

Leading Issues Journal

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In this Issue

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, on 7 December 2000, presented to Prime Minister, John Howard and the Commonwealth Parliament its final report, "Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge." 1 January 2001, will mark the end of the life of the Council that was established as a statutory authority on 2 September 1991. To acknowledge the Council's leadership and extensive achievements, both tangible and intangible, over the nine years of its existence, the Centre for Leadership for Women dedicates this final Issue for the year 2000, to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

In its last term of operation, in August and September 2000, as reported in its final report, the Council for the first time wrote to about 22,000 business and community organisations and individuals, to see how they responded to the national reconciliation documents. The survey asked respondents to indicate: Their activities in relation to reconciliation before the release of the documents; their acceptance of and commitment to the documents themselves; the actions they had already undertaken and those they planned in response to the documents; and the effect they expected these actions would have. By the deadline of 25 October, Council had received almost 1,000 responses, from a wide cross section of people surveyed. Of the local governments that responded, 25% indicated that they had developed agreements with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Business indicated an 18% response rate to developing agreements with the mining sector being particularly strong in this regard. The Council had hoped for a higher response rate, but recognised that numbers would have been limited by the short time for response. It also recognised that as the responses came from city and country areas of all States and Territories, they represent a reasonable cross-section of the Australian community.

As evident by the trends indicated by this sample survey, it is clear that there is still much to be done towards reconciliation. Reconciliation Australia, an independent foundation established by the Council will take over from 1 January 2001 to continue the reconciliation process. However, it is increasingly apparent that if a reconciled Australia is to become a reality, it is ultimately 'up to us'. With this focus, the Centre presents to you a list of selected sections from the Council's final report, "Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge."

(All the information below has been reproduced courtesy of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation)

Background to the Act establishing the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

The preamble to the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991* sets out some of the reasons for, and circumstances surrounding, the enactment of the legislation. The preamble reads:

Because:

(a) Australia was occupied by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who had settled for thousands of years, before British settlement at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788; and

(b) many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders suffered dispossession and dispersal from their traditional lands by the British Crown; and

(c) to date, there has been no formal process of reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians; and

(d) by the year 2001, the centenary of Federation, it is most desirable that there be such a reconciliation; and

(e) as part of the reconciliation process, the Commonwealth will seek an ongoing national commitment from governments at all levels to cooperate and to coordinate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as appropriate to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001.

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Conclusions 'of the decade of reconciliation' by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

Chapter 9 Conclusions, "Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge" December 2000

In reflecting on the experience and outcomes of 'the decade of reconciliation' - a unique process in this nation's history - the Council wishes to place on record some conclusions. We do so to assist Australia's continuing journey towards reconciliation. Our declaration states '...many steps have been taken, many steps remain...'

As the body charged with promoting and overseeing the formal process established by Parliament, the Council and its members have been privileged to take part in that unique experience. Usually, only practice and experience can tell us the validity of what we are trying to do, and the value of what we are trying to achieve.

So we have drawn the following conclusions and principles from the work of the Council and of the tens of thousands of people who have actively engaged with the complex process of reconciliation.

We hope that these will assist all those who wish to take reconciliation forward in the years

ahead.

An idea whose time had come

1. The Parliament's unified decision to launch a formal reconciliation process was the right decision at the right time.
2. Cross-party support for the process and for Council's work was and remains an essential element of success.
3. The time was right for the process to begin, and all Australians can take heart from the positive outcomes so far.
4. Nevertheless, a decade was a short time to address the legacies of 200 years of history, and much remains to be done.
5. The many People's Walks for Reconciliation during and after Corroboree 2000, involving hundreds of thousands, could not have been predicted when the process began.
6. Similarly, nor could the historic achievement of bringing together on the first day of Corroboree 2000 all heads of government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, and representatives of peak bodies and sectors, to support the Council's Vision of reconciliation while openly acknowledging differences on the way forward.
7. The acknowledgment during the Sydney 2000 Olympics and Paralympics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the recognition of their cultures and contributions could not have occurred without the reconciliation process.

A foundation of broad support

8. The overwhelming majority of Australians generally support reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.
9. There is broad agreement that reconciliation is vital for Australia's future as a mature, harmonious nation.
10. The decade has seen a major shift in attitudes, with reconciliation moving from a little-understood concept to a key item on the national agenda coming up to the centenary of Federation.

Diversity within an agreed framework

11. However, people differ on exactly what reconciliation means and how to achieve it.
12. Much of this is a healthy diversity - different views are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
13. The tasks of reconciliation will vary according to local needs and circumstances.
14. It is important to establish an agreed framework for this healthy diversity.

15. Council believes that its two reconciliation documents (the *Declaration* and the *Roadmap*) provide such a framework.

