- Read Reconciliation Australia's [Let's Bust Some Myths Factsheet](#). Did you realise that you subscribed to any of the myths discussed prior to reading this Factsheet? What are some of your own cultural assumptions that may have shaped these myths? How can learning more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions help to build recognition and pride in Australia's First Peoples? Does debunking negative myths, stereotypes and stigmas reduce the likelihood of racism and poor race relations?
- Take a look at the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48 of this guide and select three historic events that you believe best represent progress made towards advancing stronger race relations in Australia. Take the time to carry out further independent research about these events. Examples might include the 1965 [Freedom Ride](#), or the passing of [the Racial Discrimination Act \(1975\)](#) by the Australian Parliament ten years later. What do you believe the significance of these events has been in terms of positively driving the race relations dimension forward? Thinking about the recommendations from the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, as well as your personal experiences, what more do you think needs to happen for the future of race relations in Australia?

- The level of contact and interaction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is low, with only 32 per cent of the general community having socialised with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2015. View the 2014 and 2016 [First Contact](#) documentary series on SBS TV. In immersing six non-Indigenous people into settings that bring them face to face with Aboriginal Australia for the first time, these programs shine a light on the deep divide between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the rest of the nation.

For secondary teachers, or anyone interested in furthering personal learning, consider consulting the accompanying [First Contact Classroom Resources](#) produced in partnership with Reconciliation Australia. What are some of the learnings about the relationships between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians that emerge from the experiences of First Contact's six participants? What are some of the learnings that you have developed as a viewer? Beyond 'first contact,' what value do you place on more ongoing contact, collegiality, and companionship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community?

- What does it mean to recognise 'race' as a socio-cultural construct rather than a biological reality? Does this make the experience of racism any less real? Similarly, view beyondblue's [Invisible Discriminator](#) video and ask yourself whether 'unseen' racism makes the experiences and effects of racism any less real. [Educate yourself about racism](#) and its negative effects on mental health and socio-emotional wellbeing in particular. What are some of these effects and why is it important to prevent them through promoting positive race relations?



LET'S TALK:
RACE RELATIONS

- The table below lists quotes from case studies that each reflect one of the three different forms of racism—direct, indirect and institutional. [Read more](#) about these three different forms of racism. How are they similar, and what are some of their key differences? Try writing your own list of real or imagined examples of each of the three forms in the relevant column:

Form of Racism	Case Study Quote	More Examples
Direct (Overt) Racial Discrimination	<p><i>"I was waiting in the bakery and there were these non-Indigenous white people in front of me, and that's ok, they were before me. Suddenly some more white people come in and I'm still waiting, waiting, waiting to be served... They were serving all the people who came in after me, and I said 'Yooohoo! Am I invisible in here?'... It would have been 20 minutes or longer before I got served because nobody else was coming into that shop, and I'm 100% sure it's because I'm Aboriginal and they would just serve anybody over me..."</i>⁶</p> <p>The experience of an Aboriginal man in Yorke Peninsula in 2009.</p>	<i>List your examples here</i>
Indirect (Covert) Racial Discrimination	<p><i>"I asked her 'why aren't you a GBM?' (Government Business Manager) and she said, 'I asked the current GBM how I apply to become a GBM and he said to me 'You'll never be employed, because you come from this community and they don't want community members applying for the position on the basis that you could be part of one faction of the community and not look after all parts of the community'. I mean... that's discrimination! It's the very people who should be in the job that are being told 'You need not apply'..."</i>⁷</p> <p>The experience of an educated Aboriginal woman on a remote community, who sought employment as a Government Business Manager ('GBM').</p>	<i>List your examples here</i>
Institutional (Systemic) Racism	<p><i>"I had my second child at another hospital... he was above birth weight, a healthy baby... I've got no issues whatsoever... I know how to look after my child. I'm ready to go home – as I'm leaving with my bag she (the nurse) said, 'What nationality are you?' I said, 'I'm Aboriginal'... She goes 'Oh we're allowed to keep you in here.' I said, 'For what reason?' She goes, 'Because you're at risk.' How am I at risk?... Without knowing my race, everything's fine, and all of a sudden..."</i>⁸</p>	<i>List your examples here</i>

LET'S TALK: RACE RELATIONS

- Have you ever witnessed or experienced racism at play in your personal or professional life? How did it make you feel and/or how did it affect you? How do you think it made others feel, and/or how do you think it affected others?
- In 2015, proud Wiradjuri man and prominent journalist Stan Grant made an incredible [speech on Racism and the Australian Dream](#) as part of the IQ2 debate series held by The Ethics Centre. Listen to the speech—do you agree that the 'Australian Dream' is rooted in racism? How can racism prevent our country and people from reaching their full potential?
- Why is it important to understand and value the experiences and rights that we all share as people (consider the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)), as well as the unique experiences and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (consider the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#))? How does understanding and valuing each of these sets of rights help to support strong race relations, including an attention to both equality and equity within these relationships?
- Why is it important to celebrate not only the similarities but also the differences between and amongst non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups?
- Can you identify any ways in which your work or social places could be more inter-culturally accommodating? You might, for example, like to consider elements of the physical environment, language use, or organisational policies.
- How would you describe your personal relationship with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? How would you describe your workplace's relationship with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? What could you do to make these relationships stronger?

LET'S WALK: RACE RELATIONS

CASE STUDIES

The Freedom Ride

The imperative to develop improved race relations between non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was brought to national attention over 50 years ago, when a group of Sydney University students embarked on a remarkable journey to campaign for the rights of Australia's First Peoples. Led by the late [Charles Perkins](#) in 1965, the group travelled around NSW by bus to draw attention to racial discrimination in an endeavour which has become known as The Freedom Ride. As they made their way through parts of western and coastal New South Wales, such as Walgett, Kempsey, Bowraville and Moree, the students discovered just how prevalent racism was in these country towns:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members were denied equal access to the Walgett Returned Services Leagues Club, to the public baths at Kempsey and Moree, and to the Bowraville Theatre, to mention just a few examples. Protesting against this discrimination, the students and their milestone Freedom Ride gained extensive media coverage—even the New York Times reported on this significant movement. The bold and brave journey of the Freedom Riders helped to shatter the false notion that racism did not exist in Australia, and to champion a future of more positive attitudes and actions around race relations in our nation.

For more information, see Reconciliation Australia's [Freedom Ride Factsheet](#). You may also be interested in taking a firsthand look at the experiences of the Freedom Riders by accessing a digitised copy of [Ann Curthoy's diary](#) through AIATSIS' online collections, or by listening to Charles Perkins speaking about his motivations for the Freedom Ride [here](#). Rachel Perkin's 1993 Film, [Blood Brothers- Freedom Ride](#), further documents the incredible journey and work of her father and the 1965 Freedom Ride.

Joint Statement on Racism directed at Adam Goodes

During a victorious AFL Indigenous Round match against Carlton Blues, Sydney Swans player and former Australian of the Year, [Adam Goodes](#), proudly celebrated both his culture and an exciting goal scoring moment with an Aboriginal-inspired war dance. This proud display of culture was met with what was largely racially motivated booing from a segment of the crowd. In subsequent matches, for months afterwards, some spectators continued to boo Goodes whenever he touched the ball. The hostile booing was widely reported in the media—Sydney Morning Herald article, [In a dark place: Adam Goodes, the nation and the race question](#), had journalist Rick Feneley commenting: 'The furore around the booing of Sydney Swans star Adam Goodes [has] reached a crescendo... and has divided Australians. It is a key moment for race relations in this country.'

Fortunately, as much as being a dividing issue, the booing events also resulted in strong symbolic and practical acts towards uniting non-Indigenous and

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander AFL players, spectators, organisations and everyday Australians. In so doing it helped promote more positive race relations for our nation. More than 150 organisations joined together to call for renewed efforts to stamp out racism in sport and everyday life, each supporting an important [Joint Statement on Racism Directed at Adam Goodes](#). The Statement recognised that 'to dismiss claims of racism as just banter is to use football as a shield for prejudice... To suggest that this kind of behaviour does not have an effect is to deny the evidence about the known health impacts of racism... Racism has no place in Australian sport or our society at large.' As a starting point, it urged codes and clubs to commit to encouraging their members and supporters to join the [Racism. It Stops with Me](#) campaign, according to a logic that, when it comes to race relations, 'Australia must and can be better than this.' The Statement is a positive example of racism being addressed at the institutional level, with potential to inspire more trusting and respectful race relations on an individual, everyday basis.

Ideas for Action

- A lack of trust and respect in relationships is often based on a lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding. Only 33 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians know a lot about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, but 84 per cent agree it's important to know more. Visit Reconciliation Australia's [Share Our Pride](#) resource, which is designed to take you on a valuable awareness-raising journey about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.
- Consider complementing your learning by signing up to an appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency workshop, language course or immersion experience. Remember to use reputable resources and trainers that are governed by a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community perspective.
- Engage with the Australian Human Rights Commission's [Racism. It Stops with Me](#) campaign, which invites all Australians to reflect on what they can do to counter racism wherever it happens.
- [Know your rights](#), and the rights of all other Australians, when it comes to freedom from racial discrimination and vilification. With rights also come responsibilities—familiarise yourself with Australia's [Racial Discrimination Act \(1975\)](#), and with responsible ways to act or speak out against racism, and/or lodge [complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission](#), when you witness or experience it.
- Involve yourself in beyondblue's [Invisible Discriminator](#) campaign to educate yourself about racism, respond to racism, and create change at your work or school. This campaign emerged out of beyondblue's earlier [Stop. Think. Respect](#) campaign, which urged everyone in Australia to stop discrimination, think about how their comments or actions could cause real distress and harm, and respect people's differences.
- Get involved in the [RECOGNISE](#) movement to support the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution, and ensure that there is no place for racial discrimination in it.
- Engage critically with mainstream media, and be aware of the potential for subtle biases and prejudices embedded within media sources. Consider regularly consulting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander print, TV or radio media sources (such as the [Koori Mail](#), [New Matilda](#), [National Indigenous Times](#), [NITV](#) and the [National Indigenous Radio Service](#)) to meaningfully enhance your awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Show your pride in, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities by actively taking part in [NAIDOC](#) Week celebrations. Acknowledge positive progress made towards strengthening the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community by joining in [National Reconciliation Week](#) events each year. Other annual days and weeks of national significance are listed on [PAGE X](#) of this guide.
- Encourage your workplace to develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), which will provide a framework for your staff and stakeholders' vision for reconciliation to be realised, and will help to reduce the risk of institutional racism.
- Join the [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) community to support your school or early learning service to develop environments that foster a high level of knowledge and shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, histories, cultures and contributions.
- Find out how to help to promote anti-racism in Australian schools by consulting the NSW Department of Education's [Racism. No Way](#) information and resources. A parallel [Prejudice. No Way](#) initiative has also been designed to address younger year levels.
- Be aware of, and continue to question, your own assumptions, and be mindful of ensuring that your own language and actions do not help perpetuate racism either directly or indirectly. Similarly, encourage your family and friends to be more aware of the harmful impacts of racism, and report racist material that you come across online or around your community. Consider using the [Anti-Hate Spray](#) to report hate online, and to read positive stories of anti-hate heroes.
- Acknowledge Country. Connection to Country is crucial to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and is an important way in which non-Indigenous Australians can demonstrate their recognition of, and respect for, our First Peoples. For millennia, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people visited the Country of a linguistic-cultural group other than one's own, there would be rituals of welcoming to Country. Today, these rituals have a continuing legacy in [Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country](#) practices.

