

Grounded in Truth : the pathway to reconciliation



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In 1992, Prime Minister of the day, Paul Keating delivered a speech at Sydney's Redfern Park. In this speech, Keating spoke of recognition. A recognition of Australian history and the suffering and exclusion of indigenous people. Later expressing that Australia would succeed in the challenge of reconciliation.

“We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.” – Prime Minister Paul Keating, 1992

27 years on from this speech has anything really changed? Has Australia met the challenge of reconciliation?

Reconciliation

Reconciliation can mean different things to different people. By definition, it is the act or process of people coming together and moving beyond differences (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). In Australia, reconciliation is about strengthening the relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous people. Reconciliation is not about a single political act in time or a single issue (Reconciliation Australia 2017). It is all the small, consistent steps that lead towards equality, unity and understanding (Reconciliation Australia 2017). All Australians need to be involved so the notion of equality and respect leads to an improved relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. The Mabo decision, the Redfern Speech and Kevin Rudd's Sorry Speech are all important steps in the process towards reconciliation.



National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week is an annual event where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-indigenous people can come together to learn about history, culture and build relationships (Reconciliation Australia 2019). The dates for Reconciliation Week are the same each year and celebrate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey – the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision (Reconciliation Australia 2019).

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2019 is 'Grounded in Truth'. This theme explores the necessity of 'truth-telling' about Australia's colonial history which is characterised by dispossession, violence and racism (NRW 2019). Reflecting on Australia's true past is a crucial step to a unified future where historical wounds are healed and respect between people, race and culture has been harnessed (NRW 2019).

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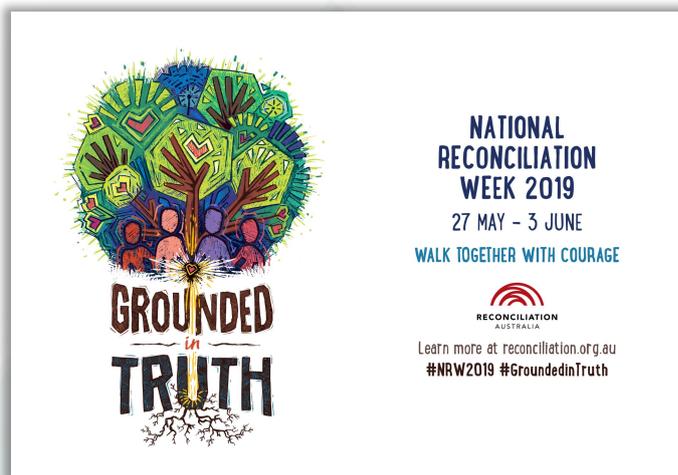
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The Future

Has Australia met the challenge for reconciliation? Has Prime Minister Keating's vision from the Redfern Speech been fulfilled?

Not quite. Over the 27 years since the Redfern Speech Australia has made some serious progress towards reconciliation, however; we still have a long way to go.

It is within yours and my control to take steps to walk together with courage on this path of reconciliation. Together we can make Australia a great place for indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. So, what are you doing to help Australia address its past?



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