

National Reconciliation Week 2017: Let's take the next steps

Narragunnawali Teaching and learning ideas

This National Reconciliation Week (NRW), we reflect on two significant anniversaries in our nation's reconciliation journey—50 years since the 1967 referendum and 25 years since the historic Mabo decision. As we commemorate these significant milestones, we ask all Australians to be a part celebrate NRW by taking the next steps.

Each year National Reconciliation Week (NRW) celebrates and builds on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. It is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to explore how each of us can join the national reconciliation journey.

NRW is held from 27 May to 3 June each year. Preceded by [National Sorry Day](#) on 26 May, NRW is bookended by two key events in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

- [27 May 1967](#) – the referendum that saw more than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Australian Government power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise them in the census.
- [3 June 1992](#) – the Australian High Court delivered the Mabo decision, which recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a special relationship with the land. This paved the way for land rights or Native Title.

A brief history of National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) started as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993 (the International Year of the World's Indigenous People) and was supported by Australia's major faith communities. In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launched Australia's first 'National Reconciliation Week'. In 2000, Reconciliation Australia was established to continue to provide national leadership on reconciliation. In the same year, approximately

300,000 people walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of NRW, showing support for the reconciliation process.

This year's theme

NRW has a different theme each year – the 2017 theme is '*Let's take the next steps*'. As we reflect and commemorate two significant anniversaries of reconciliation in Australia, we look to take the next steps together in our national reconciliation story.

50 Year Anniversary of 1967 Referendum

This significant anniversary commemorates 50 years since the vote to end discrimination to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian constitution by allowing the government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With the result being overwhelmingly yes (97.77%) this was a significant step towards reconciliation in Australia.

25 Year Anniversary of the Mabo Decision

This significant step in reconciliation saw Eddie Mabo challenge the Australian legal system in recognising the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners of their land. The result of this case saw the high court pass down the fact that Terra Nullius (Land belonging to no one) should never have been applied to Australia.

Talking about reconciliation

When [discussing reconciliation](#) with students and children, a good place to start is to talk about key terms such as friendship, harmony, difference, respect, acceptance and understanding, and how these elements already function in our everyday lives.

Some starting points to ask students and children when discussing reconciliation:

- What does reconciliation mean?
- Why would there be multiple definitions for '*reconciliation*' that make sense?
- What ingredients make a good relationship?
- What makes you feel pride (both in oneself and those around you) and what happens when you feel disrespected?
- Why is it important to respect others?
- How can we learn from each other?
- What can we learn from history?
- Why is it important to learn from history?

It is important to consider that reconciliation means many different things to different people. In Australia and in schools and early learning services, reconciliation means working to understand and learn about different values and how we exist in many different ways, and the benefits of learning about this. An important and large part about learning about and respecting Australia's First Peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Considerations for schools and early learning services hosting NRW events

- Remember to register events organised by your school or early learning service, whether big or small, public or private, on the [NRW website](#). This assists Reconciliation Australia to understand Australia's engagement with the week.
- Make sure to leave plenty of time to organise speakers and to let people know about your event—remember building respectful collaborative relationships with your local community is at the heart of reconciliation.
- Put NRW on the agenda of an all staff meeting to encourage your whole school or early learning service community to get involved and put forward ideas. This is also a good opportunity to discuss the 2017 theme—*Let's take the next steps*.
- Include a story in your newsletter, on your website or send home a flyer of events to encourage parents, families and your local community to attend.

Ideas for action

NRW is a great opportunity for schools and early learning services to organise and attend public events as a way of strengthening community understanding and engagement with reconciliation.

Visit the NRW website (www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/get-involved/) for tips on how to make the following suggested activities happen in your school or early learning service, and head to the [Narragunnawali Platform](#) to find additional resources to extend the conversation and activities beyond NRW for your school or early learning service.

Organise a Welcome to Country: A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners from the Country in which your school or early learning service is built, to welcome visitors to their Country. A Welcome to Country usually occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or English.

Acknowledgement of Country: An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for/to Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. An Acknowledgment of Country can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are connected to another place. The act of being Welcomed to and Acknowledging Country are a continuation of protocols that have been practiced for thousands of years and are a significant element of respect.

Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP): Your school or early learning service can continue promoting reconciliation throughout the year by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). A RAP is a formal statement of commitment to building relationships and respect with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#) makes the first steps to develop a RAP easy.

Here you will find a list of actions, practical steps and measurable targets for your school or early learning service to develop and implement in the classroom, around the school and with the community; a series of [professional learning](#) and [curriculum resources](#), and a chance for you to put your school or early learning service on the 'Who has a RAP?' [map](#).

Host a morning tea or lunch: Bringing your school or early learning service community together for a morning tea demonstrates that reconciliation is an important priority and will encourage participants to stop, reflect and take notice of its place in their own lives.

Participate in local community events: During NRW, public events are being held across the country – including other schools, early learning services, community centres and local parks. Many of these events are free, and in the spirit of reconciliation, open to schools, services and community members interested in building new relationships based on respect.