LET'S WALK: RACE RELATIONS

- Take the time to establish positive and productive dialogues with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and institutions in your local area such as Elders Councils, Land Councils, Language and Culture Centres, Education Consultative Groups, Health Services and community organisations. Remember to ensure that relationships come before business and to make good relations, rather than outcomes, as your first priority. Positive outcomes will flow from positive relations. If a working relationship is not built on mutual trust and respect, then it is difficult to achieve strong and sustainable outcomes. Envisage your relationship to be transformational rather than transactional, and remember that one of the keys to building a good working relationship is to actively listen more than you speak and, where appropriate, ask questions above giving opinions.
- Treat everyone as an individual. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, like other cultural groups, may share things in common, but can also have differences between them. Be aware of possible cultural differences, but do not assume them.
- Download All Together Now's [Everyday Racism App](#) and consider taking part in the 7-day challenge. The app is designed to help to improve user's understanding of racism, build their empathy for those who experience racism, and empower them to learn how to effectively speak up when they witness racism.
- Be inspired by the tips shared by beyondblue's 'Invisible Discriminator' actors about how to stay strong when responding to racism. See [Staying strong: Responding to racism](#).

References

1. Pat Anderson, 'Racism a driver of Aboriginal ill health', NACCHO, July 2013, available at <https://nacchocommunique.com/2014/02/28/naccho-aboriginal-health-and-racism-what-are-the-impacts-of-racism-on-aboriginal-health/>.
2. NSW Government Department of Education, 'About Racism', available at: <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding-racism/>
3. NSW Government Department of Education, 'About Racism', available at: <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding-racism/>
4. NSW Government Department of Education, 'About Racism', available at: <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding-racism/>
5. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010, available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/lookup/4704.0Chapter450Oct+2010>
6. Flinders University, 'Racism in Australia is Alive and Kicking,' available at [http://www.flinders.edu.au/medicine/fms/sites/social_health_sciences/documents/Racism_in_Australia_is_Alive_and_Kicking_POSTER_-_print_vers\[1\]-1.pdf](http://www.flinders.edu.au/medicine/fms/sites/social_health_sciences/documents/Racism_in_Australia_is_Alive_and_Kicking_POSTER_-_print_vers[1]-1.pdf)
7. Fiona Allison, Melanie Schwartz and Chris Cunneen, 'That's discrimination! Indigenous peoples' experiences of discrimination in the Northern Territory,' for Indigenous Legal Needs Project, available at https://www.jcu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/121245/finalILBversion.pdf
8. Respondent to Member Health Survey by National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, presented by Scott Avery at AIATSIS National Indigenous Studies Conference, March 2014, available at <http://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/>
9. Reconciliation Australia, '2016 Australian Reconciliation Barometer', available at https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RA_ARB-2016_Overview-brochure_web.pdf
10. Reconciliation Australia, '2014 Australian Reconciliation Barometer', available at https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RR7200-Barometer-Brochure_WEB.pdf

2. EQUALITY & EQUITY

“For Indigenous peoples to participate in Australian society as equals requires that we be able to live our lives free from assumptions by others about what is best for us. It requires recognition of our values, culture and traditions so that they can co-exist with those of mainstream society. It requires respecting our difference and celebrating it within the diversity of the nation.”¹

– Dr William Jonas, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

LET'S TALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension

The State of Reconciliation in Australia report defines the equality and equity dimension as a state in which:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians participate equally and equitably in all areas of life and the distinctive individual and collective rights and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are universally recognised and respected.

Developing an understanding of this dimension can be strengthened by examining the distinct contexts, meanings and measures of the concept of 'equality' compared to 'equity,' all the while recognising the ways in which the two are mutually reinforcing.

Within *The State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, equality is defined as:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being in control of their life choices—enabling them to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic opportunities enjoyed by the wider Australian community.

Unfortunately, as equality stands today, it is clear that Australia is falling far short of providing equal life opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Large and unacceptable gaps continue to exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians across all social, health, educational and economic indicators. Statistics show that, due largely to the intergenerational impacts of Australia's unjust colonial history, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to consider their living conditions as worse than other people's. They are also more likely to experience higher rates of preventable illnesses and be subject to lower life expectancy, and they are more likely to face barriers to employment and education.

In response to the [2005 Social Justice Report](#), targeted government investment programs, through the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) [Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage](#) framework, are working to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (in)equality by aiming to:

- close the gap in life expectancy within a generation (by 2031;
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018;
- ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities by 2013;
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children by 2018;
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020;
- halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and other Australians by 2018; and
- close the gap in school attendance by the end of 2018.

These kinds of significant, long-term and targeted efforts, particularly when designed and delivered in strong partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are necessary to ensure that *all* Australians have full, equal and culturally appropriate access to life opportunities. Accordingly, and although there is still a long way to go, health, education and economic outcomes for Australia's First Peoples have begun to improve over recent years, providing optimism for achieving equality.

LET'S TALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Enabling equal opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to fully participate in the freedoms of not only Australia's national community but also of the *international* community, is further governed by the United Nations' [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). This Declaration works to recognise the 'inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family' as a foundation for promoting freedom, justice and peace in the world.

At the same time, it is imperative to acknowledge and uphold the *distinct* rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so as to promote not just equality, but also equity. *The State of Reconciliation in Australia* report defines equity as:

The unique rights—both collective and individual—that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians hold by virtue of being Indigenous, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ability to freely exercise these rights.

These unique rights are meaningfully governed by the United Nations' specific [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), which affirms that Indigenous peoples are no less equal to all other peoples, and yet recognises and respects the rights of all peoples to be different and to consider themselves different.

Like equality and equity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples do not operate in isolation or in opposition to each other. They are co-constructive frameworks which sanction the simultaneous importance of humanity and diversity. Recognising and respecting both shared and unique rights supports fair participation and partnerships, all the while allowing for [self-determination](#) within the life of the nation. In this way, a mutually reinforcing relationship is recognised between equality and equity, representing a vital dimension to achieving a holistic future of reconciliation across Australia.

LET'S TALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Quick Stats

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy less participation in, and access to, the range of life opportunities—significant disparities continue to exist in the key areas of employment, education and health.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to consider their living conditions worse than other people's, and are more likely to see barriers to employment and education. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have less enjoyment of their unique individual and collective rights as Indigenous peoples.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel less cultural security than other Australians.

Sources: Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report 2014, Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016, Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015, Social Justice and Native Title Report 2014, AIATSIS 2005.

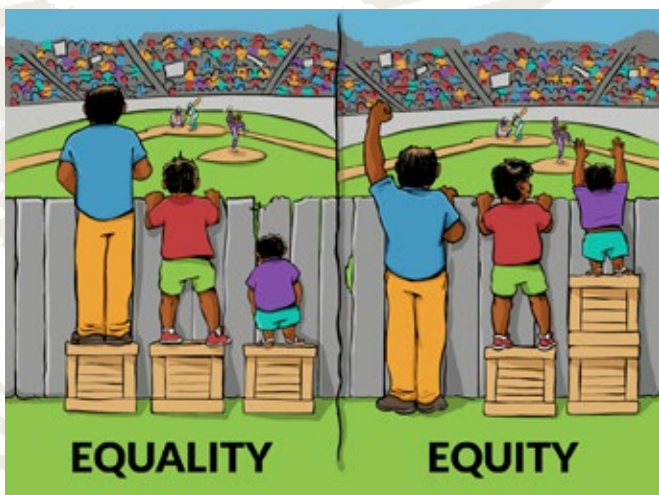


Image Source:
[Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: Angus Maguire

Discussion Questions and Activities

- Can you think about any ways in which the equality and equity dimension can influence, and be influenced by, the four other dimensions of reconciliation?
- How would you feel if you were unable to fully access, or participate in, something due to your cultural background or beliefs? Are there any instances in which you have witnessed or experienced inequalities/inequities at play in your personal or professional life? How did it make you feel and/or how did it affect you? How do you think it affected others?
- Quiz yourself and/or your peers by asking the eight questions listed in Reconciliation Australia's [Close the Gap Q & A Factsheet](#). How similar were your responses to those of your peers? How similar were your responses to the answers provided in the Factsheet?
- (Why) do you think it is important for all Australians to have a strong and shared awareness of past and present inequalities? How will this help to shape a stronger future of reconciliation for Australia?
- In 2016, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull delivered his [Closing the Gap Statement](#), beginning this speech by addressing the Parliament in Ngunnawal language. [Listen to the speech](#) and jot down some of its key messages. What is the symbolic or practical efficacy of delivering this speech in Ngunnawal language, and what needs to be done further to turn the verbal messages of the speech into positive action?
- View the [2016 Close the Gap campaign video](#). If you were the Prime Minister of Australia, what would be your number one recommendation for closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians across social, health, educational and economic spheres?
- View the image to the left as a further stimulus for discussing the following questions:
 - What are the main differences between equality and equity?
 - Does including all people equally also mean including all people equitably?
 - Could trying to include all people equally actually be *exclusive* in any ways? Can addressing equality alone ever be inequitable?
 - What are some of the ways in which equality and equity can positively work together?

LET'S TALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

- Take a look at the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48 of this guide and select three historical events that you believe best represent progress made towards advancing stronger equality and/or equity in Australia. Take time to carry out further independent research about these events. Examples might include the 1966 [Wave Hill Walk-Off](#), or COAG's 2008 commitment of \$4.6 billion towards Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage for projects in health, housing, early childhood development, economic participation and remote service delivery. What do you believe the significance of these events has been in terms of positively driving the equality and equity dimension forward? Thinking about the recommendations from the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, as well as your personal experiences, what more do you think needs to happen for the future of equality and equity in Australia?
- Why is it important to understand and value the experiences and rights that we all share as people (consider the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)), as well as the unique experiences and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (consider the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#))? How does understanding and valuing each of these sets of rights help to support both equality and equity?
- Australia was one of just four countries to have voted against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples when it was first introduced in 2007 (see [Australia's support of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)), however the Federal Government moved to formally endorse it in 2009, appreciating its role in more equitably advancing the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. What do you think some of the reasons for Australia's initial 'no' vote may have been, and what does this tell us about the state of equality and equity in Australia? Why do you think working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to negotiate a meaningful action plan on the Declaration, and to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to giving full effect to the Declaration, remains an imperative for Australia?
- Listen to the song, [Special Treatment](#), by Paul Kelly. This song makes indirect reference to some of the unjust or unequal treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's postcolonial history. Try to identify what some of these might be, and conduct some further research around the history of these injustices. Consider, for example, forced dispossession of traditional lands, stolen wages, systemic bans on traditional linguistic and cultural activities, and forced separation from families and communities. Then think about some of the special considerations or provisions given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions, or laws for Aboriginal customary activities on Parks and Wildlife managed lands/waters.

