



Reconciliation Australia

STRATEGIC PLAN 2001–2003



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS

Taking Reconciliation Forward

One million Australians of diverse backgrounds and views walked together across bridges all round the country last year to demonstrate their active support for reconciliation. An overwhelming majority of Australians support a true and just reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

The challenge now is to transform that broad goodwill and support into real outcomes for reconciliation. Australians have walked together for reconciliation; now we have to work together to achieve real change.

This Strategic Plan outlines how Reconciliation Australia will play its part in making reconciliation a reality in our communities, workplaces, organisations and every facet of our national life.

The people's reconciliation walks and other achievements so far have resulted from the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the efforts of many thousands of Australians over the decade since the Commonwealth Parliament voted unanimously in 1991 to establish the Council.

Reconciliation Australia wants to build on this great legacy of an active and broadly based movement to make reconciliation a reality. And we want to work in partnership with all sections of the community to make sure this happens. Together, we are working towards the ultimate reconciliation vision of:

A united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all.

As we implement the goals, strategies and actions set out in this Strategic Plan, we hope to work with all those who share this vision.

Directors Of The Board Of Reconciliation Australia



Mr Michael Long, an Aboriginal man from the Northern Territory, is Vice-Captain of the Essendon Football Club and won the 1993 Norm Smith medal for Best and Fairest in the grand final. He has recently taken up painting.



Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra OAM, a Gulumula Bapurru man from Eastern Arnhem Land, is the CEO of Aboriginal Resource and Development Services, and a former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation member.



Mr Mark Leibler AO is the senior partner in the Melbourne legal firm Arnold Bloch Leibler and a prominent leader of the Australian Jewish community. Mr Leibler regularly advises, lectures and writes on taxation issues.



Ms Jackie Huggins AM, an Aboriginal woman from Queensland, is Deputy Director at Queensland University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, an historian and author, and a former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation member.



Mr Dick Estens is a cotton grower from Moree and former Chairman of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers' Aboriginal Employment Strategy, which has found many jobs for Aboriginal people in the Moree area.



Mr Joseph Elu, a Torres Strait Islander, is Chairman of Indigenous Business Australia and a strong advocate of economic development for Indigenous peoples. He is a former ATSIC Commissioner for the Torres Strait.



Mr Campbell Anderson is a company director having worked mainly in the resources industries. He has served on various peak business bodies including most recently as President of the Business Council of Australia.



Ms Shelley Reys (Co-Chair), an Aboriginal woman of the Djiribul people, is Managing Director of Arrilla – Aboriginal Training and Development. She is a board member of YWCA of Sydney and former Chair, Women's Reconciliation Network.



The Hon Fred Chaney AO (Co-Chair) is Deputy President of the National Native Title Tribunal, Chancellor of Murdoch University, and a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Commonwealth Parliament.

Overview

Goals, Strategies, Actions



Many people and organisations have endorsed and are working for the reconciliation vision of *A united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all.*

The question is how best to make this vision a reality.

Broad support and goodwill are necessary but not sufficient. To genuinely embrace reconciliation the nation now needs to take the next difficult steps to fully address the underlying structural issues that have created and continue to entrench socio-economic disadvantage, racism, ignorance and apathy.

This Strategic Plan for our first three years provides the framework by which **Reconciliation Australia** seeks to inject substance into the term reconciliation, and to ensure that progress is measured by real changes in the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the wider community.

Our starting point is the final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, aptly titled *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge*. This summarised the historical reasons why Australia needed a reconciliation process, the achievements of the formal decade of reconciliation, the things which remained to be done, and the Council's recommendations for continuing the process towards true reconciliation.

Building on that foundation, Reconciliation Australia has adopted a mission statement setting out its key goals for its first three years, and has mapped out strategies and actions to achieve these goals.

Reconciliation Australia's mission is:

To deliver tangible outcomes for reconciliation by forging innovative partnerships to:

- **achieve social and economic equity for Indigenous Australians;**
- **strengthen the people's movement for reconciliation; and**
- **acknowledge the past and build a framework for a shared future.**

The three goals of this strategic plan flow directly from this mission statement. The plan also outlines the strategies and actions Reconciliation Australia has adopted to achieve each of these goals.

Essential to implementing this plan is establishing meaningful and strategically targeted partnerships with governments, organisations and individuals who not only share our values, but who can help ensure we extend the work of reconciliation throughout the nation.



Goal 1: Achieve Social And Economic Equity For Indigenous Australians

Reconciliation Australia will actively encourage the forging of new partnerships that help all Australians to understand the past, allowing us to move beyond historic grievances so that together we can deal with the challenges of the present and the opportunities of the future.

As a nation we have begun to understand and address the legacy of relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. We have begun to acknowledge that one result of past actions has been the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Indigenous peoples.