Promote NRW on social media: Social media is a great way to share your NRW experiences and to join in the national conversation about reconciliation between 27 May and 3 June using the hashtag #NRW2017.

Join the Narragunnawali community: [Narragunnawali](#) assists schools and early learning services to bring reconciliation to life in classrooms, around schools and services and with the community all year round, not just during NRW.

Fly or display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags: Flying or displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags is a highly visible and physical symbol of respect. This act demonstrates Australia's recognition of its First Peoples and promotes a sense of community partnership and a commitment to reconciliation.

Screen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander films and TV programs: The stories and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are exceptionally diverse. Films, television series and documentaries that tell these rich stories, especially those made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, producers, directors and actors, are an accessible way to continue your learning journey around the histories and cultures of Australia's First Peoples. Use our [viewing guide](#) to select films and programs of interest, or tune in to NITV during NRW to watch a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused programs.

Visit sites of cultural significance: Visiting sites of cultural significance within your town, city or surrounding national parks can provide a different perspective on the land where you live, work or play and allow you to learn about the Traditional Owners of the area. Working with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to learn about and visit sites of historical and cultural significance will also enrich relationships, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, Country and Place.

Learn about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander art: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have used a variety of media to tell stories for thousands of years. Paintings, carvings, weavings, dance, song and other art forms continue to be a way to pass on stories, histories and knowledge across generations. You can deepen your understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions by inviting artists to your school or early learning service to share their art making practice.

Curriculum Ideas

These teaching and learning ideas are designed for early learning, primary and secondary school settings, but it's up to you as a teacher to determine how to make the ideas relevant and suitable for your class. You will see that all of these activities can be made age-appropriate with some adjustment and thought. Have fun trying them out this National Reconciliation Week (NRW). Remember these are just a few suggestions and the possibilities are endless. You may also like to explore the *Narragunnawali Platform* for other curriculum resources to extend learnings and teachings about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures beyond NRW.

Talk about the theme: The theme for NRW 2017 is '*Let's take the next steps*' reflects the nature of our Nation's reconciliation journey so far, and looks forward, taking the next steps in this continuous journey. Earmarked by the two key anniversaries of the 1967 referendum and the 1992 Mabo Decision. In reflecting on and discussing *taking the next steps* it is important to acknowledge and discuss the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reconciliation in Australia.

View the NRW poster [here](#) and discuss the theme and the significant element portrayed on the poster.

Create your own NRW poster: Students can create their own NRW poster based on the theme 'Let's take the next steps'. Discuss the importance of the type of images, layout, size and quantity of text, colour and composition for effective communication and to grab attention. When creating a poster, ask students to consider what the purpose of the poster is, who the audience might be, and why certain images and text have been included in the poster. *Take a picture of your posters and send them to schools@reconciliation.org.au*

Postcard from the future: Ask students to imagine they are living in a future Australia that has achieved reconciliation. As a class, think about what a reconciled Australia looks like, sounds like and feels like and brainstorm a list of the things that might have contributed to this achievement. You might like to use the five dimensions of reconciliation on page 7 of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia [report summary](#)* to guide your discussion. Ask students to design their own postcard to send from future Australia to a friend or significant person, telling the recipient what life is like. Choose an eye-catching picture to draw, paint or print. *Send your postcards to schools@reconciliation.org.au*

Our shared history – reconciliation jigsaw: Students explore our shared history using Reconciliation Australia's [Share our Pride timeline](#), the [2017 NRW Reconciliation Timeline](#) and/or the timeline on page 4 and 5 of [The State of Reconciliation in Australia report summary](#). Reconciliation Australia's Our Story webpage may also serve as a useful stimulus for this activity.

Individually or in small groups, select one milestone for reconciliation on the timeline and explore its significance by answering the questions below:

- What was the date, location and name of the event?
- What happened at the event or on that date?
- Who did it affect and how?
- Who were the main people involved?
- What is the significance of the event to reconciliation?
- How is the event remembered today?

Students may need to do some further research on the event to answer the above questions. Students could create a research poster that summarises answers to the questions. If images are used in a poster activity, please ensure that correct protocols are followed in regards to warnings of possible images of deceased persons, and ensure that the images are sourced appropriately.

Come together as a class to place the key events within a timeline of reconciliation and discuss the possible next steps for reconciliation in Australia. What could these steps look like in a

classroom and school context compared to a nationwide context? What next steps might you be able to take as an individual?

- View on platform [here](#).

Host a screening of a documentary that looks into significant dates, events or people: As this year is the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, the 25th year of the Mabo Decision, and the 20th anniversary of the [Bringing Them Home Report](#), explore these events from different perspectives and lived experiences by screening some of the following kinds of documentary resources in your class or school:

- Vote 'Yes' – A short film directed by Nick Waterman, featuring Miranda Tapsell (The Sapphires) depicts the feelings and experiences of voting day in the 1967 referendum. <http://vimeo.com/flickerfest/voteyestrailer>
- [Mabo documentary series](#) - written and directed by Adrian Wills for ABC Television's Indigenous Department. This series delves into the history, life and legacy that Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo lived, fought for, and left behind for his community.
- The Healing Foundation's [Telling Our Stories - Our Stolen Generations](#) Are a collection of vignettes recorded by the Healing Foundation that tell of the strength and resilience of members of the Stolen Generations.
- [Servant or Slave](#) – Explores some of the lived experiences Aboriginal girls endured during the Stolen Generations through the stories of five women.