Based on your research and reflection, compare how the so-called 'special treatment' of the past is similar or different to the kinds of special considerations or provisions given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. What inequalities of the past might some of these current special considerations be addressing, and how do they help to (re)instate a stronger sense of equity? Would you consider current considerations and provisions to be related to adversities or to positive opportunities?
- In debates concerning reconciliation, self-determination is sometimes referenced by the government and individuals as being a threat to one of the other key dimensions of reconciliation: national unity. Read the Australian Human Rights Commission's [Self-determination and effective participation 'within the life of the nation'? An Australian perspective on self-determination](#) article for clarification on the unfoundedness of these fears. How can self-determination actually help to advance national unity by fostering the full, effective, equal and equitable participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society?

LET'S WALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

CASE STUDIES

The Wave Hill Walk-Off

On the 23rd August 1966, Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji stockman on the Wave Hill Cattle Station, initiated a strike in response to the poor and unequal working conditions faced by Aboriginal workers. At the time, these workers were paid less than five shillings per day, which equates to no more than six dollars nowadays. This was less than the minimum wage set for Aboriginal peoples, and was only one-fifth of a non-Indigenous worker's wage. Aboriginal workmen and women also experienced poor housing, no running water and scarce food rations. Unable to tolerate the unequal treatment of Aboriginal people on their own Country, Lingiari encouraged fellow workers and their families to 'walk-off' Wave Hill Station as part of eight years of significant strike action. While the walk-off was initially focused on working conditions and equal pay, it soon evolved into championing broader lands rights, and was the precursor to the

first land rights legislation in Australia. The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 followed ten years later, and represented the first legislation by the Australian government to legally award Aboriginal land rights. Land rights legislation and native title have since led to important agreement-making processes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to address equality and equity in relation to land, resources, health, education and research. Lingiari was named a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to Aboriginal peoples in 1976 and, in 2001, the Lingiari Foundation was formed to promote reconciliation and develop Aboriginal leadership. To commemorate Lingiari's commitment to promoting stronger equality and equity, a Northern Territory Federal electorate is named after him, and a memorial has also been dedicated to him at Reconciliation Place in Canberra.

For more information, see Reconciliation Australia's [Let's Talk: Land Rights Factsheet](#). You may also like to have a listen to the song, *From Little Things, Big Things Grow* by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody, which tells the story of the Wave Hill Walk-Off through music.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Soldiers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have fought for Australia in every war since Federation, thus even before they were officially considered citizens in 1967. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, joining the military actually gave them a sense of equality that they had never before experienced in postcolonial civilian life. The army offered training and education opportunities, provided travel and pay, and fostered a chance to form new friendships and comradeships regardless of skin colour or cultural background. Unfortunately, after returning from conflicts such as World War II, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians came home to the same inequalities and inequities that they had encountered before the war. They were often denied the honour and rights given to other returned servicemen and women, such as entry to Returned Service League clubs and soldier settlement schemes. Only one Aboriginal man ever

received land under the soldier settlement scheme whereby, according to Aboriginal leader, Mick Gooda, many First Nations soldiers "went back to their land, only to find it had been taken away from them and given to other soldiers." Leonard Waters, the first Aboriginal aviator to serve in World War II similarly echoes "After the war, I went back to being just another black fellow," facing the same disrespect and discrimination as in the pre-war period. More recent efforts to recognise and redress these inequalities and inequities, in part through a simultaneous focus on historical acceptance, therefore plays an important role in promoting reconciliation. Some positive examples include AIATSIS Library's [Indigenous Australians at War](#) collection, dedicated memorials such as the [Yininmadyemi](#) artwork in Sydney's Hyde Park, and pop culture tributes such as John Schumann's 2015 song, [On Every ANZAC Day](#).

For more information, see Reconciliation Australia's [Let's Talk: Remembering the Forgotten ANZACs Factsheet](#).

Ideas for Action

- To learn more about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' fight for equality and equitable rights since colonisation in Australia, explore the '[Our Shared History](#)' section of Reconciliation Australia's [Share our Pride](#) resource. Also visit the online version of the [National Museum of Australia's From Little Things Big Things Grow exhibition](#). These further learnings may help you appreciate how far Australia has come in strengthening the equality and equity dimension over time. At the same time they make clear just how much more needs to be done in order to truly reach reconciliation across the nation.
- You might also inspire meaningful discussions by exchanging your own stories and understandings about the history of equality and equity in Australia with friends, family and colleagues, or by engaging with the '[Have your say](#)' section of the online exhibition.
- [Get involved in Close the Gap](#). Join more than 200,000 other Australians in signing the [pledge to Close the Gap](#) in health equality between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and encourage your workplace, school, family and friends to take part in [National Close the Gap Day](#) events (in March each year). These events celebrate the successes of the Close the Gap framework, while also raising awareness of the important work that still needs to be done to achieve equality and equity in Australia.
- Keep up to date with the progress and priorities of COAG's Close the Gap framework by reading and comparing the Australian Human Rights Commission's [annual shadow reports](#) on this framework. Share your learnings from, or reflections on, these reports with your friends, family and colleagues, and discuss the small but significant ways that you might contribute to closing the gap from year to year. You may also like to involve children and students in these learnings and discussions from a young age by encouraging them to engage with relevant stimulus material such as this ABC Behind the News [Is the Gap Closing?](#) episode.
- Know your rights, and the rights of all other Australians, when it comes to equality and equity. Familiarise yourself with both the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). You might even consider lodging [complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission](#), if you witness or experience inequality or inequity at play. You may also be interested in consulting [illustrated handbooks](#) or [manuals](#) regarding these relevant rights frameworks.
- Contact your state or territory-based Equal Opportunity Commission (or equivalent) for information, news and ideas about how to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to fully and fairly access social, health, educational and economic opportunities. The WA Equal Opportunity Commission's [Aboriginal Matters](#) resources are a good starting place.
- Host a Caritas Australia [Walk as One film screening](#) in your community, school or parish and then discuss the film and its messages about addressing inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples around the world, including in Australia. After viewing the film, consider signing the [Walk as One petition](#) to tell to your local MP that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice and equality matters to you.
- Get involved in the [RECOGNISE](#) movement to support the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution, and ensure that there is no place for inequalities or inequities within it.
- Encourage your workplace to develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), which will provide a framework for your staff and stakeholders' vision for reconciliation to be realised, and for potential inequalities or inequities to be effectively addressed at the institutional level.

LET'S WALK: EQUALITY AND EQUITY

- Join the [*Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning*](#) community to support your school or early learning service to develop inclusive environments that are free from inequalities or inequities, and that generate a strong and shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.
- Show your commitment to the [*Change the Record*](#) campaign, which works to help empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It promotes equality by addressing the overrepresentation of First Australians in the justice system, and the disproportionate number of those facing violence. [Take the pledge](#) to close the gap in rates of imprisonment and violence by 2040. Consider further avenues to [get involved](#) in this campaign, e.g. raising awareness by talking to friends, family and colleagues; following or contributing to the campaign's social media activities.
- Engage with Save the Children's [*Every Last Child*](#) campaign, which seeks to reduce inequitable discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia, as well as children facing discrimination across the globe. A full copy of the *Every Last Child* report can be found [here](#).
- Research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations near you that are dedicated to promoting health equality, or equality and equity more broadly, and consider how you may be able to support these organisations. You may wish to start by taking a look at the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in your area, such as: [Australian Capital Territory](#), [Queensland](#), [Northern Territory](#), [Western Australia](#), [Victoria](#), [Tasmania](#), [New South Wales](#), [South Australia](#).

References

1. <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/guides/information-sheet-social>
2. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/social-justice-report-6>



3. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

“Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”

– Final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Parliament, December 2000.

LET'S TALK: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension

The *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report defines the institutional integrity dimension as a state in which:

Reconciliation is actively supported by the nation's political, business and community structures.

Formal political support for reconciliation by Australia's Federal Government only began in 1991, when the [Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation](#) (CAR) was established in response to the [report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#). To provide justice and equity for all, CAR encourages meaningful communication, cooperation and action between government bodies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian community.

In its final report to the Australian Parliament, CAR made six recommendations that supported its [Roadmap for Reconciliation](#) and the [Declaration Towards Reconciliation](#). They included creating a framework to overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage; negotiating an agreement or treaty; reforming the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and removing Section 25 of the Constitution, which allows states to stop people from voting based on race.

Of CAR's recommendations, the greatest progress has been made on overcoming disadvantage, particularly through work on COAG's [Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage](#) framework. Important steps towards a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been made, and we are closer than ever to recognising the First Peoples in the Constitution and removing racial discrimination from the nation's founding document. Important symbolic steps have also been made in the political sphere, such as Kevin Rudd's 2008 [National Apology to the Stolen Generations](#).

Nevertheless, while reconciliation has broad multi-partisan support on the national political scale, the support by successive governments for CAR's broader recommendations is mixed. To continue the work of CAR, Reconciliation Australia was established in late 2000 and has been funded ever since. At the same time, funding for state and territory Reconciliation Councils has fallen far short of what was envisaged.

[Indigenous Expenditure reports](#) suggest that while all governments have increased their total Indigenous spending in real terms each year since 2008-09, the latest report shows that spending on Indigenous-specific services has fallen. Many recent reviews suggest that unsatisfactory progress on Closing the Gap and advancing reconciliation more broadly is not due to the quantity of expenditure, but rather on the quality of its allocation and delivery. This criticism was the catalyst for

reforms under the 2014 [Indigenous Advancement Strategy](#) (IAS), but early indications are that these reforms were too much, too soon. Rather than resolving many of the issues they sought to address, they have instead left a trail of anxiety and uncertainty for many service providers.

While various government policies have demonstrated mixed levels of institutional integrity and progress towards reconciliation, broader support for reconciliation in the business and community sectors has increased significantly over the past ten years. Such growth is highlighted by the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) (RAP) program, which provides a framework for organisations to implement practical reconciliation actions.

The RAP program started out with eight trailblazers in 2006 and today more than 800 organisations have developed a RAP. Some federal, state and local government institutions have actively engaged in the RAP program, and the business sector has been a particularly strong supporter of this program, with many corporate heavyweights additionally participating in the Business Council of Australia's (BCA) Indigenous Network. More than 200 institutions from the not-for-profit and community sectors have a RAP and national sporting bodies and clubs also show strong and active support for reconciliation.

Building on the momentum of the workplace RAP program, schools have now become a focus for promoting reconciliation. Reconciliation Australia's [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) program was established to actively involve early learning, primary and secondary school institutions in the reconciliation process.

