

working towards just
and respectful
relationships between
Aboriginal and other
Australians

Newsletter Spring 2011

Reconciliation Victoria
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QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Reconciliation Victoria's funding restored

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Jeanette Powell recently announced the reinstatement of funding for Reconciliation Victoria. The Minister announced that the Coalition Government will provide \$800,000 for Reconciliation Victoria over the next four years.

"Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians is a critical part of the Coalition Government's commitment to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians," Mrs Powell said.

"We still have a long way to travel on the path to genuine reconciliation and closing the gap."

"Reconciliation is about a mutual process

of recognition and respect based on the commitment to building and maintaining an ongoing relationship that delivers real outcomes."

Reconciliation Victoria has been funded to develop a Victorian Reconciliation Framework and to undertake community education in the Victorian community (see over page for details).

We have re-invigorated Council and have appointed a Statewide Coordinator and Project Support Officer, and are in the process of recruiting a Project Coordinator (see P. 8 for details).

We have recently moved into an exciting collaborative space, *Hub Melbourne*, in Bourke Street, near Southern Cross Station. (See P. 8)

Constitutional Recognition

Reconciliation Victoria, along over 3,400 other organisations and individual Australians, recently made a submission to the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (<http://youmeunity.org.au/have-your-say/submissions> see Submission #3224).

Rec Vic expressed our support for changing the constitution to reflect a **contemporary vision for our nation** that is embraced by all Australians. We believe this vision is of an Australia that:

- does not discriminate on the basis of race,
- upholds principles of justice, fairness and human rights,

- celebrates the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures to our national identity and as the oldest continuing cultures in the world,
- acknowledges Australia's shared history and articulates the basis for an improved future relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

We believe this is an historic opportunity to take a significant step as a nation, as we did in the 1967 referendum, towards a reconciled and mature Australian nation. Though significant it is only one step on the long road to achieving meaningful reconciliation, through truth, recognition and respect.

Reconciliation Victoria – The Next Phase

“We aim to empower and support local reconciliation groups and grass-roots communities across Victoria to build the conditions and foundations for a reconciled Australian society.”

Reconciliation Victoria is being supported by the State Government to further reconciliation in the Victorian community through:

- *Developing a Victorian Reconciliation Framework - RecVic will engage with the Victorian community, including government and non government sectors, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community to develop a Victorian Reconciliation Framework that provides a vision and framework for action across the whole community.*
 - *Continuing to work with the local government sector to advance reconciliation in local communities, building on the recommendations from the first year of the Reconciliation in Local Government project.*
 - *Supporting Victorian Government Departments to develop action plans to advance reconciliation.*
 - *Developing and implementing a community education program with local reconciliation groups, to stimulate awareness of reconciliation issues including federal constitutional reform, coordinate Reconciliation Week activities, conduct forums and ensure Indigenous views and aspirations inform community education activities.*
 - *Developing an evaluation plan and associated tools in partnership with evaluation experts to monitor and measure our progress against objectives.*
 - *Seeking sustainable long-term partnerships to augment core government funding.*
- Improve education and understanding about pre and post-settlement local and Australian histories, and continuing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Combat racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 - Promote recognition of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and peoples, and celebrate their valuable contribution to our communities.
 - Foster two-way dialogue and exchange between Aboriginal and other Australians, to advance mutual understanding, relationships and respect.
 - Promote rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians, outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Const Recognition – cont. from P 3

chance of success of a referendum, but also for improving mutual understanding, respect and relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

To create the national conversation that is required for change to be achieved, through ‘majority of votes in the majority of states’, we suggested there will need to be **state-based, intensive, grass-roots campaigns** throughout each of the Australian States and Territories.

Our submission outlined the potential for mobilising the existing grass-roots reconciliation movement in Victoria, featuring the network of Local Reconciliation Groups, with support and coordination from RecVic, to actualise such a campaign and involve the majority of Victorians in the conversation about recognition and Constitutional reform.

RecVic is a bi-cultural organisation made up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Council members. We aim to build the conditions and foundations for a reconciled Australian society. We aim to empower and support local reconciliation groups to engage grass-roots communities across Victoria to:

Constitutional Recognition – cont.

“Reconciliation Victoria expresses our support for amending changes to the constitution that reflect a contemporary vision for our nation that is embraced by all Australians.

RecVic detailed our views on specific changes to the Constitution, drawing on the views expressed by our members and supporters, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians, at forums and workshops held so far. We feel strongly that the Panel’s recommendations to the Government should **make the case for meaningful change** to the Constitution that respects and reflects the views and concerns emerging from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about token or symbolic amendments only, and the risk of missing the opportunity for more substantial change.

Our proposed changes are:

a. The inclusion of a statement of recognition in the body of the Constitution, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the sovereign custodians of the lands and waters of Australia, and the importance of their continuing cultures to Australia’s national identity. This statement of recognition could replace Section 25, discussed below.

