Deep listening the key to a reconciled future

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The cooler months are a welcome change to the searing heat and never-ending days of no rain.

Makuru is one of the six Noongar seasons; often represented by the colour blue. Blue signifies the rain and the cold weeks ahead in the months of June and July.

While many gardens may lie dormant, the sodden ground leads to beautiful bouquets of manyat (banksia) blooming and stretching out hundreds of individual flowers, adorning us with their brush-beauty.

Makuru nights are filled with the smoke from prescribed burns and the days welcome hazy sunlight and fog while mali (black swans) glide along the Derbal Yerrigan, preparing for their time to mate and nest.

For me, Makuru is also a time of self-reflection as we step out of Djeran season, where many conversations have occurred about our reconciliation journey, and for the next step towards truth telling and action.

As a union, this will include updating our Reconciliation Action Plan and ongoing work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee on matters that they feel are important for the union to focus on.

The committee has raised the need for the union to focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander new educators and regional members by establishing network meetings. We hope to have at least one regional network meeting this year.

Equally as important is our responsibility to continue supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart in its entirety. *Voice, Treaty, Truth.*

As stated during National Reconciliation Week by Yawuru elder and former Labor senator Patrick Dodson, the “recent federal election result provides the current Labor government with an opportunity to be courageous, the tide of time and ill-wills should not stop them from implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full … [there is] no reason why the establishment of a Makarrata Commission should not be explored and implemented within this term of government. Such a Commission can lay the groundwork to deal with truth-telling and treaty making processes.” Again we will listen to our committee before we take any action.

This year’s theme for NAIDOC Week, *Strength, Vision and Legacy*, is so apt. While we celebrate the achievements of the past, we must not shy away from conversations of commitment to the Uluru statement, prioritising a First Nations voice in our vision for a fair and equitable future.

How else can we support our up and coming young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to lead the path and their communities?

This year’s theme is about the “strength of our young leaders, the vision of our communities, and the legacy of our ancestors.” (For more visit naidoc.org.au)

This year is also significant as it marks 50 years of NAIDOC. What began as NAIDOC being commemorated on one day, has now become a week. It is always wonderful to see many schools, TAFE colleges and communities stop and consider what this week is about; to celebrate our rich history. NAIDOC Week runs 6-13 July.

NAIDOC Week falls in our term break this year, but I know many places of work will still celebrate it in their own special way.

For many SSTUWA members who do prioritise First Nations cultures and histories in their teachings, NAIDOC Week goes beyond just the week.

For the SSTUWA, this theme is so fitting as it encompasses what a union stands for. We stand on the shoulders of giants as

we continue to advocate for justice, truth and solidarity for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Equally as important is the role of allies. The union movement has long stood by and supported our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and communities, and our work will never be done, so long as there is still discrimination, racism and the continued marginalisation or our first peoples.

Take some time to look back at the last 50 years and really take the time to think about what this week means to you. Do some research of the country that you currently reside on, who your local elders are and what you can do to help strengthen true reconciliation.

We know progress has been made to elevate the voices of our first peoples, but we are a very long way from really listening to the oldest continuing culture in the world.

Without us participating in deep listening, we cannot have a reconciled future.



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