Despite progress in institutional integrity driven by the RAP program, the [Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#) results reveal that all sectors should still do more to improve education, employment and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Enhancing the governance of government through active consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and focusing on local and holistic approaches that are founded on evidence-based policies and sustained, adequate and appropriately allocated funding will be key. The positive social change generated through the RAP program is driving collective institutional force in Australia's reconciliation movement.



Quick Stats

- Broad multi-partisan political support for reconciliation exists but successive governments' implementation of CAR's recommendations has been mixed.
- All Australian Governments' total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expenditure has increased, but funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services has decreased.
- Business and community support for reconciliation is increasing.
- RAPs are driving social change and improving economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
- Most Australians believe that political, business and community institutions should do more to advance reconciliation.

Sources: Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016, Indigenous Expenditure Report 2014, RAP Impact data 2016, Workplace RAP Barometer 2016

Discussion Questions and Activities

- Can you think of any ways in which the institutional integrity dimension can influence, and be influenced by, the four other dimensions of reconciliation?
- How can a lack of integrity negatively impact on trust in a relationship, and on the reliability, consistency or strength of the outcomes of that relationship? You may like to think about this question at the personal level prior to considering it at the institutional level—for example, has a friend or colleague ever communicated something to you, only to change that message when communicating with other people or in other contexts? Has a friend or colleague ever made a commitment to you that, without reason, was not followed through?
- Research and reflect on the six [recommendations](#) that CAR made in its final report to the Australian Parliament. What are some of the similarities and differences between CAR's recommendations, and the recommendations of *The State of Reconciliation in Australia* report? Do you agree with these recommendations, and how do you feel about progress made towards achieving them? Do you have any other recommendations to advance reconciliation through active support at the institutional level?
- Compare the organisational structure, visions and functions of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and Reconciliation Australia. How are they similar and how are they different, and how do these similarities and differences respectively contribute to the future of reconciliation in Australia?
- Take a look at the [2016 RAP Impact Measurement report](#) and identify or discuss some of the positive outcomes of RAPs. These range from the provision of pro bono support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, to the more positive attitudes of people working in organisations with RAPs. They also indicate lower prejudice, greater pride and more frequent contact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. How can and do RAPs contribute to driving institutional integrity and reconciliation more broadly?

LET'S TALK: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

- Do you know of any workplaces and institutions in your local area that have a RAP, or that are actively supporting reconciliation more generally? Is your own workplace currently thinking about developing or extending its RAP, or is it actively supporting reconciliation through any other means?

Explore the [Who has a RAP?](#) section of Reconciliation Australia's [RAP Hub](#) and compare and contrast some of the visions and plans for reconciliation in your local area and across different organisations around Australia. What do you believe are some of the qualities of a strong and successful RAP? How can institutional integrity be reflected and realised through a RAP's design and implementation alike?

- What did you learn about reconciliation, and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions when you were at (pre)school? Are there any learnings that you feel were absent, inadequate or inappropriate? Why is it important for educational environments to demonstrate strong institutional integrity with regard to teaching and acting around reconciliation?

Compare the [RAP](#) program to the [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) program. In what ways do schools and early learning services differ from other kinds of workplaces, and how is the [Narragunnawali](#) RAP framework reflective of this?

- Take a look at the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48 of this guide and select three historic events that you believe best represent progress made towards advancing stronger institutional integrity in Australia. Examples might include the Australian Government's official recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in 1995, or its passing of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Act 2013](#) to maintain momentum towards a referendum.

Take the time to carry out further independent research about these events. What do you believe their significance is in terms of positively driving the institutional integrity dimension forward? Thinking about the recommendations from the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, and your own experiences, what more do you think needs to happen for the future of institutional integrity in Australia?

- Compare some of the key speeches that have been made to address matters of reconciliation at the political level, such as Prime Minister Paul Keating's 1992 [Redfern Speech](#), and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's [National Apology to the Stolen Generations](#) in 2008. What is the significance of these speeches? Do they have practical as well as symbolic value? Can you identify any ways in which the words of these speeches have been translated into meaningful action since their delivery? What more can be done to turn rhetoric into reality?
- Through its biennial [Indigenous Governance Awards](#) (IGAs) program, Reconciliation Australia, in partnership with BHP Billiton, identifies, celebrates and promotes outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. The common thread is their exceptional Indigenous governance that drives positive change on the ground. Read some of the stories from past [IGA Finalists](#), and jot down some of things that you believe represent 'good governance' within these organisations. Do you think there is anything that local, state, and federal government institutions could learn from the governance structures and systems of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities? How can good governance structures and systems help to support reconciliation? Why is it important to critically reflect on, and improve, the governance of government?
- Many recent reviews of government spending suggest that unsatisfactory progress made towards advancing reconciliation is due not to the quantity of expenditure, but rather the quality of its allocation and delivery. While governments have continued to increase their total Indigenous spending in real terms since the 2008-09 financial year, spending on Indigenous-specific services has fallen. Research and review past [Indigenous Expenditure reports](#) and the Federal Government's most recent [IAS](#) funding program. Can you identify any opportunities for strengthening the allocation and delivery of expenditure either within or outside of the IAS funding streams?

LET'S TALK: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

- Some argue that a lack of institutional integrity stems from tokenistic rather than genuine or authentic attitudes and actions. What is 'tokenism' and what are some of the connotations attached to this term? What is the difference between 'tokenistic' and meaningful acts of reconciliation? Do you think a 'tokenistic' demonstration of respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and identities is better or worse than no demonstration at all?
- Read the paragraph on 'Tokenism' in Cara Shipp's [Bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the classroom: Why and how](#) article, which analyses the question of tokenism in educational institutions specifically, but can be used to help you critically address the question of tokenism in regard to any institution's actions. Reflect on, or discuss, your responses to the questions in the following excerpt paragraph and consider the degree to which tokenism is represented by an act itself, or indeed the attitudes and intentions behind that act:

"Is the painted boomerang tokenism? Well, that depends. Did the students engage with Aboriginal people while painting the boomerang? Did they learn about the boomerang, its uses, and the many different kinds of boomerangs traditionally used? Did they learn that the returning boomerang, an Australian icon, was traditionally actually a child's toy, and differently-shaped boomerangs were created as hunting tools? Did they learn how boomerangs are made, incorporating an appreciation of early use of 'physics', and what some of the various Aboriginal names for the objects are? In short, was the learning experience a rich one that advanced the students' intercultural knowledge/understanding in some way? More importantly, did the experience allow the students (and teachers) an opportunity to meet and talk with Aboriginal people? And finally, is the boomerang-painting activity just one of many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures explored across the key learning areas throughout the school in each year level? If the answer to these questions is 'yes,' then I would venture to suggest the painted boomerang is not necessarily 'tokenism.'"

LET'S WALK: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

CASE STUDIES

Glenelg Aboriginal Partnership Agreement, 2011-2020

In 2011, the Glenelg Shire Council in Victoria took the initiative to develop a ten-year [Glenelg Aboriginal Partnership Agreement](#) — an integral commitment to promoting recognition, healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of the local area. This Agreement ensures that the Council works in a mutually beneficial partnership with the local Aboriginal community to: foster positive knowledge sharing; increase cultural awareness and education; create strong social and economic development for Glenelg's Aboriginal and wider community; share community pride in celebrating events of significance such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week; and build inclusive, collaborative work efforts in areas such as tourism, cultural heritage protection and management of

the natural environment. The Agreement is a strong example of how careful, constructive and consistent collaboration between local government institutions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can actively support the building of meaningful two-way relationships, understanding, and reconciliation within the community. It builds on past Agreements, and is intended as a living document. While having specific actions and outcomes, it also allows for ongoing mutually agreed changes to accommodate dynamic community needs, as well as learnings around what represents best, evidence-based practice for the particular community. Institutional integrity in the spirit of reconciliation has thereby become an important and formally embedded part of the Council's core principles and practices.

For more information and ideas about how your local government or non-government institution can make a formal commitment to meaningful reconciliation action, you may wish to visit Reconciliation Australia's [RAP Hub](#).

Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group

The Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group, led and developed by Martu people under the [Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement](#), has established itself as an important voice at the decision-making table. In the 2014 [Indigenous Governance Awards](#) (IGAs) the Group was Highly Commended for its work in breaking down communication barriers between the local Aboriginal community, industry and government agencies. According to IGA Judge, Eddie Cubillo, 'The group's work shows what can be achieved if we are willing to work with Indigenous people, as they too want to contribute to the wider community without giving up their cultural values.' In 2013, the Group designed and delivered a unique baseline survey to find out what local community members thought so

they could share their story with government and industry. The survey's findings are now driving the Group's work. According to the Coordinator of the Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement, Maggie Kavanagh, it's 'a really good model of people themselves talking to their own people and coming up with the solution of how to approach some very tricky issues.' Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group has been designed, created and delivered with complete ownership of local Aboriginal people. That gives them greater control over how external agencies and industry work with the local community, and so positively pushes not only for its own institutional integrity, but also the integrity of wider local institutions.

For more information about the Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group, as well inspiration from other past IGA finalists with strong institutional integrity, you may wish to visit Reconciliation Australia's [IGA webpages](#).

Ideas for Action

- Encourage your workplace to develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), which will provide a framework for your staff and stakeholders' vision for reconciliation to be formalised and acted upon with a meaningful level of institutional integrity.
- Join the [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) community to support your school or early learning service to develop environments that maintain a meaningful level of institutional integrity, promoting knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, histories, cultures and contributions.
- Conduct an audit of common goods and services involved in your business or workplace's core operations or events. Use a search tool as the [SupplyNation Indigenous Business Direct](#) resource to locate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses that could assist with some aspect of implementing those goods and services in your workplace. Think carefully about some of the unique things that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses may have to offer your workplace in comparison to non-Indigenous businesses. Consider also how partnering, supporting, and sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses can help foster institutional integrity, along with other important business concepts such as supplier diversity and corporate social responsibility.
- Conduct a policy audit or code of ethics review within your workplace or social club to ensure a zero tolerance approach to prejudice and discrimination is in place, and that inclusivity and reconciliation is addressed at the administrative level. Ensure that all employees or members of your workplace/social club are familiar with these administrative documents so that organisational principles can be readily turned into positive practice.
- Consider possibilities for your business to participate in the BCA's [Indigenous Network](#) membership group. Members of this Network meet regularly to share insights, experiences and perspectives on how best to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and communities. Even without formally joining the Indigenous Network, you and your business can also engage with relevant resources such as BCA's latest [Indigenous Engagement Survey Report](#). Here you'll find information and ideas that draw on institutional integrity so useful to meaningfully develop innovative approaches to improving outcomes in education, employment, and economic and community development.
- Consider possibilities for you or your institution to participate in the Yothu Yindi Foundation's annual [Garma Festival](#). Garma is a gathering of 2,500 political and business leaders from across the globe, committed to improving the state of Indigenous disadvantage by engaging with other business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. In doing so, the Festival helps foster a shared sense of institutional integrity across political, business and community sectors.
- Get involved in the [RECOGNISE](#) movement to support the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. Help ensure there is active support for reconciliation by the nation's political structures.
- Critically follow government, media, and community conversations about unresolved issues of sovereignty, [treaty](#) and agreement-making, and encourage meaningful discussion about these issues in everyday friendly, familial or collegial conversations. Careful and dedicated dialogues need to continue among all people and with all sectors of the Australian community in order to progress these important matters in an informed way, and with integrity.

