Voice calls out for reconciliation

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The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2023 is *Be a Voice for Generations*. The theme encourages all Australians to be a voice for reconciliation in tangible ways in our everyday lives – where we live, work and socialise.

For the work of generations past, and the benefit of generations future, let's choose to create a more just, equitable and reconciled country for all.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is marked every year from 27 May – 3 June.

It is an opportunity for Australians to learn and reflect upon our shared histories, culture and achievements and our part to play in achieving reconciliation in Australia.

The dates for NRW also commemorate key milestones in reconciliation in Australia, the successful 1967 referendum (27 May) and the 1992 High Court Mabo decision (3 June).

NRW is preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, which remembers and acknowledges the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people forcibly removed from their families and communities, who are now known as the "Stolen Generation."

We cannot begin to fix the problems of the present without accepting the truth of our history. Sorry Day asks us to acknowledge the Stolen Generations, and in doing so, reminds us that historical injustice is still an ongoing source of intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and peoples.

Reconciliation Australia's research shows large community support for the next steps in Australia's reconciliation journey, including the Voice to Parliament, treaty making and truth-telling.

The 2023 theme, Be a Voice for Generations, urges all Australians to use their power, their words and their vote to create a

better, more just Australia for all of us.

Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine said the theme called on Australians to honour the work of generations past who fought for justice in Australia and to work together today to tackle the unfinished business of reconciliation for the generations to come.

“There has long been a strong thread in Australian history of people striving to build a just society,” she said.

“Australian history has included many examples of non-First Nations Australians who stood with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during early strikes, protests and notably during the 1967 referendum.

“Australia has a long record of inspiring allyship and solidarity to address centuries of racism and injustice.
“This National Reconciliation Week we urge all Australians to follow in this tradition to ‘Be a voice for generations’, whilealso imagining a better country for future generations.”

Ms Mundine said her organisation’s research indicated a large reservoir of community support for the next steps in Australia’s reconciliation journey, including the Voice to Parliament, treaty making and truth-telling.

“The 2022 Australian Reconciliation Barometer shows 80 per cent of all Australians believe the creation of a national representative Indigenous body is important and 79 per cent believe such a body should be protected under the constitution,” she said.

“And there is growing support for a Treaty between First Nations and other Australians with a 19 per cent increase from 53 per cent in 2020 to 72 per cent today.

“Support for truth-telling also remains very high at 83 per cent for the general community and 87 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.”

Ms Mundine said reconciliation was about building a better nation; a more united Australia that respected and was proud of 65,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, stories and achievements.

“An Australia that believes in the right of First Nations peoples to make decisions about our lives and our communities; and an Australia that stands opposed to racism, inequity and injustice,” she said.

“I urge all Australians to join me in participating in activities this National Reconciliation Week and to raise our voices for the future.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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