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Are we there yet?

Remember 2000? 'Sorry' in the sky over the Sydney Opera House. A million Australians participating in amazing bridge walks. A huge movement committed to the Roadmap for Reconciliation laid out by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation; a plan to re-set the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation laid out four National Strategies: (1) to overcome disadvantage; (2) to seek economic independence; (3) to sustain the reconciliation process; and (4) to promote recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights.

It's worth reflecting on the last decade to assess our progress; to find out if we're there yet.

We've definitely got a few things right. Reconciliation continues in local communities, and most states have reconciliation councils. The Apology was a high point. However, members of the Stolen Generation are yet to receive compensation.

We've also seen private sector initiatives aiming to connect Aboriginal people to jobs, although it's unclear what they've achieved.

We've seen a series of new policies:

'Practical Reconciliation' from the Howard Government and 'Closing the Gap' from the Labor Governments. Despite the increased funding and effort, a serious weakness in many of these Government policies fall down remains the failure to consult and collaborate with Aboriginal people.



Photo: Tim Acker, 2008

Looking back at the Council's strategies, it's clear that the fourth has been overlooked in the last decade.

Work should definitely continue on the other three, but without attention to the fourth strategy, the possibilities of ever arriving at reconciliation are limited.

(continued on page 2)

Are
we
there
yet?

The false distinction between rights and practical outcomes must be rejected once and for all.

(continued from page 1)

What does recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights mean? Acknowledging Indigenous people's special status as our nation's First Peoples is fundamental.

This acknowledgement means:

- 1. Constitutional change** to include a new preamble recognising the status of First Australians. All major parties agreed to this in principle during the recent election campaign, although the wording has to be agreed and a referendum held.
- 2. Constitutional change** to remove the anachronistic section 25, which allows discrimination on racial grounds, and to add a new 'equality' clause.

3. International responsibility. All governments should comply with our international Indigenous rights and human rights obligations, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

4. A treaty. In its final report (2000), the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation recommended that all parliaments recognise that their jurisdictions were settled "without treaty or consent" and to negotiate agreements or treaties.

Some people say the lack of action on the fourth strategy is because the 'rights agenda' has achieved nothing concrete for Aboriginal people.

Yet native title rights – though slow in coming –

have delivered major deals for Indigenous people. One of the largest was finalised in February 2010 by the Yaruwu people around Broome who will receive land worth about \$140 million for development, culture and welfare purposes plus \$56 million in funds to develop local Indigenous capacities.

Hardly mere symbolism!

The false distinction between rights and practical outcomes must be rejected once and for all.

That's why ANTaR is campaigning on constitutional change.

To find out more about our campaign, and what you can do to help, go to our website: http://www.antar.org.au/are_we_there_yet

**David Hunter 2010 Memorial Lecture:
Indigenous incarceration: Justice Reinvestment**

**Mick Gooda (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner)
and a local speaker from Canberra's Aboriginal Justice Centre**

**7.00pm, Thursday 4 November 2010
Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
15 Blackall St, Barton, ACT**

ANTaR ACT - 2010 Report

This year has seen some promising signs for reconciliation in the ACT and major policy breakthroughs nationally.

Earlier this year, we began a campaign on Indigenous incarceration, highlighting the disproportionate rates of Indigenous people in prisons and promoting positive solutions.

Thanks to our advocacy work, the ACT Attorney General is considering a proposal to appoint an 'Indigenous friend' to help young Indigenous people navigate the justice system and get better outcomes.

You can learn more about this in the article on page 6, or by coming to hear Mick Gooda, the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, at our David Hunter Memorial Lecture on November 4.

Nationally, ANTaR welcomed a new National Director, Jacqui Phillips. Jacqui has an extensive background in campaigning and advocacy. ANTaR

pushed for recognition of Indigenous issues, both before the election by releasing our policy platform, and after, when the Labour Government initially removed the Indigenous Health Ministry.