LET'S WALK: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

- Encourage your business, workplace or social club to maintain respectful and sustained engagement with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their representative bodies, and community organisations, such as:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Councils/[Native Title Representative Bodies](#);
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [Arts](#), [Language](#) and Cultural Centres;
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative groups (e.g. [NSW AECG](#), [VAEAI](#) in Victoria, ACT [ATSIECG](#) and [SAAETCB](#) in South Australia);
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services (see [NATSILS](#));
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations (see [Aboriginal Medical Services](#));
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated businesses (see [Indigenous Business Direct](#));
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaison Officers within government and non-government organisations;
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within your institution, as well as your institution's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and local community.
- Consider volunteer and professional secondment opportunities that may allow you to meaningfully learn from, and share with, respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business and community organisations. Critically reflect on how the learnings and experiences from your period of internship can be drawn on to promote stronger cultural competence and corporate social responsibility within your everyday workplace to advance its institutional integrity in the spirit of reconciliation.



4. UNITY

“Here in Australia we’re fortunate enough to have one of the richest and oldest continuing cultures in the world. This is something we should all be proud of and celebrate.”

– Dr Tom Calma AO, Reconciliation Australia Co-Chair.

LET'S TALK: UNITY

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension

The *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report defines the unity dimension as a state in which:

all of Australian society values and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as part of a shared national identity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the oldest living cultures in the world. In order to achieve a sense of national unity, all Australians should feel a certain pride in the tens of thousands of years of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Learning about and connecting with that rich and diverse history is key to embracing and celebrating the ancient heritage that underpins our national story.

Unfortunately, for far too many years, dominant colonial narratives have worked to overshadow the important histories and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, despite their unique place as the First Australians. A national identity focused on the romanticised tradition of the 'bush legend,' democracy, and the 'free spirited bronzed Aussie' was born out of these dominant discourses,¹ problematically relegating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage to the past, and neglecting to acknowledge their past, present, and future significance.

Encouragingly, over time, Australia's national identity has evolved to better embrace multiculturalism, diversity and inclusivity. It is important to emphasise the need for a *shared* national identity—one which might be multifaceted, but which effectively reflects all citizens and our *entire* history as a nation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage are an integral and important part of this shared identity, and deserve to be proudly represented and celebrated. Our pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is shown to be slowly increasing, and most Australians believe it is important to learn more.

The greatest challenge is in turning this goodwill into action and positive change. For example, while the majority of Australians think it is important to know more, most rate their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as low. Many Australians want to contribute to reconciliation, but only a small number claim they know *how* they can contribute. Furthermore, we have an opportunity to progress national actions that will improve relationships and help unify Australia, in the same manner as the 2008 [National Apology to the Stolen Generations](#) did.

But there is still much work to be done. Organisations such as Reconciliation Australia have a clear role to play in educating all Australians about reconciliation, and how they can meaningfully contribute to our nation's reconciliation journey. Australians are now better placed than ever before for the long-sought reconciliation milestone of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To this end, all Australians can help strengthen unity by supporting a referendum for meaningful recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution. Moreover, while there are still some steps to go before a referendum, all Australians have a role to play by talking to, and learning from, people from all walks of life.

Actively listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, developing proposals that have their support, and making positive contributions to a national conversation around unity, and reconciliation more generally, are all positive steps. The desire of people wanting to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures supports the inclusion of these as a compulsory part of the school curricula.

Quick Stats

- Many Australians (78%) believe it is possible for Australia to be united.
- Most Australian (77%) believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's national identity, with 73% agreeing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a unique place as the First Australians.
- Pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is increasing.
- Australians' knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is limited (only 33% are knowledgeable) but most Australians (84%) believe it is important to know more and strongly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories being a compulsory part of the school curriculum.
- Some Australians (52%) want to support reconciliation but most (80%) don't know how.
- When people participate in reconciliation activities, their knowledge improves and their views on the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians change significantly.
- Some Australians (46%) believe the Apology has improved our relationship but many Australians strongly support new actions to unify Australia, including recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

Source: Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016

Discussion Questions and Activities

- Can you think about ways in which the unity dimension can influence, and be influenced by, the four other dimensions of reconciliation?
- Think about what 'identity' means to you. Who do you identify as, and/or, with? What is your nationality and heritage and how important is this to you? (How) do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage feature in your personal sense of identity?
- What do you think is the quintessential Australian identity? Does this resonate with you? Why or why not?

How do you think we can better foster a shared Australian identity that includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage? What might we need to change or adjust to help to create this shared Australian identity?

- Search for the 'Who We Are' films on the [ReconciliationAus](#) YouTube channel. This suite of short films follows the lives of six exceptional young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who share their stories about their communities, histories, and cultures and identities in contemporary Australia. An accompanying teaching and learning guide can also be downloaded for each short film by visiting the [Naragunnawali Resources](#) page.
- Consider carrying out some of the discussion questions and activities in the teaching and learning guides, all the while reflecting on the following overarching questions: in what ways are the lives and identities of the individuals in the films influenced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures? In what ways are they influenced by non-Indigenous histories and cultures? Why is it important to recognise that, over time, many different histories and cultures have combined to forge the unique identities, relationships, challenges and opportunities of contemporary Australian life?

LET'S TALK: UNITY

- At least 250 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were active in Australia prior to colonisation. Explore an [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages map](#) and consider how the map, and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, reflects the significant diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities more generally.

Colonial policies—including systemic condemnation of traditional language use, and forced separation of children from their families and speaker communities—have critically endangered many First Languages. How might recognising and revitalising these languages be important to advancing unity in Australia? Can unity be achieved in diversity? How can diversity actually contribute to the richness and strength of Australia's shared pride and national identity?

- Find or write up a calendar of national commemorations and celebrations. Compare the number of popular celebrations or public holidays (such as the Queen's Birthday) that are Eurocentric in nature to the number of annual events of national significance (such as NAIDOC Week) which actively incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage. (Why) is proudly incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage into national holidays, commemorative events or celebrations important to fostering Australia's shared national identity and unity?
- There has been a lot of contemporary debate around the celebration of Australia Day—our national holiday—on January 26. In 1788, that was the date on which Captain Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales and raised the British flag for the first time in Sydney Cove. Australians hold many different views on the significance of 26 January. For many, it is not a day for celebration, but instead represents a day on which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of life were changed forever. For others, it is known as Survival Day, commemorating the resilience of people and culture, and the continuing contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to Australia.

How do you commemorate, celebrate or commiserate 26 January? How do you feel about the idea of changing the date on which Australia Day is celebrated? Would your feelings about Australia's national holiday change if your ancestors and history were ignored?

- Take a look at the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48 of this guide and select three historic events that you believe best represent progress made towards advancing stronger unity in Australia. Take the time to carry out further independent research about these events. Examples to research might include the [1967 Referendum](#), in which 90.77% of Australians voted 'Yes' to give the Commonwealth Government the power to legislate for Aboriginal people and to include Aboriginal people in the Census, or the very first celebration of National Reconciliation Week in 1996.
- What do you believe the significance of these events has been in terms of positively driving the unity dimension forward? Thinking about the recommendations from the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, as well as your personal experiences, what more do you think needs to happen for the future of unity in Australia?
- The symbolic aspects of national identity are important to consider alongside the practical aspects. National symbols are often a source of unity and shared pride, but they can also divide and exclude. Unfortunately, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage are still largely absent from our national symbols, especially our official symbols. Indeed, it was not until 1995 that both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were officially recognised by the Australian Government and, in Australian Geographic's '[100 Aussie Icons](#),' only six listed icons relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Write a list of things that you believe best symbolise Australia's national identity, and see how your list compares to Australian Geographic's, or those of your friends, family members or colleagues.

Why do you think our national symbols need to reflect the histories and cultures of all Australians—old and new—in order to generate a stronger sense of shared pride, and to help to unite our nation?

LET'S TALK: UNITY

- The Macquarie Dictionary defines recognition as “the acknowledgement of something as valid or entitled to consideration.” What does the word ‘recognition’ mean to you? How do you feel when you are sincerely recognised for who you are and what you contribute—proud, valued and connected? Does being recognised motivate you and encourage you to recognise the best in others in turn?
- As custodians of the Australian landscape for over 40,000 years, and having survived and thrived despite many years of social and legal exclusion since colonisation, (why) do you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures, and their heritage, deserve to be respected, formally recognised and shared?
- Recognition can take many different forms, including giving thanks when someone lends you a helping hand, cheering on friends during a football match, or being praised at work or school for your hard work and effort. Jot down some examples of the kind of recognition that you have given, or have been given, in your personal or professional life. Read the [RECOGNISE](#) movement’s ‘[Why Recognise?](#)’ explainer and discuss the following questions: How does constitutional recognition of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent a particularly important form of recognition? (How) does constitutional recognition help to complete our national story and identity? (How) does constitutional recognition help foster stronger unity into the future?
- In his essay, [A Rightful Place](#), Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson articulates: ‘Our nation is in three parts. There is our ancient heritage, written in the continent and the original culture painted in its land and seascapes. There is its British inheritance, the structure of government and society transported from the United Kingdom fixing its foundations in the ancient soil. There is its multicultural achievement: a triumph of immigration that brought together the gifts of peoples and cultures from all over the world—forming one dissoluble commonwealth. We stand on the cusp of bringing these three parts of our national story together...’

(Why) do you believe these ‘three parts’ of our national story need to be woven together in order to better support unity in Australia? What do you think needs to be done in order to bring these three parts together?

- Listen to the song ‘[Treaty](#),’ written by Yothu Yindi in collaboration with Paul Kelly and Midnight Oil. The song was the first in an Aboriginal language (Gumatj) to gain extensive mainstream radio airplay, and calls for the government to honour Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s promise of a treaty between the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. How might a treaty help to further support recognition, national unity, and reconciliation more broadly?

