Bridging now to next

The beginning of National Reconciliation Week (NRW) – 27 May to 3 June – is the anniversary date of the 1967 referendum decision. On this date 58 years ago, 90.77 per cent of Australians voted yes to give the federal government the power to legislate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for our first peoples to be included in the census.

The third of June is equally significant as it celebrates the 1992 Mabo High Court decision on native title land rights, where the concept of terra nullius (no one's land) was overturned as legal fiction.

This year's NRW theme, *Bridging Now to Next*, draws upon the ongoing work of reconciliation connecting the past to the present and future.

You can view more details about these events here and we encourage our members to register for them, which you can do online at the same website.

Reconciliation is about building, strengthening and reinforcing the relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the first peoples of this land and everyone else. It is about truth telling and truth listening to heal the atrocities that happened to our first peoples and breaking those shackles of violence and racism that were part of Australia's colonial past and educating all on this onward road towards reconciled Australia.

As outlined by Reconciliation Australia, there are five dimensions to reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance.

As stated by former Senator Patrick Dodson: "These five dimensions do not exist in isolation but are interrelated. Reconciliation cannot be seen as a single issue or agenda; the contemporary definition of reconciliation must weave all of these threads together. For example, greater historical acceptance of the wrongs done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can lead to improved race relations, which in turn leads to greater equality and equity."

As your union, it is imperative that we too continue with our reconciliation work; to bridge the important work on Aboriginal education and rights done by many who came before us by continuing to build, strengthen and improve.

This year, the SSTUWA will renew and update its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The purpose of our RAP is to look at reconciliation from every aspect of our operations as a union and establish strategies that will strengthen our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and the broader community. The RAP Working Group will work with the union's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee and staff to finalise its RAP.

Our work is always ongoing. One of our key priorities as a union is to help with truth telling and truth listening. Members are always asking us for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander curriculum resources. In the March issue of *Western Teacher*, we shared links to Narragunnawali resources that will assist our members with a wealth of classroom resources linked to specific subject guides, webinars and relevant workshops to reconciliation toolkits. These quality resources are free and require our members to sign up to here.

Equally as important is our work as a union with Reconciliation WA. The SSTUWA has representation at the Reconciliation in Education Industry Network meetings and recently became a member of Reconciliation WA, where we will have more access to a range of benefits for all members regarding Aboriginal education. We will also be able to provide our members with relevant networking events and workshops through our media platforms.

Reconciliation is not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's business, but also everyone's business. Only then can we hope for a reconciled future.



Source: Reconciliation WA



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