The impact of these and other actions have contributed to a situation where Indigenous peoples are both relatively and absolutely disadvantaged when compared not only to other Australians, but also to other Indigenous peoples in developed nations such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

Indigenous peoples and governments cannot address these unacceptable levels of disadvantage alone. All parts of civil society must be involved in building and sustaining partnerships that are based on principles embodying mutual respect, mutual rights and mutual responsibility.

STRATEGIES

1.1 APPLYING THE RECONCILIATION TEST – ACTIONS NEED TO EQUAL WORDS

In November 2000 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) responded to recommendations from the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation for transparent benchmarks to be developed to measure the performance of government programs in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

Reconciliation Australia will work cooperatively with COAG and other relevant bodies and will proactively encourage rigorous monitoring of Australian governments to ensure they meet the reconciliation test: that actions do equal words. Initial priority areas for Reconciliation Australia include improving the delivery of government services and programs by identifying and promoting best practice, and supporting community-based approaches to address family and sexual violence.

ACTIONS

ADOPT A PROACTIVE ROLE TO ENCOURAGE THE RIGOROUS MONITORING OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS IN SETTING TRANSPARENT BENCHMARKS TO MEASURE THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

ENGAGE WITH ALL HEADS OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE THEY HONOUR THEIR COMMITMENTS ON RECONCILIATION MADE IN THE NOVEMBER 2000 COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS.

1.2 RECOGNISING AND PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE – WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Enormous experience and knowledge has already been gained in identifying the critical elements to achieving improvements in vital areas such as health, housing, education and employment for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Too often, however, this experience is neither shared nor recorded in a form that is readily available to those who could most benefit. Practical examples where this has been addressed include publications such as:

- *What works – Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students' education* for the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, which evaluates 80 education and training projects for Indigenous students; and
- *The Grog Book* by Dr Maggie Brady, which aims to assist people who are able to encourage and stimulate community-based action to deal with the problems of alcohol and drugs, drawing on the direct experience of those already working in this area in Indigenous communities.

These innovative approaches need to be adopted and applied in other areas. Similarly, the success of many other positive initiatives should be recognised and more widely promoted.

ACTIONS

IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE MODELS OF BEST PRACTICE IN SERVICE DELIVERY THAT RESULT IN TANGIBLE OUTCOMES.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENTS, INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER RELEVANT SECTORS, ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF USER-FRIENDLY RESOURCES THAT HIGHLIGHT PROVEN BEST PRACTICE IN ACHIEVING MEASURABLE OUTCOMES IN SERVICE DELIVERY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

1.3 PROMOTING INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY – ESTABLISHING THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATIONS

The ability of people to manage and budget their incomes, arrange to pay third parties, purchase food, goods and services, and maintain a level of financial and economic independence and planning, all rely on maintaining informed access to appropriate banking and financial services.

The rhetoric of economic independence is commonly employed as a laudable objective for Indigenous peoples. However, there is little evidence of systematic attention being applied to ensuring Indigenous Australians can even enjoy equitable levels of access to those essential banking and financial services that are taken for granted by other Australians.

There are also wider issues involving Indigenous access to commercial and housing-loan finance and joint-venture capital which can only be progressed through partnerships between the private sector and key Indigenous organisations. These include issues linked to making more effective use of existing assets without putting communally-owned land at risk.

Some positive initiatives have already been taken by parts of the financial-services industry, including Indigenous credit unions. These initiatives need to be built upon and partnerships created between relevant financial institutions, governments and Indigenous organisations to find innovative ways to progress Indigenous economic self-sufficiency.

ACTION

ENCOURAGE AND FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE AND SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES WHICH WILL OVERCOME BARRIERS TO THE PROVISION OF BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS. THIS WILL INCLUDE INITIATIVES TO STRATEGICALLY USE EXISTING ASSETS, TACKLE POOR FINANCIAL LITERACY, AND DEVELOP INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ENSURE AND SECURE THE PROVISION OF HOUSING, COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS LOANS, AND JOINT VENTURE FUNDS.

1.4 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE – A CORNERSTONE FOR PROGRESS

Stable Indigenous organisations that are accountable to their communities, and responsive to their needs and values, form the critical foundations for community and family well-being. Such institutions also provide the essential mechanisms through which leadership is exercised in dealing with governments, their various agencies, and the private sector.

In Australia there has been limited sustained attention given to issues of governance and capacity-building in Indigenous communities through their local and regional representative organisations. Conversely, the issue of Indigenous governance, capacity building and devolution of service delivery has been a central policy focus in Canada and the United States for a number of years. This overseas experience has confirmed that successfully addressing community dysfunction and improving socio-economic outcomes is directly linked to:

- communities having genuine decision-making power;
- exercising that power through effective institutions; and
- governing institutions acquiring legitimacy with the people whose future is at stake.