LET'S WALK: UNITY

CASE STUDIES

Yabun Festival, Share the Spirit Festival and Survival Days

In response to the [debate around the celebration of Australia Day—our national holiday—on January 26th](#), a number of inclusive festivals now celebrate the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, promoting a more united future for Australia. They include the [Yabun Festival](#) in Sydney, [Share the Spirit Festival](#) in Melbourne, [Belgrave Survival Day](#) in Victoria, [Tandanya Survival Day](#) in Adelaide and, previously, the [Saltwater Freshwater Festival](#) on the NSW coast. Ultimately, they are about changing our national day of celebration to one that all Australians can feel part and proud of. They echo some of the key messages of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's poignant [2000 Australia Day Address](#), which called for Australians to 'find a day on which we can all feel included, in which

we can all participate equally, and can celebrate with pride our common Australian identity.' O'Donoghue warns that 'enthusiastic, but mindless, nationalism can be a dangerous thing' and that it is instead important to use days of national significance such as January 26 to carefully 'think about our past, present and possible futures in order to embrace those things that we take pride in as a nation—and to recognise the things that we cannot condone.' Doing so can serve as a 'strategic opportunity for all Australians to learn from the past and refine ourselves as a harmonious and just society—to map our future as a reconciled nation' characterised by unity and shared pride.

For more information, follow the hyperlinks above to carry out some further research around these inclusive 26th January events, and consider reading a [copy of Dr O'Donoghue's full Australia Day Address](#). You might also like to consult Reconciliation Australia's [Let's Talk: January 26 Factsheet](#).

The Marruk Project

The Marruk Project takes an innovative approach to unite all members of its local community in the regional Victorian town of Swan Hill. It uses performing arts—puppetry, acting, dance and music—to strengthen culture and create opportunities. Elders, young people, artists and cultural leaders get to know each other by positively sharing their histories. In connecting both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through creative productions, Marruk empowers individuals and keeps age-old Dreaming stories alive. The Project was a 2014

[Indigenous Governance Awards](#) Winner and, according to IGA Chair, Mick Dodson, has a unique ability to 'bring the whole town together. It's what we should be seeing across the world. We need things like this to co-exist—to build understanding.' Believing and experiencing the unifying power of such projects to celebrate diversity and promote cross-cultural awareness bodes well for the future of reconciliation in Australia.

For more information, read more about [The Marruk Project](#) on Reconciliation Australia's IGA Past Finalists pages.

Ideas for Action

- Show your pride in, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as part of Australia's national identity by actively taking part in annual days and weeks of national significance such as [NAIDOC Week](#) and [National Reconciliation Week](#). Critically reflect on the way in which you commemorate January 26 and consider taking part in inclusive festivals such as [Yabun Festival](#) in Sydney, [Share the Spirit Festival](#) in Melbourne, [Belgrave Survival Day](#) in Victoria, [Tandanya Survival Day](#) in Adelaide.
- Be aware of, and critically reflect on, your own sense of identity and the relationships and assumptions that underpin it. Be open to carrying out further learning (and, in some instances, 'unlearning') about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage, and their importance to Australia's shared story, collective identity, and unifying sense of pride. Reconciliation Australia's [Share Our Pride](#) and [Let's Bust Some Myths Factsheet](#) may provide a useful starting place. Share any newfound knowledge with your friends, family and colleagues, and spend the time developing positive relationships with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to learn from, and connect with, local peoples and perspectives.
- Consider complementing your learning by signing up to an appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency workshop or immersion experience. Again, remember to use reputable resources and training providers that are governed by a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community perspective.
- Engage with current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander news, particularly through drawing on media sources that incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Examples might include [Koori Mail](#), [New Matilda](#), [National Indigenous Times](#), [NITV](#) and the [National Indigenous Radio Service](#). Remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, perspectives and stories should not be relegated to the past—they are active and important part of Australia's current and future communications and community.
- Learn about, and appropriately fly, the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags](#) alongside the Australian flag to visibly demonstrate your respect and acknowledgement of the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories to Australia's national identity and unity.
- Find out more about the history, context and continued status of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language\(s\)](#) of your local community. You may even discover that place names in your local area stem from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (see [Indigenous meanings of Australian town names](#)). Acknowledge and celebrate these linguistic-cultural connections to your local area.
- Incorporate [Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country](#) protocols into workplace, school or community meetings and events. These are important acts of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and custodians of their land. Ensure that you understand the difference between an Acknowledgement of, and Welcome to, Country, and their respective influence in fostering unity in Australia.
- In the words of Richard Wynne, former Victorian Minister for Indigenous Affairs, an Acknowledgement of Country 'says to the world, and more importantly to ourselves, that we accept that fact we are in a place that has a history and story beyond 220 years. It says to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fellow Australians that we are all in the future journey of our country together.'² Wurundjeri Elder, Joy Murphy, also emphasises the importance of a Welcome to Country as a 'way of giving Aboriginal people back their place in society, and an opportunity for us to say, we are real, we are here, and today we welcome you to our land.'³

LET'S WALK: UNITY

- Download the [Welcome to Country app](#) as a way of appreciating the Traditional Custodians and language groups of the lands on which you may be living, working or visiting. The app currently contains information on more than 30 linguistic-cultural groups throughout Australia, and more groups will be added over time. Note that the physical or cultural-linguistic boundaries suggested through the app's GPS tracking capacity may not be perfectly accurate, but can serve as a rough guide to appreciate the histories and great diversity that contribute to Australia's national unity.
- Critically engage with the idea of [unity in diversity](#), and promote the value of genuine unity in diversity in your social interactions and working relationships. [The 2016 Spring Lamb: You Never Lamb Alone ad](#) may provide a light-hearted but nevertheless helpful way to spark meaningful conversation about the concept of unity in diversity.
- Get involved in the [RECOGNISE](#) movement to provide unifying support for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. Play your part to minimise the possibility of damaging racial division within it.
- Encourage your workplace to develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), which will provide a framework for your staff and stakeholders' vision for reconciliation to be realised, and will help to foster stronger unity.
- Join the [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) community to support your school or early learning service to develop unifying environments that foster a high level of knowledge and shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, histories, cultures and contributions.

References

1. Purdie, N. and R. Craven (2006) 'Young people's perceptions of what it means to be Australian,' available at http://research.acer.edu.au/learning_processes/1/
2. 'Your Say', Koori Mail 472 p.23 March 24, 2010
3. Winkler, M. 'Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country – what is it and why do we do it?' Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre, available at <http://www.miromaa.org.au/our-way/welcome-of-country.html>

5. HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

“Something must be done about the denial of the real history of this country. At the same time, we must support each other to accept our own history, the history of pain and distress that so often holds us victim. It is only in accepting it that we can make choices to deal with it and move on from it.”¹

– Professor Marcia Langton, Aboriginal academic and activist

LET'S TALK: HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

Unpacking and Understanding the Dimension

The State of Reconciliation in Australia report defines the historical acceptance dimension as a state in which:

All Australians understand and accept the wrongs of the past and the impact of these wrongs. Australia makes amends for the wrongs of the past and ensures that these wrongs are never repeated.

Fundamentally, historical acceptance is about telling the truth to achieve justice and healing. Part of this truth-telling process is acknowledging that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures have had a continuous connection to the Australian landscape for tens of thousands of years. It is accepting that since colonisation, Australia's history has been characterised by devastating land dispossession, intentional marginalisation, violence, and overt and unapologetic racism directed at our nation's First Peoples. Along with conflicts and massacres, colonisation brought with it active policies and practices to segregate, assimilate, and take away the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. Policies and practices include forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (the [Stolen Generations](#)), failure to pay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers' wages ([Stolen Wages](#)), and unjust incarceration and [Aboriginal deaths in custody](#).

These wrongs of the past continue to impact today, partly because it wasn't all that long ago. In fact it was only in 1969 that all states had repealed the legislation allowing for the removal of Aboriginal children. And it was as late as 1997 that the [report of Australia's National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#) was released. Another reason past wrongs continue to negatively affect the present is the lived experience of [intergenerational trauma](#). Psychological trauma is a person's response to directly witnessing or experiencing a devastating event that is often extremely overwhelming and difficult to come to terms with.² Intergenerational trauma is when survivors of the initial experience pass on their trauma to younger generations.³

The transmission of trauma across generations is extremely complex, sometimes played out in parenting practices, behavioural problems, violence, unresolved grief, harmful substance abuse and mental health issues.⁴ The ripple effects of colonial injustices and intergenerational trauma have severely limited the ability of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to fully and positively participate in their lives and communities, and has created and perpetuated widespread disadvantage for our nation's First Peoples.⁵

A lack of historical acceptance is a further reason for which the wrongs of the past continue to be reflected in the present. Unless past injustices are fully and truthfully acknowledged, and then appropriately amended, they will continue to hinder true reconciliation. For many decades, mainstream media and education systems have failed to provide a full or impartial picture of Australia's history since colonisation. Many non-Indigenous Australians have been left with a 'historical blind spot,' unaware of both the struggles and successes of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers. A process of further learning and, in some instances, 'unlearning,' is therefore needed.

An understanding the past varies in the broader Australian community, but there is a prevailing and problematic sense that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are responsible for their own disadvantage. To turn this around requires education about the negative effects of colonisation, systemic racism and exclusion. The perception by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is that past wrongs have not been righted. This is a major barrier to reconciliation. Efforts to repair past wrongs have been slow, piecemeal, largely ignored, or in fact getting worse. For example, [native title](#) has been slow to take effect, although we are starting to see results through agreement-making; the recommendations of the [Bringing them Home](#) report were largely ignored; and incarceration rates are higher than at the time of the [Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#).

Despite these sporadic efforts, there are positive signs that Australia is examining the injustices of the past. For example, in 2015, the Queensland Government announced a [Stolen Wages Reparations Scheme](#); the South Australian Government announced an \$11 million [Stolen Generations Reparation fund](#); and the Western Australian Government signed a landmark [native title agreement with the Noongar people of south-west Australia](#). Two significant symbolic acts of historical acceptance that preceded these more practical initiatives are Paul Keating's 1992 [Redfern Speech](#) and Kevin Rudd's 2008 [National Apology to the Stolen Generations](#).

To achieve lasting change, we must treat both the symptoms and the underlying (historical) causes of contemporary issues and injustices. Doing so involves working in genuine and positive partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to learn from their experiences and perspectives and to invest in appropriate early intervention and prevention strategies across workplaces and institutions, schools, and wider communities.



Quick Stats

- Most Australians (89%) agree that wrongs of the past must be rectified before we can move on with reconciliation.
- Many Australians accept facts about past injustices but are unsure of the details. However, 87% agree that it is important for all Australians to learn more about past issues.
- Nearly half of Australians (46%) believe that Australia's colonial legacy is the cause of Indigenous disadvantage today.
- Australians are divided on the nature and extent of the effect of past wrongs on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. Between 50-60% of the general community agree that past race-based policies have created today's disadvantage.
- Australians have widely varying views on forgiveness and moving on, and progress on repairing the wrongs of the past has been mixed.
- Australia is repeating some of the wrongs of the past and urgent, well-considered action is needed to reduce the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison.

Source: Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015, Australian Institute of Criminology 2011.