Division on some key issues

16. While Australians overwhelmingly support reconciliation and support many propositions in the Council's documents, they are evenly divided on other issues.

17. For example, despite overwhelming evidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the most disadvantaged Australians, almost half the Australian people believe that they are not disadvantaged.

Opposition, discrimination and racism

18. Ignorance, apathy, resistance and opposition still exist in parts of the wider community about reconciliation and the need to overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage.

19. For that matter, not all Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are convinced about the process. Some ask why should they reconcile when they've done nothing wrong - the wrongs have been done to them.

20. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also remain unconvinced about how reconciliation can improve employment, education and housing outcomes and make a difference to their daily life circumstances.

21. Despite major advances, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders often still face prejudice when trying to rent a home, find a job, hire a taxi, get service in shops and banks, and when doing the simple everyday things that most Australians take for granted.

22. Public awareness and education about such issues remains a key task of reconciliation.

23. Continuing acute disadvantage, discrimination and racism suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remains the biggest challenge for reconciliation.

Not a foregone conclusion

24. For these and other reasons, true and lasting reconciliation is not a foregone conclusion.

25. Reconciliation is hard work - it's a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway.

26. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.

Elements for success

27. **Consultation** with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, other stakeholders, and the broad community, has been essential to get this far, and will be essential to going

further.

28. Consultation has helped identify key issues, find common ground, and develop suitable approaches for going forward.

29. It is critical to listen and hear, not just talk, and to follow up with action.

30. It is important to talk **with** each other, not **past, to** or **for** each other.

31. Successful consultation requires mutual respect and understanding, recognising local protocols, and preparedness to adapt to different customs and cultures.

32. Partnerships based on equality and cooperation are also essential.

33. Working together, people can identify the issues and solve them.

34. Many inspiring examples demonstrate the value of partnerships in practice.

35. Education is crucial for the future of reconciliation, in many senses.

36. Better educational outcomes for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are essential to ensure equality of opportunity with other Australians.

37. The education system should also provide all Australians with the opportunity to learn about our shared history.

38. Some Council members were surprised during major consultations to hear so many people ask 'How come we didn't know about this before?' when discussing our history.

39. Our experience is that understanding of history helps to bring mutual respect and recognition of the diversity of our society.

40. Governments and leaders in all sections of society should also take responsibility for raising public awareness about reconciliation issues through community education.

41. The media has a particular responsibility to provide objective coverage and information.

42. **A strong grassroots people's movement** is the key to ensuring that reconciliation becomes a reality in all aspects of the nation's life and identity.

43. The people's movement has already demonstrated the powerful momentum of reconciliation.

44. It has shown that individuals can make a difference, and produced many advocates for reconciliation.

45. Actions in local communities and organisations are changing things at the local level.

Things which remain to be done

46. While celebrating its progress towards reconciliation, Australia must also acknowledge that outstanding issues remain to be resolved between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

47. Reconciliation requires overcoming differences in social and economic outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

48. A framework for doing this has been outlined in Council's strategies for overcoming disadvantage and achieving economic independence, contained in the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* , and more detailed ways of implementing these strategies are provided in companion booklets.

49. Reconciliation also requires a formal resolution of issues which were never addressed when this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent.

50. To achieve such a formal resolution through an agreement or treaty will require much public discussion and understanding, as well as consultations and negotiations in good faith between all parties.

51. Any such formal settlement will also need to address the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in regard to their rights both as Australian citizens and as Indigenous peoples.

52. In the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* , Council has outlined a strategy to promote recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, and a more detailed booklet explains the issues and how they might be addressed.

53. Council believes that the Commonwealth Parliament should legislate to establish a framework for negotiating the resolution of outstanding issues, and has provided a possible draft of such legislation (see Appendix 3).

Sustaining the process

54. With so much achieved and a framework established, the reconciliation process must now go on to do the things which remain to be done.

55. Council's *National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation process* outlines a framework for how to do this, and a companion booklet provides more detailed suggestions.

56. Sustaining the reconciliation process will require commitment and action at all levels and in all sections of the Australian community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

57. This includes specific organisations and networks at the grass roots - without which the people's movement cannot continue.

58. The Council believes that it will also require a specific body - a foundation - to provide a national focus and national leadership in working towards reconciliation.

59. Therefore, in discussion with a range of stakeholders, the Council has established an

independent foundation, **Reconciliation Australia** , which will carry on these tasks from 1 January 2001.

Final Recommendations by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

(Chapter 10 Final Recommendations, "Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge" December 2000)

After a very extensive public consultation process, the Council drew up two documents of reconciliation: the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* and the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* . At Corroboree 2000 on 27 May 2000, it presented these to the Prime Minister, other national leaders, and the nation as a whole.

