



Reconciliation Victoria's 2016 AGM and Statewide Forum

Saturday 12th November at the Korin Gamadji Institute, Richmond

Reconciliation Victoria AGM

At the AGM, retiring Co Chair Keith Gove thanked our funding bodies for their continued support and recognised the “terrific work and achievements of the staff including those who left us during the past year”. He also thanked retiring Council member John Smith, who has been “instrumental in RecVic’s local government work including the development and launch of the Maggolee website”.

Fellow Co Chair Belinda Duarte spoke of her excitement of the work on our 10-year strategic plan that will be produced by the end of this year, inviting members and supporters to get in touch for more information or to provide feedback or input.

“Reconciliation Victoria is looking to work more strategically, we want to reflect international and national indicators, as identified in the five ‘dimensions’ of reconciliation in the [State of Reconciliation Report](#) released by Reconciliation Australia earlier this year.

We are looking at utilising the five dimensions as a framework for all sectors of the community to develop a common understanding of reconciliation, and RecVic transitioning into a coordination role across key sectors, to maximise our collective impact.”

Treasurer John Farlow presented the 2015/16 Financial Report. RecVic’s accounts were audited at the end of the financial year and this resulted in an unqualified audit. We were left with a surplus of just over \$7000 at the end of the financial year.

Statewide Coordinator Erin McKinnon outlined the highlights for 2016: the launch of the Maggolee website; our first ever residential regional forum, held at Budj Bim; the 2016 HART Awards; and our internal systems improvement. She thanked our volunteers and staff and welcomed new staff member Aileen Traynor and welcomed back Emily Chauvel Byrne.

Michelle Isles and Deb Chapman were elected unopposed to the two vacancies.

Young Aboriginal musician, artist and educator Brent Watkins, from Culture Evolves, provided the entertainment with some wonderful didge playing.

The panel discussion was followed by a Q&A and lively small group discussion: “From Talk to Action: So what does this mean for me and my role in Reconciliation?”

Approximately eighty people attended the event, and we were very encouraged that there were so many new faces in the audience. People travelled from as far away as Lake Bolac, Ballarat, Bendigo, Queenscliff and Shepparton.

At the Council meeting held immediately after the AGM, Keith Gove stood down as Co Chair - after 10 years at the helm - and Michelle Isles was appointed as the new Co Chair, alongside Belinda Duarte who continues in the role. John Farlow remains as Treasurer.

Panel Discussion: "Young Aboriginal Perspectives on Reconciliation"

The panel discussion, "Young Aboriginal Perspectives on Reconciliation", featuring 2016 Miss NAIDOC Merinda Dryden and Koorie Youth Council Deputy Manager Indi Clark, was moderated by RecVic Program Manager Aileen Traynor.

Merinda spoke passionately of the need to work in partnership to have Aboriginal history taught in the school curriculum, and of how it is culture that provides us with a sense of belonging.

"Aboriginal culture must live in the hearts, minds and actions of ALL Australians because our diversity makes us richer - and together, we are stronger.

This is the history of Australia.

We know more knowledge about other cultures, more than our own. If we don't act on this now then we will have an extinct culture and the knowledge will be lost.

We define our country as having unity, respect and culture, HOWEVER today we all live in a world where we are blinded by past events which prevents us from seeing the near future.

Because of this Australians and Aboriginals have been separated for many years and THIS is our weakest point.

To have a healthy education system, indigenous and non-indigenous people must work in partnership to PLANT the seed for a new beginning of the education system.

Remember without partnerships & culture we remain blinded and disconnected."

Indi Clark spoke of the importance of education and his passion for reconciliation - something that has flowed through his "bloodlines". "Education and cultural awareness are the only way forward for this nation. Education can be the game changer to combat ignorance and prejudice, and you are never too old to learn."

Culture has been central to his life. The biggest lesson we can learn from Aboriginal culture: traditional Aboriginal culture was collectivist – something non-Aboriginal people can learn from – today's [Western] society is individualistic. We can learn "how do we work together, how do we keep each other safe, how do we keep each other strong?"

Indi's message, when asked about what we can learn from Aboriginal culture, was: "just ask, but don't be tokenistic, the one thing our mob will see is that if you are not genuine they will see right through you".