



5 FAST FACTS

Reconciliation and National Reconciliation Week

26 May 2010

1. Working together to close the gaps between Indigenous and other Australians benefits all Australians.

When we talk about reconciliation we are talking about a process of building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that enables us to work together to close the gaps, and to achieve a shared sense of fairness and justice.

Closing the Gaps describes the actions that governments, business and community organisations engage with to end Indigenous disadvantage. Reconciliation has no meaning if it isn't aimed at achieving equality in life expectancy, education, employment and other indicators of disadvantage.

In working to achieve measureable equality, Reconciliation Australia encourages simultaneous efforts to improve daily life and address underlying actions that influence daily life. This includes a mix of practical and symbolic efforts. Working together to close the gaps benefits all Australians, not just Indigenous Australians or those who work directly with them. The financial as well as human cost of failure impacts on us all.

2. Building mutually respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australians is core to reconciliation.

Good relationships are based on trust, understanding, communication and mutual respect. Reconciliation Australia's research shows that our levels of trust in each other are generally low and we often fail to understand each other. If we

are to change this, everybody in Australia has a role to play in improving our relationships.

Trying to improve our relationships is happening on many levels. This includes the overarching relationship between the Australian Government and the nation's first peoples, as well as in every workplace, school, sporting club and every community. It also has to happen at the individual level because that is where Australians understand reconciliation as a felt experience.

3. Reconciliation didn't end with the bridge walks or The Apology.

National Reconciliation Week 2010 highlights that a decade after the historic bridge walks it's fair to say the future for reconciliation has never looked brighter. And while there's still a way to go, respect, trust and the knowledge to turn good intentions into effective actions pave the way forward. In the words of the Prime Minister, we can now walk and work together.

Implicit in the concept of reconciliation is justice. The wounds of injustice among us continue to cause pain and prevent us from feeling reconciled. Australians recognise when justice has been achieved, this was felt in the 1967 Referendum and again in 2008 when the nation stopped the watch The Apology. Those involved, feel justice is done when Native Title has been recognized or stolen wages compensated.

When we talk about justice, we are really talking fairness; it's a quality we value and practice as a nation. While a sense of justice may be felt at the personal level, a belief in fairness is collective. When we work together and succeed by building good relationships, we experience a shared sense of what is fair and just.

4. National Reconciliation Week is a time to reflect on what we can do to make a difference.

In 1993 faith communities of Australia started the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation. Following its success, the week was expanded in 1996 to become National Reconciliation Week to provide nationwide focus for all reconciliation activities. This is a time for all Australians to commit to changes and actions within their circle of influence to contribute to a more mature and inclusive

Australian community. This year will be the 15th year of National Reconciliation Week. It also marks 10 years since the bridge walks for reconciliation.

5. We all have a role to play in reconciliation.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the bridge walks for reconciliation, this National Reconciliation Week asks all Australians to think about what actions they can take individually and as part of their community to contribute to a reconciled nation.

When people come together to share conversations and share in each other's hopes and dreams for a better Australia, reconciliation takes another step forward. You can celebrate our success so far by holding a BBQ or morning tea, or by organizing an event for customers, staff, students or members of the community. It's also an opportunity to talk about what still needs to be done over the next 10 years.

On Friday May 28, Reconciliation Australia will launch a new public awareness campaign that encourages Australians to consider their own role in reconciliation. There will be online, television, cinema, radio and print components and will call for all Australians to help finish what was started. The Unfinished Oz website will be central to the campaign and offers a range of ways for people to get involved in the reconciliation process.

For ideas of how to get involved check out our website www.reconciliation.org.au