Reconciliation Australia will partner with Indigenous and other organisations to promote informed and objective debate with a view to progressing policy and practical frameworks for building governance capacity in Indigenous communities.

ACTIONS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY INSTITUTIONS CONVENE A NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO EXAMINE INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE. ISSUES EXAMINED WILL INCLUDE THE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE AND CORPORATE FRAMEWORK, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING, AND BEST PRACTICE IN AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS, AND CONSISTENT WITH CONFERENCE OUTCOMES, HIGHLIGHT AND PROMOTE BEST PRACTICE IN INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE TRAINING, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING.

1.5 MENTORING FOR YOUTH – MAKING THE BEST OF OUR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Targeted mentoring at the individual level often results in young people gaining access to support and opportunities that would otherwise not be available because of cultural differences, geographical location or socio-economic status. Just one of several examples of this approach is the Smith Family's *Learning for Life Program* that enlists sponsors to support individual students from disadvantaged families to participate more fully in the education process through meeting costs for excursions and books. The program provides a financial scholarship and the support of a dedicated mentor for each student. The Smith Family recently launched this program in Western Australia and has specifically targeted Indigenous students. There are a number of related initiatives that could benefit by the creation of a national support network that aims to share experience and knowledge.

ACTION

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL FOR ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR YOUTH MENTORING AIMED AT IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH.



Goal 2: Strengthen The People's Movement For Reconciliation

The people's reconciliation walks and other achievements have resulted from the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the consistent efforts of many thousands of Australians over many years. Reconciliation Australia will build on this legacy of an active and broadly based people's movement to give substance to the word reconciliation, working in partnership with all sections of the community.

STRATEGIES

2.1 FRIENDS OF RECONCILIATION AND NATIONAL LEADERS PROGRAM

There are many Australians who wish to actively support reconciliation by engaging in, or directly contributing to, activities that enhance the process.

The establishment of Reconciliation Australia as an independent non-government body provides individuals and organisations with an opportunity to support and partner with both us and other organisations in activities that result in tangible outcomes.

ACTIONS

ESTABLISH AND PROMOTE A FRIENDS OF RECONCILIATION PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES A RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTING RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA'S WORK. THIS WILL INCLUDE IDENTIFYING TANGIBLE WAYS INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CAN PARTICIPATE IN FURTHERING RECONCILIATION.

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL LEADERS FOR RECONCILIATION PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR MAJOR COMPANIES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO MAKE TANGIBLE AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS TO RECONCILIATION.

2.2 RECOGNISING AND REWARDING EXCELLENCE

There are many individuals, organisations and communities that work tirelessly to progress reconciliation all over the nation. Some are acknowledged and rewarded but too often many are not recognised for their contributions and achievements. Nor are their experiences always recorded in ways that assist, inspire and guide others in undertaking similar activities.

Reconciliation Australia will seek financial support to establish reconciliation awards under a number of categories to be awarded and administered by relevant bodies. These awards would be made to individuals, communities and organisations duly nominated and judged as having achieved the most tangible outcomes for reconciliation over a given period.

ACTION

PARTNER WITH RELEVANT BODIES TO ESTABLISH RECONCILIATION AWARDS THAT RECOGNISE AND PROMOTE TANGIBLE OUTCOMES IN RECONCILIATION ACROSS ALL SECTORS OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.

2.3 WIDER COMMUNITY EDUCATION

One of Reconciliation Australia's principal functions is to promote education about reconciliation. Research commissioned by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation confirmed that, alongside broad support for reconciliation, there remains widespread community ignorance and misunderstanding about the truth of Australia's shared history and the underlying structural causes that underpin Indigenous disadvantage. This will require the formation of partnerships that directly contribute to improved community understanding of the issues that have shaped relationships between Indigenous and other Australians and the ways these issues can be addressed.

ACTIONS

PROMOTE INDIGENOUS STUDIES AT ALL LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL AND TERTIARY CURRICULUM.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA'S WEBSITE AS A CLEARING HOUSE FOR INFORMATION ON RECONCILIATION.

UPDATE AND IMPROVE THE LEARNING CIRCLE KITS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION.

2.4 SUPPORTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

As a result of the activities of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, State Reconciliation Committees were established in each State and Territory to support its work. A national network of local reconciliation groups was also established to promote reconciliation at the grassroots community level. Maintaining cooperative relationships with all parts of the reconciliation movement will remain an important priority for Reconciliation Australia.

ACTION

WORK COOPERATIVELY AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEES, LOCAL RECONCILIATION GROUPS AND ALL PARTS OF THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES CONSISTENT WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA.

2.5 MONITOR AND CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Reconciliation Australia will continue to coordinate and encourage national activities such as National Reconciliation Week and from time to time convene national forums to debate issues and monitor and report on progress.