Reconciliation Victoria believes this recognition must also acknowledge the suffering and injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since the colonisation of Australia, without a treaty, by the British in 1788.

b. The removal of Section 25, as we believe that Australians do not support discrimination on the basis of race, and thus this Section reflects an outdated mode of thinking, which has been superseded by the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* and Australia’s ratification of International human rights instruments.

c. The amendment of Section 51 to recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Nation’s peoples. This clause should allow for enactment and changes to laws, policies and agreements, with the full prior and informed consent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that protect and uphold their rights as first nation’s peoples.

The requirement for free, prior and informed **consent gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples a say** in the special laws and measures that are made for them. It is consistent with the evidence of what works in Indigenous affairs, and one of the core principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, to which Australia is a signatory.

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/declaration_indigenous/declaration_full_4.html

d. Enabling binding agreements to be made between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other parties. This could be achieved through inclusion of an agreement-making clause, as referred to in the YouMeUnity Discussion Paper as Idea 7. In lieu of this, a provision in the Constitution requiring full, prior and informed consent in relation to an amended Section 51, as outlined above, could create the conditions for lasting and binding agreements to be made on a range of matters.

The *Reconciliation Victoria / ANTaR Victoria Working Group on Treaties and Agreements* made a separate submission (attached as appendix to RecVic submission) that focussed on the issues and opportunities pertaining to an agreement-making clause.

Our submission also discussed our views on the importance of an appropriate process for arriving at the form of Constitutional Recognition to be proposed, that **allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples an opportunity to consider draft questions** and have a say on the proposal for their inclusion in the Constitution. We also encouraged careful consideration of the timing of a referendum to enable the best chance of success.

Finally, our submission addresses the **importance of community education and engagement** in the lead-up to a referendum. A national conversation on these issues, such as was occurring in the lead-up to the 1967 referendum, is important not only for enabling the best

Around the traps: Local Reconciliation Group roundup

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group – Highlights



*Jindi Worobak
Dance Troupe, Zoos
Victoria
Reconciliation Action
Plan Launch,
Healesville
Sanctuary, NRW
2011*

- Our website has been a great platform for promoting our activities: <http://www.geelongonefire.org.au/> and we recently added a blog, which is more appealing for younger members, invites responses and is accessible for local media to access our stories: <http://geelongonefire.blogspot.com/>
- Our 2nd *Reconciliation in the Park* NRW event, organized in partnership with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op, was a great success. We received excellent media coverage and engaged two schools to contribute art works for a display in the Geelong library.
- In July won a NAIDOC award from the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op for reconciliation.
- Submitted a response to the 'Constitution Recognition' panel, and circulated information to inform the public about the plans.
- We continue to push for an effective Reconciliation Plan for the region.

Next steps:

- We have just secured some funding to plan our 3rd *Reconciliation in the Park* in 2012. A working group of GOFRG and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op members is in place to develop the plans.
- We have expressed an interest to Rec Vic to take a lead role in promoting the plans for Constitutional Recognition in our region.
- We are developing a website with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op to raise awareness about the history and culture of the Wathaurong people around Geelong.



*Reconciliation
Manningham's Jim
Poulter explains
significant historical
sites during NRW
2011*

extensive program of events. In recognition the Council won the national award for the best National Reconciliation Week program of any local government area in Australia. Events included storytelling in schools and libraries, history walks, an evening with Kutcha Edwards, an art exhibition, film night, book and historical display launch and other cultural events.

Coming up, during Manningham's Heritage Week, commencing October 12, events planned include a 'History Convoy' conducted by local author, historian and RM member, Jim Poulter. Participants will visit a number of Aboriginal and pioneer historical sites in Manningham, of which Jim has a unique knowledge. Jim will also hold a cultural immersion workshop, explaining how the concepts of Spirit, Flesh and Skin underlie traditional Aboriginal religion and social structure.

Also, in conjunction with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council, RM has embarked on a planting program of traditional ring or arched Marker Trees - trees that marked the traditional travel routes and songlines - in a number of parks. RM is also negotiating with Parks Victoria to replicate this Marker Tree program in all State Parks.

RM is lobbying the local council to have Currawong Park redeveloped as an Aboriginal Heritage Park. It is currently developing an inventory of the bush tucker and bush medicine found in the park, and hopes to take tours of such sites during Healthy Lifestyles Week next February, and again in NRW 2012.

Working with Mick Woiod of Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, RM aims to place commemorative rocks, plaques and Marker Trees on both sides of the Yarra on the Pound Bend Aboriginal Reserve site, the site of the last great intertribal corroboree of the Kulin Nation in 1852. RM will campaign for an official apology to the Wurundjeri for their subsequent expulsion from their country leading up to NRW 2012.