Discussion Questions and Activities

- Can you think about ways in which the historical acceptance dimension can influence, and be influenced by, the four other dimensions of reconciliation?
- For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories were recorded and passed on through largely oral rather than written traditions. (Why) might acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling and [Songlines](#) be important to historical acceptance, and the living narratives of our nation?
- View Reconciliation Australia's [2016 National Reconciliation Week video, Our History, Our Story, Our Future](#). What is the relationship between Australia's histories, stories and future? What does the video communicate about the importance of historical acceptance?
- How and what were you taught about Australian history? From whose perspective(s) were you taught about Australian history? Is there anything that you wish you learnt more about regarding Australian history? What do you think some of the key things younger generations of the future should learn about Australian history?
- Australian history dates as far back as tens and thousands of years ago. Visit the ['Our Shared History' Timeline](#) on Reconciliation Australia's [Share Our Pride](#) website as a starting point for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences pre- and post- colonisation. What do you know of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures prior to European colonisation in 1788? As the world's oldest *living* cultures, what is the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australia's present and future? How has colonisation impacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures? Why is it important to recognise that all cultures are dynamic rather than static?
- History is being created right now, every day. What kind of mark would you like to leave in Australia's history, and what are your hopes and dreams for Australia's reconciliation future? What do you think needs to occur in order to advance your hopes and dreams, and to ensure that past wrongs committed against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not repeated into the future?
- Pick out one or more history books from your school or community library and think critically about the content and perspective of the books—who authored and published the book? What stories are being told, and who is telling them? Are all voices included? Did this exercise tell you anything about the lack of historical acceptance in Australia for many decades and/or about the need for stronger historical acceptance into the future?

LET'S TALK: HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

- Better connect with the history of the local area in which you live, study or work. Who are the Traditional Owners of your local area, and what are some of the significant stories that they have to share? Who are some of the past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models of your local community, and why is it important to recognise them and their work? What has the historical relationship been between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in your local area and what is the nature of that relationship now? What current, and future work needs to be done to educate your wider community about the history of your local area, and about the past, present and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are integral to your community and its reconciliation journey?
- Take a look at the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48 of this guide and select three historical events that you believe best represent progress made towards advancing stronger historical acceptance in Australia. Take the time to carry out further independent research about these events, as well as about the past wrongs that they may have been addressing. Examples might include [the 1992 High Court recognition of native title in the landmark case *Mabo vs Queensland \(No. 2\)*](#), or the establishment of the [Tent Embassy](#) 20 years earlier. What do you believe the significance of these events has been in terms of positively driving the historical dimension forward? Thinking about the recommendations from the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, as well as your personal experiences, what more do you think needs to happen for the future of historical acceptance in Australia?
- While they may be confronting, consider reading the 1997 [Bringing them Home Report](#), or viewing the Australian Human Rights Commission's related [Bringing them home: separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families video](#) to learn more about the past wrongs committed against Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. What did engaging with these materials teach you about one or more aspects of the truth of Australia's history since colonisation? How did engaging with these materials make you feel about the truth of Australia's history since colonisation, and the part that you play in Australia's reconciliation future?
- In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally made a [National Apology to the Stolen Generations](#) ending successive Federal Governments' reluctance to do so. In 1997, the group Australians for Native Title (ANT) was formed, and established an initiative known as [The Sorry Books](#). The Sorry Books were seen as an opportunity for ordinary Australians who wanted to meaningfully write, or sign, a 'people's apology' in lieu of a Federal government apology. Read up on the diverse content and messages of The Sorry Books. If you were to imagine writing in a Sorry Book, what might you say?
- Visit the [Healing Foundation](#) website to learn more about trauma, intergenerational trauma, and the programs that exist to help to foster healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. How is an understanding of the effects of (intergenerational) trauma important to understanding the need for historical acceptance, and reconciliation more generally? What do you believe are examples of effective initiatives towards healing the historically underpinned hurt of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians? What more needs to be done?
- In his iconic 1992 [Redfern Speech](#), Paul Keating was the first Prime Minister to officially acknowledge the devastating impact European colonisation inflicted upon the lives and cultures of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Keating's words marked an important step forward in regard to formally recognising and accepting the truth about Australia's history. In 2007, this speech was voted #3 in the ABC's [Top 20 Unforgettable Speeches](#), just behind Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I have a Dream* speech (#1) and Jesus Christ's *Sermon on the Mountain* (#2). [Listen](#) to the Redfern Speech and reflect on, or discuss, what makes it significant to historical acceptance, and to reconciliation more generally. What still needs to be done in order to turn these noble words into significant actions?

LET'S WALK: HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

CASE STUDIES

Myall Creek Memorial

Unveiled in the year 2000, the [Myall Creek Memorial](#) in northern NSW commemorates the horrific, unprovoked attack and massacre of approximately 30 Aboriginal (Wirrayaraay) men, women and children by European settlers in 1838. This massacre was just one of many violent frontier conflicts between European and Aboriginal people. However, the Myall Creek Massacre case is one of particular significance as it is the only case during this era where Europeans were explicitly declared guilty and punished for the murder of Aboriginal people.

The establishment of the Myall Creek Memorial was a joint effort between descendants of the 1838 Wirrayaraay victims and the descendants of the European perpetrators. The memorial represents a powerful symbol and act of reconciliation—recognising

and accepting the past and promoting positive collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike to advance healing and harmony. Each year, a commemorative ceremony is held at the Memorial, where non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the state gather to remember the victims and reflect on the past. The site of the Myall Creek Massacre, and of the Memorial, has also been acknowledged by inclusion on Australia's [National Heritage List](#).

A bilingual inscription at the Myall Creek Memorial, “*We remember them. Ngiyani winangay ganunga,*” reminds all Australians of the importance of remembering and accepting the truths of our nation’s past—no matter how confronting—in order to move forward together in the spirit of reconciliation.

For more information, you may wish to visit the [Friends of Myall Creek](#) website, which again emphasises that “the road to our future travels through the past.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

ACARA AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY

Developed since 2008, [ACARA](#)’s national [Australian Curriculum](#) sets the expectations for what all Australian students should be taught, regardless of their background or where they live. Recognising historical gaps in truthful teaching around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, as well as in learning outcomes between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the Australian Curriculum has mandated an [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority](#) for all Australian schools across all subject/learning areas.

The priority is specifically designed to support ‘all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world’s oldest continuing living

cultures’ and to better understand that identities, cultures and histories have been, and continue to be, ‘a source of strength and resilience for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples against the historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.’ In allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to relevantly see themselves reflected, and responded to, within the curriculum, the priority also helps ensure that all Australian children know our true history through their everyday learning environments. This is a promising case of historical acceptance being addressed at the national scale for entire future generations of Australian learners and leaders.

For more information, you may wish to visit Reconciliation Australia’s [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) online platform for ideas around how to effectively address the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-curriculum Priority in educational environments.

Ideas for Action

- Remember to critically engage with any historical ‘facts’ that you are presented with, and to compare a range of stories and viewpoints—including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives— around any single event. Reconciliation Australia’s [‘Let’s Bust Some Myths’](#) factsheet is a helpful starting place. Keep the same critical eye when reviewing current print, radio and television media coverage of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.
- Acknowledge what non-written histories can tell us about past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and perspectives. For example, where appropriate, actively take the time to learn about the important stories and messages conveyed through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [oral histories](#), [Songlines](#), and art. Again, only where culturally appropriate and after establishing trusting and respectful two-way relationships, consider volunteering your time to record some of your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community’s stories and histories. You might like to consider [digital storytelling](#) initiatives as an engaging contemporary means of capturing and passing on these important messages to future generations.
- Consider engaging in further learning—or ‘unlearning’—by signing up to an appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency workshop or immersion experience. Remember to use reputable resources and training providers that are governed by a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community perspective.
- Don’t forget to draw on the importance of self-care when taking the initiative to confront the often untold truths about historical wrongs committed against Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the impacts of colonialism is that this history has not been well taught or known for many decades, leading to steep learning curves for many Australians. Remember to be kind and gentle to yourself if you begin to feel overwhelmed in addressing any gaps in your learning. You may not be personally responsible for devastating events that have occurred, but your learning can empower you to act in small but significant ways every day to ensure that historical wrongs are not repeated.
- Actively consult with, and/or contribute to, resources and initiatives around healing the effects of [intergenerational trauma](#). Even some of the youngest Australians can work towards better understanding and addressing intergenerational trauma. For example, the Healing Foundation’s [Marlee’s Mob](#) comic book has been designed by young people to help other children understand intergenerational trauma and how it might be affecting them. *KidsMatter*’s suite of [Aboriginal Animations](#) also works to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, recognising the ongoing impact of intergenerational trauma. Each animation provides a story that highlights key messages about the day-to-day caring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s wellbeing by parents, families and communities.
- Help to ensure that the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—both past and present—are acknowledged and accepted as part of local and national commemorative events. One example is Reconciliation Australia’s [‘Let’s Talk: Remembering the Forgotten ANZACS’](#) factsheet that prompts readers to remember Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ long and proud, but often little known history of contributing to Australia’s military efforts.

LET'S WALK: HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

- Consider collaborating with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language centre to discuss possibilities for [bilingual signage](#) around your workplace, school or community. Such signage may help to demonstrate your acknowledgement of, and respect for, the Traditional Owners of your local community, and their longstanding connections and contributions to the history of the lands on which you live, learn or work. Be sensitive to the fact that past colonial policies such as explicit condemnation of traditional language use, and forced separation of children from their families and speaker communities, may have compromised any immediate capacity for bilingual signage projects. Nevertheless, simply learning about [Australia's First Languages](#)—their history, diversity and importance, is a meaningful step to take in supporting historical acceptance and reconciliation more broadly.
- Join the [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) community. In so doing, you support your school or early learning service to develop environments that foster a high level of knowledge and shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, histories, cultures and contributions. The *Narragunnawali* program also helps users to effectively address ACARA's Australian Curriculum [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-curriculum Priority](#).
- Encourage your workplace to develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#). A RAP will provide a framework for your staff and stakeholders' vision for reconciliation to be realised, based on an understanding of how historical acceptance can be used to appropriately drive positive future action.
- Get involved in the [RECOGNISE](#) movement to support the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. Doing so will meaningfully demonstrate your acceptance of the historical truth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' significant connection to the Australian landscape well before European colonisation.

References

1. Interview on ABC Television, 1998, quoted in The State of Queensland, The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report, 1999.
2. Healing Foundation, 'Growing our children up strong and deadly' 2013, available at <http://healingfoundation.org.au>
3. Healing Foundation, 'Intergenerational trauma', available at <http://healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma/>
4. Muru Marri for the Healing Foundation, 'A resource for collective healing for members of the Stolen Generations' 2014, available at <http://healingfoundation.org.au>
5. Healing Foundation, 'Growing our children up strong and deadly' 2013, available at <http://www.healingfoundation.org.au>

THE STATE OF RECONCILIATION IN AUSTRALIA

Twenty-five years after the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR), Reconciliation Australia's landmark [*The State of Reconciliation in Australia*](#) report uses a five dimensional framework to measure and analyse the nation's progress over time, assess its current state, and set out a roadmap for a reconciled Australia in the future.