ANTaR strongly advocated for the position to be reinstated, in line with the Government's commitment to 'Close the Gap'. ANTaR congratulates the Government for responding to these concerns, and the concerns of other advocates.

Locally, growing membership allowed us to be more active in campaigns and advocacy.

Along with initiating the campaign on Indigenous incarceration in the ACT, we have continued to reach out to the community through stalls at community events across the ACT. We also have a new website (www.antaract.wordpress.com) so you can keep up to date on our activities.

In the coming year, we will continue campaigning on Indigenous incarceration, as well as looking for ways we can work with our wider membership more effectively (that means you).

We are always looking for volunteers so if you'd like to be involved with ANTaR ACT please drop us an email (katherinermay@gmail.com or matt_m_fenwick@yahoo.com.au) or come to our monthly meetings.

You can also check out ANTaR national's website for lots more ideas on how you can support reconciliation nationally, and in your community.

Thank you

Katherine May



and Matt Fenwick



ANTaR ACT members Phil, Julie and Cherisse at the North Canberra Community Fair

Reconciliation action plans: a journey

Creating a RAP is a great way to explore the possibilities and opportunities for contributing to reconciliation, whatever type of organisation you are part of.

My experience of Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) began when I was involved in finalising the Australian Bureau of Statistics's first RAP. Like many other organisations around Australia, the ABS wanted to turn good intentions into action by embedding steps towards reconciliation into its business. The ABS plan covered issues from recruitment and cultural awareness to the core business of the ABS – statistics.

Statistics have a strong connection here. Reconciliation Australia first introduced the RAP project in 2006 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. This removed section 127 of the Constitution, which stated that 'in reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth... aboriginal natives should not be counted'. Now the ABS provides an extensive range of statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

When I had a career shift, moving into the community sector, I was lucky enough to join Woden Community Service just when it was developing their own RAP.



WCS staff show their support for the RAP at a Close The Gap event in March 2010.

Relationships and respect are core to developing a sound RAP. We opened meetings with an acknowledgement of country, and we placed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in our reception area. We organised a range of events for the organisation to raise awareness of issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For our first event, we screened a Reconciliation Australia documentary on the second anniversary of the apology to the stolen generation, which still makes me tearful.

On 9 August, Mr Nic Manikis (Director of the Office of Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) officially launched the RAPs for Woden Community Service and ACTCOSS. This joint event in Corrorobee Park, Ainslie also included Aunty Janet Phillips welcoming us to country, Bevan Smith playing the didgeridoo, and rap artist 2Deadly (Nathan Carter).

Our challenge now is to deliver on our commitments in the RAP. We want to build on the relationships we've started to develop with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. We want to ensure that the organisation is welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community and that our services are responsive to their needs.

Creating a RAP is a great way to explore the possibilities and opportunities for contributing to reconciliation, whatever type of organisation you are part of. RAPs have been prepared by big corporations (such as ANZ, Qantas and BHP Billiton), small businesses, all levels of government, community organisations, schools, hospitals, universities and others. You can find examples of completed RAPs (including those mentioned here) and information about how to start a RAP at the Reconciliation Australia website:

www.reconciliation.org.au.

- Julie Evans

Sorry Day 2010

ANTaR ACT has supported local Sorry Day events for several years now.

This year, the day reflected on the lack of progress since the 2000 Bridge Walk with a series of half-way bridge crossings around Australia. In the ACT, more than 150 people braved the appallingly bad weather in Acton Park, where they led by Ngunawal Elder Matilda House and co-convenor of the



National Sorry Day committee Helen Moran.

Halfway across Commonwealth Bridge, the marchers sat down, symbolising that justice for the stolen generations is only halfway there.

As one of our volunteers on the day, Cherisse Lyons, put it, "Significant steps have been made, including the apology, but really in terms of the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home Report* it's still an unfinished journey."