During NRW, **Reconciliation Manningham** (RM) and Manningham City Council collaborated to mount an

Around the Traps – cont.



Jessie Lloyd of Songlines, performing at 'She Sings for Reconciliation', NRW 2011

Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation will hold their AGM and a forum with keynote speaker Rod Jackson, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Sth Melb Town Hall, 18 Oct. 6.00pm. Details: 9699 8804

Throughout 2011, **Queenscliff Reconciliation Mob (QRM)** held monthly screenings of the TV series Heartland. The series has given people an insight into the everyday life of Aboriginal people and the issues they face. The next film to be shown in October will be the life of Charles Perkins made by his daughter Rachel.

In June, QRM helped host a very successful indigenous dinner/auction. The money raised was shared between the Queenscliff Uniting Church and the Gavin Wanganeen Indigenous Scholarship Fund. David Tournier from the Wathaurong Corporation conducted a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country while his son, Jason, played the didgeridoo. 150 people attended and local businesses and members of the community donated items for the auction. \$8300 was raised.

During NRW **Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group** ran a very successful series of events, including a Closing the Gap Forum at the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative. The Forum featured Richard Frankland as keynote speaker and enabled participants from a wide range of organizations to consider how the local community can work to close the gap in the lifespan between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The Group also ran another well-attended Sorry Day event, involving children from local schools and the broader community.

Stonnington Citizens for Reconciliation (SCR) has just entered its twelfth year. We are working with the Stonnington Council on its Reconciliation Action Plan and with local schools to develop curriculum materials based on the local Indigenous history that was

developed several years ago. In 2012 we expect to focus on public education for constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples.

Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation Black History of Whitehorse - DVD Project:

The project involved contacting Indigenous people, who had been placed in children's homes in Whitehorse, with the aim of filming interviews with them about their experiences. Over a two-year time span we held lunches at Kangan Batman TAFE, Aborigines Advancement League, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and Connecting Home. Connecting Home also advertised the project in their newsletter.

During a weekend together with the project team, the 11 participants toured the key sites of 'Allambie', 'The Box Hill Boys' Home', 'Orana' and Tally Ho'. These visits stirred strong emotions from everyone present. Interviews with the participants are being recorded and we look forward to the launch of the DVD.

The Project Team was lead by Whitehorse Friends For Reconciliation and was partnered with Connecting Home and Whitehorse City Council. Financial support was contributed by the Victorian Government through Community Support Fund and Public Records Office Victoria, and the Whitehorse City Council Community Grant Fund.

Blackburn Lake Picnic:

A joint picnic is being planned for Sunday 27th November involving the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and the reconciliation groups in Whitehorse, Maroondah and Casey. It will be an opportunity for the Indigenous and non-indigenous communities to come together in the way humans enjoy most - with food!

The picnic will be held at the Blackburn Lake where people can walk through the Indigenous garden created in honour of Juby Wandin. The MMIGP dancers will also perform.

Promoting Reconciliation through Local Government

“Local councils should play a greater role in facilitating increased awareness within the non-Aboriginal community of local Aboriginal and shared histories, and increased understanding, recognition and celebration of local Aboriginal cultures and communities.”

Over the past year, Reconciliation Victoria has led the **Reconciliation in Local Government Action Research Project**, in partnership with the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and Reconciliation Australia, and with funding support from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

The aim of the project was to explore the usefulness, advantages and limitations of the Reconciliation Action Plan tool for Victorian Local Governments to advance reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. The project assisted three local councils to develop Reconciliation Action Plans - Baw Baw Shire Council and the Cities of Whittlesea and Stonnington.

The report of the project, which is currently being finalized, has made recommendations related to the Reconciliation Action Plan program for local governments, recommendations directed at individual local governments and recommendations for peak bodies and State government regarding support for the local government sector.

The project found that the Reconciliation Action Plan approach can assist local governments to strengthen their relationships with Aboriginal communities, and improve the cultural awareness and competency of Council as an organization, which are central for advancing reconciliation. The project found that Reconciliation Action Plans may be limited in the sense that they are a plan for Council as a corporate entity, rather than a plan for the whole community that the Council facilitates and supports, which includes components for which various organisations in the community have responsibility.

The project recommended that the Reconciliation Action Plan approach be reviewed to explore how it could be strengthened to better leverage local government's unique role to achieve

reconciliation outcomes in the broader community.

The project highlighted the value of both informal and formal relationships between local government staff and Councillors and Aboriginal people and organizations. It recommended that local governments strengthen their approach to Aboriginal community engagement, including through improving cultural competency, to enhance relationships. It also recommended that local governments formalize relationships through structures that ensure Indigenous perspectives and aspirations inform local government planning and decision-making that impacts Aboriginal people.

