Reconciliation and education



A new report provides a comprehensive blueprint for advancing reconciliation in education.

The *Reconciliation and Education: Past-Present-Future Forum Summary Report*, highlights the key challenges, opportunities and recommendations for embedding reconciliation in the education sector.

The forum, held in November 2023, brought together key education leaders and stakeholders from every state and territory in the teaching of First Nations histories and cultures.

Co-hosted by Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education program and the University of Melbourne's Ngarrngga program, the forum explored the past, present and futures of education, and considered the challenges and successes that demand attention as the sector collaborates to drive a stronger future of reconciliation both in and through education.

Forum facilitator and inaugural chief executive officer of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation, Sharon Davis, said the forum showed the vital role of education in supporting reconciliation in schools after the Voice referendum.

"Coming so soon after the referendum, there was a strong sense of determination and purpose among participants that reconciliation in education is as important as ever,"
they said.

The report highlights four recommendations:

1. Build on past work: to understand deeply and critically – and to actively acknowledge – the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and the people and organisations who have contributed to this history-making.
2. Strengthen education policy and implementation: actively focus on the importance of revisiting, strengthening and re-committing to education policy that can further reconciliation, with First Nations voices and perspectives at the core of policy and decision-making processes.
3. Coordinate the sector: work to develop a coordinated and collaborative sector approach toward shaping and actively committing to shared goals, including mapping and modelling how the system can advocate for positive change in

Indigenous education and towards reconciliation.

4. Resource reconciliation: ensure additional targeted financial and non-financial resources – and corresponding policies and commitments of governments – are provided to support teachers and school communities to implement the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their work and practice.

Mx Davis said the forum showed the vital role of education in supporting reconciliation in schools and pointed to the popularity of Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program and the University of Melbourne's Ngarrngga program as proof of the education sector's overwhelming support for the report's conclusions and recommendations.

Ngarrngga director Professor Melitta Hogarth said: "Education plays a key role in shaping future Australian citizens. It is essential that we act on the recommendations of this report, including ensuring appropriate resources and training for educators via programs such as Ngarrngga and Narragunnawali."

"This activity will promote reconciliation and improve relationships between the diverse cultural groups within Australian society."

Both Narragunnawali and Ngarrngga stress the need for the entire education sector to take a collaborative, relational and coordinated approach to addressing these recommendations to enhance a stronger future for reconciliation and truth-telling both in and through education.

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