When the marchers got to Parliament House they were given feet to stake up around Parliament House, again sym-

Sorry Day walkers at Kings Avenue Bridge.

bolising that reconciliation is only part-way there.

In the evening, a smaller group gathered round a campfire outside the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Barton.

The group listened to members of the stolen generation telling their stories, before walking down to a candlelit vigil at Reconciliation Place. It was a quiet, moving occasion and we hope to see more people there next year.

As well as providing financial support, ANTaR ACT gave logistics support on the day, including putting up a marquee to fend off the weather and helping marshal the walkers.

To find out more about Sorry Day, visit <http://www.nsd.org.au/home/>

Member Profile – Julie Evans

Julie first came to Canberra as a graduate with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1990. One of the most exciting projects she worked on there was South Africa's first post-apartheid population census. In 2008, she went on leave from the ABS to focus on community work.

Julie now works for Woden Community Services (WCS) on *The Big Issue* and is studying for her Graduate Diploma of Community Health and Development.

Julie connected with ANTaR after hearing about us through her work on Reconciliation Action Plans (see Julie's article on page 4).

"ANTaR ACT gives me a community perspective on reconciliation," said Julie. "It definitely complements my work and my studies."

Although Julie describes her role in ANTaR as "the note taker", she's also active in our community outreach. You'll often see Julie at our stalls at community events throughout the year.

When not working, studying, or volunteering with ANTaR, Julie also volunteers for the Red Cross in emergency services, as a deputy team leader with the Canberra City team, and with Vision Australia as an audio describer, helping people

with a vision impairment enjoy theatre performances.



- Interview by Bonnie Learmonth

Review

Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route

Yiwarra Kuju is a richly informative exhibition, showing the complex interweaving of Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories at the heart of many Australian stories. It tells the story of the Canning Stock Route from an Indigenous perspective, starting with the dark history of conflict, abuse, and separation that the early years of the Route brought to the region. Through a collection of paintings, contemporary cultural objects and documentary material, the exhibition brings to life the vibrant colour, irrepressible joy, and sacred connection to Country that lives on in desert communities today.

Australia's expanding pastoral industry developed stock routes allowing access to water and grasslands as stock moved around the country. Many Aboriginal people found work as stockmen and labourers in the pastoral industry. The history of the Canning Stock Route is, therefore, not just a story of development in Western Australia, it is a case study of these issues Across Australia's pastoral history.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the Canning Stock Route was in use until 1959, irrevocably affecting the lives of Aboriginal people in the region. In the end, many desert people followed the stock route out of the desert and onto cattle stations, such as Billiluna, or missions, such as Balgo and Jigalong.

"Canning made a mess of the wells and Dreaming tracks and sacred sites and law sites. He used blackfellas to get where he wanted to go, to make his mark. So it's about kartiya [non-Indigenous people] coming and making that line of wells.

But in another way, all those wells opened up our Country

for people to travel back to Country with their kids. Because if you didn't do that the Country would be lost. Now it's easier to get to Country. We've got our own story there, two ways."

(Community project leaders, National Museum website)

The importance of art is clear everywhere in the exhibition. The desert people use paintings to tell their stories, the rich colours and patterns directly indicative of their experiences and their country. Today the area around the stock route is dotted with flourishing art communities linked by the intricate family relations that form the social fabric of the desert.

Exhibition details: National Museum of Australia, 9am-5pm daily (except Christmas Day) until 26 January 2011. Free admission.

- Review by Michelle Fahy



Basket makers from Martumili, Yikartu Bumba, Lily Long, Yuwali Janice Nixon and Dadda Samson
Photo: Morika Biljabu, 2008

ANTaR:

"...perhaps the most significant national community-based organisation for reconciliation and Indigenous rights in Australia."

Former Social Justice Commissioner,
Tom Calma

Join a campaign, inform yourself, donate, subscribe to our newsletter, get involved!

www.antaract.wordpress.com

ANTaR is working locally and nationally on a range of Indigenous issues.

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