The project found that relationships between Council and communities are greatly supported through employment of Aboriginal staff, particularly in Aboriginal Liaison roles. The project recommended that local governments employ Indigenous staff, including in the Aboriginal Liaison role, and ensure appropriate retention strategies are in place to support sustained employment outcomes.

The project also recommends that local councils should play a greater role in facilitating increased awareness within the non-Aboriginal community of local Aboriginal and shared histories, and increased understanding, recognition and celebration of local Aboriginal cultures and communities.

Recommendations for the sector as a whole included development of an 'on-line resource guide' that provides a one-stop-shop of information, advice and best-practice in reconciliation initiatives for local councils, and development of good-practice guidelines for Aboriginal cultural competency training for use by councils.

Promoting Reconciliation through Local Gov't - cont.

“The project highlighted the value of both informal and formal relationships between local government staff and Councillors and Aboriginal people and organizations.”

The project found that the role of Reconciliation Victoria as a facilitator, information broker and advisor was seen as invaluable by participating councils. It was recommended that this advice and support be made more widely available and accessible for Victorian local governments.

These recommendations will be considered in the newly established Local Government - Aboriginal Partnerships forum. This forum is being co-chaired by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Local Government

Victoria, with participation of the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Governance Association, Reconciliation Victoria and a number of other Aboriginal and Local Government organisations.

~ Erin McKinnon, Reconciliation Victoria Statewide Coordinator, and formerly Project Coordinator, Reconciliation in Local Government Project.

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National Reconciliation Week 2011

The 2011 National Reconciliation Week (NRW) was an outstanding success, especially considering RecVic's limited resources. The network of Local Reconciliation Groups (LRGs), along with a number of local councils, organised an extraordinary number of events around the state.

Of the 150 events organised around Australia, 80 of them occurred in Victoria, with 21 local councils and 11 LRGs participating. Events included local government flag-raising ceremonies, public forums, art exhibitions, musical events, dinners, public breakfasts, walking tours of significant sites, a writers' festival, film screenings, a veteran's football match, historical displays and family days.

RecVic also hosted a joint forum with the VLGA for local government leaders, featuring presentations from Cr Ken Saunders, Sam Jeffries and Ian Hamm.

RecVic ran two well-attended LRG forums in March and May to promote our Small Grants program and provide an information-sharing workshop for event ideas. We also produced a NRW poster that was distributed to the LRGs, local councils and some schools and NGOs,

and produced an online downloadable NRW Events Calendar. During NRW we also launched our new website and Facebook page, which already has over 100 friends.

RecVic, in collaboration with Songlines, the City of Melbourne and ANTaR, supported the very successful and well-attended “She Sings For Reconciliation” event at the Toff in Town, featuring Emma Donovan and other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists.

Media coverage included radio interviews on ABC 774, 3RRR, 3KND and 4K1G's national Indigenous current affairs program, and promotion in The Age, Sunday Age, Beat, Inpress and on 3PBS and 3CR. Regional coverage included local newspapers in Geelong, Manningham and Shepparton.

NRW provided an excellent opportunity to commence the conversation about Constitutional Recognition. In the coming months RecVic will engage with local groups and community organizations to begin planning for an even bigger and better NRW in 2012.



Wurundjeri Elder, Bill Nicholson Jr, performs smoking ceremony at City of Melbourne NRW Breakfast, City Square, 27 May

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We're on the Web

See us at:
www.reconciliationvic.org.au



Our new home: Hub Melbourne

Hub Melbourne:
"Where Change
Goes to Work."



Hub Melbourne, our new home, is an exciting new, low-cost, collaborative work environment. Its motto is *Where Change Goes To Work*, and it was established to provide a diverse group of individuals and organizations with a space for co-working, meetings and events. It also hosts learning and collaboration experiences that create value for its members, their projects and the community at large.

Members include a vibrant community of from a range of professions and organisations, working on diverse projects large and small. Hub Melbourne has over 80 members, including RMIT, NAB, Swinburne, change.org, Illumination, Beyond Zero Emissions, International Detention Coalition, City of

Melbourne and Good Globe Media.

Apart from the collaborative opportunities that the Hub offers, it is a low-cost office space, in which all facilities are shared. It is also a very flexible workspace, providing a number of areas for meetings, workshops, forums or events of all sizes. It is also very accessible, being just 100 metres from Southern Cross Station, at 673 Bourke Street (level 3).

You can learn more about Hub Melbourne at

<http://www.hubmelbourne.com/>

Who's who at Reconciliation Victoria

Reconciliation Victoria – Council

Vicki Clark (Co-Chair)
Keith Gove (Co-Chair)
Jackie Funder (Treasurer)
Peter Lewis
Renai Dean
Michelle Isles
Melissa Brickell
John Burke
John Smith
Kooramyee Cooper

Staff

Statewide Coordinator – Erin McKinnon
Project Support Officer – Damian O'Keefe
Project Coordinator - Vacant