ACTION

PARTNER WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, CONVENE NATIONAL FORUMS TO ASSIST IN MONITORING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS.

2.6 RECONCILIATION PLACE

Reconciliation Australia has been given a permanent home in the parliamentary triangle in Canberra immediately adjacent to Reconciliation Place.

ACTION

PARTNER WITH RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE EDUCATION ABOUT RECONCILIATION THROUGH RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA'S PERMANENT HOME IN THE PARLIAMENTARY TRIANGLE.



Goal 3: Acknowledge The Past And Build A Framework For A Shared Future

In its final report to the Commonwealth Parliament, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation recommended the establishment of an agreement or treaty process to negotiate the unfinished business of reconciliation. The celebrations surrounding the Centenary of Federation have highlighted the fact that Indigenous Australians were excluded from the process that led to the formation of Australia's Federation. Today we need to ensure Indigenous Australians can fully participate in the nation's public life.

Reconciliation Australia supports the decision of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to inform, educate and seek a mandate from Indigenous Australians on the next steps to be taken. At the same time we accept, without seeking to pre-empt ATSIC's process, that we have a responsibility to promote an informed and objective debate on these issues within the wider community. The issues to be considered are varied, including the rights and status of Indigenous Australians as the first peoples of Australia, and the recognition of traditional and customary law.

STRATEGIES

3.1 HEALING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE

Any quest for reconciliation in Australia has to be based on an understanding of the tragic history of Aboriginal child removal and the general recognition in Australia of what this episode signifies for both Indigenous peoples and other Australians.

ACTION

SUPPORT AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES TO LITIGATION THAT ADVANCE THE JOURNEY OF HEALING FOR THOSE PEOPLE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE FORCED REMOVAL OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN FROM THEIR FAMILIES.

3.2 AUSTRALIAN DECLARATION TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation presented the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* to national leaders, including all Heads of Australian Governments, at Corroboree 2000 in Sydney on 27 May 2000. This declaration has been included in the preamble to Reconciliation Australia's constitution. It is yet to be adopted by all parliaments in Australia.

ACTION

ENCOURAGE ALL AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO PASS MOTIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DECLARATION TOWARDS RECONCILIATION PRESENTED TO ALL HEADS OF GOVERNMENT AND OTHER NATIONAL LEADERS AT CORROBOREE 2000.

3.3 A FRAMEWORK FOR A SHARED FUTURE – GETTING IT RIGHT

If a framework agreement or treaty to settle the unfinished business of reconciliation is to be negotiated and finalised it will require the widespread support and efforts of a great many Australians. To date there has only been a very limited examination and objective debate in the wider Australian community regarding these issues. Reconciliation Australia will contribute to this process in a manner consistent with its independent role.

ACTIONS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING GOVERNMENTS AND ATSIC, CONVENE A SERIES OF FORUMS TO CRITICALLY AND OBJECTIVELY EXAMINE THE ISSUES RELATING TO AN AGREEMENT OR TREATY AS A MEANS OF PROGRESSING RECONCILIATION.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER MATERIALS THAT UNDERPIN AN INFORMED AND OBJECTIVE DEBATE ON ALL THE RELEVANT ISSUES.

SUPPORT APPROACHES AIMED AT ENSURING CLEARER DEFINITIONS OF CUSTOMARY AND TRADITIONAL LAW, AND BUILD UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT AMONG THE WIDER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY FOR THEIR CONTINUING APPLICATION.

Reconciliation Australia



Reconciliation Australia is the independent, non-profit body established by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to provide a continuing national focus for reconciliation when the Council ended its work on 31 December 2000. Our role is to maintain a national focus for the reconciliation process, report on progress to the Australian community, circulate information, encourage partnerships, and provide forums for discussion.

While Reconciliation Australia received one-off seed funding from the Commonwealth Government, the amount currently available to meet Reconciliation Australia's entire costs represents the equivalent of six months operation of the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Because we are an independent, non-government and non-profit body, we rely on community and corporate support in various forms to enable us to carry out our role with maximum effect. As with the Council during its decade of work, we can only achieve these aims with broad community backing and in partnership with organisations and individuals in the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and wider communities.

To stay alive, reconciliation needs more than just goodwill. It also requires your active contribution and financial support.

One immediate way you can help is to become a Friend of Reconciliation by donating to Reconciliation Australia. All donations are tax deductible.



Find out more about
Reconciliation Australia at:

www.reconciliation.org.au

Contact Reconciliation Australia at:

inquiries@reconciliation.org.au
PO Box 4773, Kingston ACT 2604
Tel: (02) 6295 9266
Fax: (02) 6295 0855

Donations:

Donations line: 1300 734 333

Post donations only to PO Box 2657,
Fitzroy Business Centre, VIC 3065

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Reconciliation Australia Ltd
ABN 76 092 919 769
CFN 16994