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## **An Open Letter to the People of Australia**

On the fourth anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, the Australian Reconciliation Network encourages all Australians to consider carefully the recommendations made by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We believe that recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution is another positive step forward for our nation. The Panel has produced an excellent report that shows viable options exist to achieve this goal.

Many Australians would be surprised to learn that our Constitution currently allows Governments to discriminate against any group on the basis of race. We believe this is out of touch with modern Australia and does not reflect who we are as a nation today.

Historically it has been the Australian people who have lead the way towards reconciliation—overwhelmingly voting YES in the 1967 Referendum to count Aboriginal people in the census, walking across bridges in crowds of hundreds of thousands in a show of reconciliation, and turning out in droves to watch as Kevin Rudd made the formal Apology—unifying moments in our history that should not be forgotten.

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution continues the unfinished business of the recommendations made by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 2000.

Extensive community consultations and polling that informed the Panel's report suggest that changes are worthy and capable of support for a referendum.

We have before us a tremendous opportunity to define our nation's story and take another step towards a reconciled nation. We share a vision for an Australia which recognises and is proud of our unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and celebrates the diversity which makes our nation great.

We therefore encourage all Australians to consider carefully the Panel's proposals to amend the Constitution.

Signed:

Dr Tom Calma and Ms Melinda Cilento, Reconciliation Australia Co-Chairs

Kristy Masella and Kerrie Murphy, NSW Reconciliation Council Co-Chairs

Aunty Heather Castledine and Peter Jackson, Reconciliation Queensland Inc Co-Chairs

Renai Dean and Keith Gove, Reconciliation Victoria Co-Chairs

Jim Morrison and Keith Bodman, Reconciliation WA Co-Chairs

Prof Peter Buckskin PSM FACE and Hon. Robyn Layton QC, Reconciliation South Australia Co-Chairs

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