The intention of the report is to spark a renewed national conversation about how, over the next twenty-five years, we can move towards becoming a just, equitable and reconciled Australia according to the realisation of the following five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, historical acceptance and unity.

In the twenty-five years leading up to the report's release, the concept of reconciliation has taken a holistic approach that encompasses rights, as well as so-called symbolic and practical actions. Over this time, reconciliation has introduced a greater focus on the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians and opened up national debate on prejudice, discrimination and racism. It has raised broader questions about our national identity and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights in our nation's story. Reconciliation can no longer be seen as a single issue or agenda and the contemporary definition of reconciliation must weave all of these threads together. It is based on the recognition of the multidimensional nature of reconciliation, and on a review of reconciliation in Australia and internationally, that the five critical dimensions of reconciliation were identified.

As highlighted by the Reconciliation Timeline on page 48, Australia has achieved some significant milestones on our reconciliation journey. These include the establishment of native title, the Apology, the *Closing the Gap* framework and progress on constitutional recognition of First Australians.

While much goodwill and support for reconciliation is growing across the Australian community, racism, denial of rights, and a lack of willingness to come to terms with our history continue to overshadow the nation's progress towards reconciliation. This journey reminds us that reconciliation is a work in progress—generations of people have fought hard for meaningful change and future gains are likely to take just as long.

There are still many hard conversations before us. These conversations are for all Australians to actively commit to and participate in, whether as individuals, or as members of the business, government, education, community or other sectors.

It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that one day in the near future, we can say that we are truly reconciled. Until we achieve reconciliation, Australia will fall short of its full potential as a nation.

This Discussion Guide serves as a platform for users to establish or extend meaningful conversations and actions around reconciliation. Prior to engaging with the guide, you may wish to read a [full](#) or [summary](#) copy of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, and view the [video](#) which marked its release and highlights our nation's history, story and chapters to come.

ABOUT RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia was established in 2001, and serves as the national expert body on reconciliation in the nation. It is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with a vision to one day wake to a reconciled, just and equitable Australia. This vision is based on the five interrelated dimensions of reconciliation identified in the 2016 [The State of Reconciliation in Australia](#) report: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, historical acceptance, and unity.

Reconciliation Australia endeavours to enable all Australians to contribute to the realisation of the five dimensions of reconciliation, doing so by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Reconciliation Australia works to connect people through shared experiences, expectations and knowledge, and to educate people about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and successes. This work is carried out through a number of initiatives and programs across workplaces, education environments, and communities, including:

◆ Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs):

RAPs provide a framework for organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation. RAPs are practical plans of action built on relationships, respect and opportunities, and help to create social change and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. From Australia's biggest corporates to not-for-profit and government organisations, the RAP community is a diverse and fast growing collective of organisations turning their good intentions into action. More than 800 organisations have created a RAP since 2006, and there are many more in development.

◆ Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning:

The *Narragunnawali* program is designed to support Australia's 21,000+ schools and early learning services to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. Participating schools and early learning services are assisted to find meaningful ways to increase respect, reduce prejudice, and strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

◆ Indigenous Governance Awards (IGAs):

The IGAs were created by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote effective Indigenous governance. The IGAs are about sharing success from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations around Australia and showcasing how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are driving change on the ground.

Reconciliation Australia further supports all Australians to develop a stronger recognition of, and collective sense of pride in, the nation's First Peoples through the development of [resources](#) such as its [Share Our Pride](#) website, and through its meaningful contributions to the [media](#) and policy spheres.

To learn more, and to find out how you can [get involved](#), [contact](#) the Reconciliation Australia team or visit www.reconciliation.org.au/.

ANNUAL DAYS AND WEEKS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE TO RECONCILIATION IN AUSTRALIA

While the quest for reconciliation in Australia continues every day, there are certain dates of particular national significance to reconciliation, which are celebrated or commemorated each year. These dates not only remind Australians of some of the key historical events in the nation's reconciliation journey, they also have great relevance and resonance to the present and future direction of the reconciliation movement.

◆ 26 January (Australia Day)

The 26th of January, 1788, was the date on which Captain Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales and raised the British flag for the first time in Sydney Cove. Australians hold different views on the significance of this date with many regarding it as a day for celebration. But for others, it represents a day on which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of life were changed forever. Some call it 'Survival Day,' acknowledging the resilience of people and culture, and the continuing contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to Australia.

◆ 13 February—Anniversary of the National Apology

On 13 February 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd moved a motion of apology to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the House of Representatives. The Apology acknowledged and apologised for past laws, policies and practices that devastated Australia's First Peoples, in particular members of the Stolen Generations. This anniversary acts as a reminder to all Australians that 'sorry' is more than a word. It is a reminder that communities, peak body organisations, politicians and policy makers must continue to work together to achieve key positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

◆ March—National Close the Gap Day

Close the Gap is Australia's most prominent health equality campaign, focused on achieving health equality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation. On national Close the Gap Day, hundreds of thousands of Australians take action by holding events around the nation. These events both celebrate the successes of Close the Gap and raise awareness of the important work that still needs to be done.

◆ 21 March—Harmony Day

Harmony Day celebrates Australia's cultural diversity. It is about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone, and is a day for all Australians to embrace cultural diversity as well as share what we have in common. The central message for Harmony Day is that 'everyone belongs,' reinforcing the importance of inclusiveness across Australia.

◆ 25 April—ANZAC Day

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a long and proud, but often overlooked, history of contributing to Australia's military engagements. ANZAC Day is an important opportunity to learn about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have served, and continue to serve, in all major conflicts alongside their non-Indigenous comrades.

◆ 26 May—National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day has been held each year since 1998 and was born out of a key recommendation in the *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. This report was tabled in Federal Parliament on 26 May 1997. National Sorry Day commemorates and remembers all those who have been affected by government policies of forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which resulted in the Stolen Generations.

◆ 27 May—Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

This day marks the anniversary of Australia's most successful referendum and a defining event in our nation's history. The 1967 Referendum saw over 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national Census.

◆ 27 May to 3 June—National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 Referendum and the High Court's Mabo decision (Mabo Day). NRW is a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Each year has a different theme set by Reconciliation Australia.

ANNUAL DAYS AND WEEKS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE TO RECONCILIATION IN AUSTRALIA

◆ 3 June—Mabo Day

The Mabo decision was named after Eddie (Koiki) Mabo, of Mer Island in the Torres Strait, who challenged the Australian legal system and fought for recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of their land. The Mabo decision overturned 200 years of the doctrine of *terra nullius* and was a turning point for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights, because it acknowledged their unique connection with the land. It also led to the Australian Parliament passing the Native Title Act in 1993.

◆ 1st Week of July—NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week is a celebration of the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC formally stands for 'National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee,' but, over time, the acronym has become the name for the entire festival week. Each year, the week focuses on a different theme, set by the National NAIDOC Committee.

◆ 1 July—Coming of the Light Festival (Torres Strait Islands)

This festival marks the day when the London Missionary Society first arrived in the Torres Strait in 1871, introducing Christianity to the region. It is a significant day for Torres Strait Islander communities across the region and in mainland Australia.

◆ 4 August—National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is a time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to celebrate the strengths and culture of their children. It is also an opportunity for all Australians to show their support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and learn about the impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child. Each year has a different theme set by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

◆ 9 August—International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is celebrated every year on 9 August. Globally, there are over 350 million Indigenous people, representing over 5,000 cultures and languages in more than 70 different countries. The UN General Assembly first proclaimed the Day of the World's Indigenous People in 1994 and adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

◆ September—National Indigenous Literacy Day

Organised by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, National Indigenous Literacy Day is held in September each year to spread the word about the improving literacy levels and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in some of the most remote and isolated parts of Australia. Funds raised on National Indigenous Literacy Day support the purchase of books and resources for these communities, with a focus on culturally responsive reading materials.

Reconciliation Timeline

This timeline looks at events that have made an impact on the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1788 The First Fleet arrives and builds a settlement at Port Jackson in Sydney, New South Wales.

1901 The Commonwealth of Australia is formed.

1962 The *Commonwealth Electoral Act* is amended to give the vote to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Federal elections.

1967 On May 27, more than 90 per cent of Australians vote 'Yes' in a referendum to give the Australian Government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

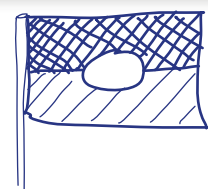
1975 The Australian Parliament passes the *Racial Discrimination Act* to help ensure that Australians of all backgrounds are treated equally and receive the same opportunities.

1770 Captain Cook enters Botany Bay on the *Endeavour*. The British Government does not recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their special connection with the land. Instead, they claim the land for the British Crown and declare that Australia is *terra nullius* – land belonging to nobody.

1948 The *Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act* gives the category of 'Australian Citizenship' to all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for the first time. However, at a state government level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still suffer legal discrimination.

1972 **January:** The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra, campaigning for the recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

December: The Australian Government establishes the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.





RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

1976

Patricia (Pat) O'Shane becomes Australia's first Aboriginal barrister.



1991

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its final report into the deaths of 99 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian jails.

1993

The United Nations declares 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

September: The first National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation is supported by Australia's major faith communities.

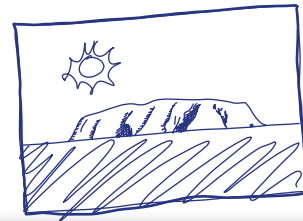


1997

The Bringing them Home Report on Australia's Stolen Generations is launched at the National Reconciliation Conference.

1985

Uluru is handed back to its traditional owners.



1988

The Barunga Statement, calling for rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

1992

February: The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation holds its first meeting in Canberra.

June: The High Court hands down the *Mabo* decision, recognising the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land. The Court rules that Australia was never *terra nullius*.

1996

Following on from the National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launches Australia's first National Reconciliation Week.

1998

National Sorry Day is commemorated for the first time on 26 May.



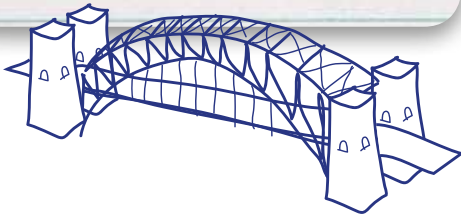
NATIONAL
SORRY
DAY



RECONCILIATION
AUSTRALIA

2000 Reconciliation Australia is set up as an independent, not-for-profit organisation.

May: Approximately 300,000 people walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week, showing support for the reconciliation process.



2005 National Reconciliation Planning Workshop is held; attended by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

2009 Australia supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Previously, Australia had been one of only four nations to oppose the Declaration.



2004 The Commonwealth Government establishes a memorial to the Stolen Generations at Reconciliation Place in Canberra.

2007 Australia celebrates the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum.

June: The Australian Government, led by Prime Minister John Howard, begins an intervention into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.

2008 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Parliament.

2016 What future steps do you think Australia should take towards greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?



This timeline does not contain all reconciliation milestones. It has been designed to mark key events.