



**MEDIA RELEASE – 19 January 2012**

## **Clear support to bring Australia's Constitution into the 21st Century**

Reconciliation Victoria, ANTaR Victoria and the Victorian Council of Social Service welcome the recommendations in the report released today by the Panel appointed to consider recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution.

The Panel's report has been developed from a strong process of community engagement. Australians were clear that they want recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution, and for the racist elements to be removed.

'This historic referendum will allow Australians to re-think the nation through a Constitution that reflects who we are today – a country that embraces our diverse cultural heritage, acknowledges our First Peoples rights and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as the oldest continuing cultures in the world,' said Dr Peter Lewis, ANTaR Victoria Spokesperson.

'All levels of government now have a role to play in facilitating a referendum and in helping to secure broad community support to ensure the Australian Constitution reflects our community today. We need to build on the significant steps made by the 1967 Referendum and the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008 and embrace full recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,' said Carolyn Atkins, Deputy Director of VCOSS.

'In 1967 over 90% of Australians voted YES to count Aboriginal people in the Census. Now Australia has the opportunity to take the next step and shape an Australian identity that we can all feel part of and proud of, and to ensure that Australia's Constitution reflects who we are as Australians,' said Keith Gove, Reconciliation Victoria's Co-Chair.

Reconciliation Victoria, ANTaR and VCOSS urge all stakeholders to embrace the considered advice of experts on this important area and support these changes to bring Australia's Constitution into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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