



In May, 2007, on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 constitutional referendum, Reconciliation Australia brought together 41 Australians, aged under or around the age of 40 and of Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, for three days on Gundungurra country in Bowral, NSW. Their task was to discuss how to effect real change in Australia on reconciliation and indigenous disadvantage. The participants drafted a practical agenda for steps to be taken, individually and as a group. They also made a formal declaration to reflect both the process and outcome of their talks and their intentions beyond that gathering. They wanted the statement to capture their hopes and ambitions, their places on what they identified as a personal and national journey, their separate and joint responsibilities and their undertakings for the future. They also wanted it to serve as a call to action.

ONE FUTURE FORUM 2007 DECLARATION

Forty years ago, Australians came together in a great act of constitutional change to stand against inequality.

After a decade-long campaign by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working in partnership, Australians acknowledged that something was not right.

In the greatest public consensus about a referendum in the nation's history, an ambition was born for a fairer Australia.

In the decades since, there have been great achievements. Yet forty years on, something is still not right.

Too many Indigenous people are dying young. Trauma and grief haunt black Australia and affect us all. Indigenous cultures and languages are being lost. Poverty and illness are entrenched and inherited.

The funerals of our Indigenous young represent more than the grief of their families. It's a waste of life and a loss for the nation.

Ongoing denial and indifference to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience as part of the national story weighs us down and holds us back.

But this can change.

Our hope is for an Australia which refuses to let injustice, poverty and discrimination persist.

Our hope is for an Australia where all children can thrive, share in and contribute to our national wealth.

Our hope is for an Australia which recognises the unique standing of our First Peoples and respects their cultures within a diverse modern nation.

Realising these hopes requires a bold new effort. In this time of great prosperity, we have the resources to bring about great and lasting change.

But to do this, we must renew the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This will require us to:

- Recognise the distinct rights of Indigenous peoples
- Understand our own identities, culture and values to forge a new shared identity

- Share the responsibility to eliminate injustice and foster reconciliation
- Embrace our need for healing and cultivate a culture of storytelling

To get there, we must act together, as well as making distinct commitments to bridge the gulf in understanding.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, we affirm that we have inherent rights to land and culture. These rights are not separate to a modern Australian state, but instead enrich the fabric of the nation.

We draw strength from our Elders and Ancestors and commit to build on the legacy they have created for us. We commit to:

- leading the hard discussions about our IDENTITY and what it means to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- taking the challenge to and ENGAGING our communities to realise our full potential;
- eliminating and HEALING our own violence, shame, abuse and apathy;
- developing a new VOICE for the way we relate to each other nationally.

We assert our right to determine our own futures. We invite all Australians to join us in creating a modern nation where everyone's rights and commitments are valued and protected.

As non-Indigenous people, we acknowledge injustices past and present. We have profited from Indigenous dispossession. We have cultivated the disadvantage of Indigenous people and advanced at their expense. We say sorry.

We commit to:

- confront RACISM wherever we encounter it;
- change government and other institutions to eliminate DISCRIMINATION and respect and involve Indigenous people;
- support Indigenous LEADERS carrying the weight of expectations;
- engage with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS about the past, present and future;
- build a new MOVEMENT of Australians committed to justice.

Together, we will forge a partnership based in mutual respect and shared ambition.

There is an urgency to this task. The cost of inaction is great, and grows greater the longer we delay.

Reconciliation is everyone's business.

We want Australia to be the best it can be. We want to make things right.