Create an artwork: Involving your whole class or whole school, perhaps in conjunction with a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, collaborate to create a mural linked to the theme '*Let's take the next steps*'. As a suggestion, you may consider allowing students to paint the bottom of their feet, or paint a printed footprint template. Encourage students to sign their names underneath their footprint, and to write down their thoughts of what they could do as their personal "next step" towards advancing reconciliation, or what their class, school or community's next most powerful step might be. Consider extending the collaborative involvement in this activity to wider local community members.

Professional learning

The reconciliation process is an important part of Australia's story and our national identity. NRW is a great opportunity for staff to learn about reconciliation history and contemporary issues through the following professional learning suggestions:

In the lead up to NRW, dedicate some specific time to engage your staff in an NRW-focused workshop.

Start the workshop with a research or reflection session to think about the historical context of NRW, [dates of significance](#), and about the trajectory of NRW themes celebrated over time. You may wish to consult resources such as Reconciliation Australia's [NRW website](#), or this 'What Is National Reconciliation Week?' [NITV Explainer](#).

Amongst yourselves, discuss questions such as:

- What is the historical background to NRW celebrations?
- Why is it important to continue to celebrate NRW today?
- How does celebrating NRW in the classroom, around the school and with the community contribute to the wider process of reconciliation?
- What does this year's NRW theme mean to you and your school or early learning service?
- How does this year's NRW theme compare to the themes of previous years? Do they complement or build on each other?
- What are some of the issues that still surround NRW celebrations, and the NRW movement in general? How could we work towards addressing these into the future?

Based on these discussions, work together to critically consider ideas for incorporating this year's NRW theme into curriculum activities, and for celebrating NRW in your classrooms, around your school or early learning service and with the community.

My Acknowledgement of Country: Acknowledging Country has become common practice at the start of events such as school assemblies, meetings, and presentations. Sometimes we forget about the significance of the act of acknowledging Country. In this activity, staff develop their own unique and meaningful Acknowledgement of Country that they can use on an ongoing basis. For support with this activity, please refer to the resource on the [Narragunnawali Platform](#)

Have a yarn: Positive change starts with conversations which encourage the open exchange of ideas and build shared understandings. Set aside some time with your colleagues during NRW to form a yarning circle and discuss the importance of reconciliation in our nation's story, in your workplace/community, and in your own life.

Ensure you respect the protocols of the [yarning circle](#) process by providing all participants with an opportunity to have their say. Each participant should speak, one at a time, and be heard without interruption. This process develops deep listening skills and the ability to show respect in the face of differing views.

Learn From Others: Take the opportunity to reflect on previous projects and ideas, to help develop your own unique celebrations of NRW, and to extend it beyond a week in your calendar year. A [professional learning resource](#) has been developed to support you with this activity.

Hold TED screenings: The journey towards reconciliation forms a significant part of Australia's story, as do the stories of both trauma and triumph told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples. TED talks give us access to these stories, told first hand in moving and motivating ways by diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.

How to make this happen:

- Most TEDx talks are less than 20 minutes in length, so can quite easily be screened via YouTube at a staff meeting during NRW.
- There are many incredible talks, but here are a few that speak strongly to reconciliation:
 - *Science, art, and reconciliation* by Steven Tingay at TEDxPerth
 - *ONExSAMENESS* by Dr Anita Heiss at TEDxBrisbane
 - *Two worlds* by Ingrid Cumming at TEDxPerth
 - *IndigenousX* by Luke Pearson at TEDxCanberra
 - *ONExEAR* by Michael Williams
 - *All you need is... TO DREAM* by Chris Sarra TEDxBrisbane

Host a book club: Reconciliation is an important part of our nation's story and reading books can impart many different perspectives on this story and fill in historical blind spots. While we can learn much from reading alone, hosting a book club can provide even more insight by encouraging meaningful discussions about reconciliation and sharing ideas and viewpoints.

How to make this happen:

- Use our reading guide to pick books of interest focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.
- You may like to hold a one-off book club during NRW, or continue reading throughout the year by holding a discussion group monthly or every two months.

Other, free reconciliation professional learning resources are available on the Narragunnawali platform [here](#). The reconciliation journey is important all year round, consider other resource To promote reconciliation among staff and students all through the year.

- The book club discussion could take place in person, or if pressed for time to gather, through a private online forum.
- Consider posing a few questions to guide your discussion. Try to move beyond likes and dislikes to questions such as:

*What did you learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories or peoples?
How do you think the book could start a dialogue about reconciliation?*

If your book club successfully runs for a year, you may like to vote on your favourite book and host a reading of select passages during the next NRW.

Let us know what you're reading during NRW using the hashtag #NRW2017.

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