The Council earlier advised the Prime Minister that these documents represented its formal recommendations to him as Minister in relation to the 'nature and content' of documents of reconciliation under paragraph 6(1)(h) of the Act.

Paragraph 6(1)(h) of the Act also requires the Council to make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the 'manner of giving effect' to such documents. In relation to the 'manner of giving effect to' the above reconciliation documents, the Council presents the following recommendations.

1. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agree to implement and monitor a national framework whereby all governments and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) work to overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' disadvantage through setting program performance benchmarks that are measurable (including timelines), are agreed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and are publicly reported.
2. All parliaments and local governments pass formal motions of support for the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation and the Roadmap for Reconciliation, enshrine their basic principles in appropriate legislation, and determine how their key recommendations can best be implemented in their jurisdictions.
3. The Commonwealth Parliament prepare legislation for a referendum which seeks to:
 - recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia in a new preamble to the Constitution; and
 - remove section 25 of the Constitution and introduce a new section making it unlawful to adversely discriminate against any people on the grounds of race.
4. Recognising that the formal reconciliation process over the last decade has achieved much and has helped bring Australians together, all levels of government, non-government, business, peak bodies, communities and individuals commit themselves to continuing the process and sustaining it by:
 - affirming the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation and actioning the Roadmap for Reconciliation;
 - providing resources for reconciliation activities and involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their work;

- undertaking educational and public-awareness activities to help improve understanding and relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community; and
- supporting Reconciliation Australia, the foundation which has been established to maintain a national leadership focus for reconciliation, report on progress, provide information and raise funds to promote and support reconciliation.

5. Each government and parliament:

- recognise that this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent and that to advance reconciliation it would be most desirable if there were agreements or treaties; and
- negotiate a process through which this might be achieved that protects the political, legal, cultural and economic position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

6. That the Commonwealth Parliament enact legislation (for which the Council has provided a draft in this report) to put in place a process which will unite all Australians by way of an agreement, or treaty, through which unresolved issues of reconciliation can be resolved.

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NATIONAL RECONCILIATION DOCUMENTS:

The Council ceremonially presented its two reconciliation documents to national leaders and the Australian people at Corroboree 2000. They are the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* and the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* . Below is the *Declaration* and the four national strategies from the *Roadmap* .

("Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge" December 2000)

Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation

We, the peoples of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together in a spirit of reconciliation.

We value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of lands and waters.

We recognise this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent.

Reaffirming the human rights of all Australians, we respect and recognise continuing customary laws, beliefs and traditions.

Through understanding the spiritual relationship between the land and its first peoples, we share our future and live in harmony.

Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.

Reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians. Many steps have been taken, many steps remain as we learn our shared histories.

As we walk the journey of healing, one part of the nation apologises and expresses its sorrow and sincere regret for the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the apologies and forgives.

We desire a future where all Australians enjoy their rights, accept their responsibilities, and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

And so, we pledge ourselves to stop injustice, overcome disadvantage, and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination within the life of the nation.

Our hope is for a united Australia that respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.

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Roadmap for Reconciliation

("Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge" December 2000)

1. The National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation Process

The National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation Process sets out ways to build on progress towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community after the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation completes its term.

These measures address practical, cultural and spiritual dimensions of reconciliation.

Essential actions include:

LEADERSHIP FOR THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

- All levels of government, the private sector, community and voluntary organisations publicly support the ongoing reconciliation process, provide resources and increasingly involve Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in their work.
- A foundation, Reconciliation Australia, is established to maintain a national leadership focus for reconciliation, report on progress, provide information and raise funds to promote and support reconciliation activities.
- State, Territory and local reconciliation groups, involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from the wider community, lead and support action that promotes reconciliation.
- Australian parliaments and political parties address the low level of Indigenous representation in the political system.

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

- Schools, tertiary education institutions and employers require and support the culturally appropriate teaching of the truth of Australia's history that includes

Indigenous perspectives and addresses racism.

- The media feature stories that promote reconciliation and challenge racist stereotyping.

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR RECONCILIATION

- Communities celebrate significant dates and events and take joint action to achieve agreed reconciliation goals.

PROTOCOL AND CEREMONY

- All parliaments, governments and organisations observe protocols and negotiate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders or representative bodies to include appropriate Indigenous ceremony into official events.

SYMBOLS OF RECONCILIATION

- Governments, organisations and communities negotiate to establish and promote symbols of reconciliation. This would include changing the date of Australia Day to a date that includes all Australians.

FORMAL RECOGNITION OF THE DOCUMENTS OF RECONCILIATION

- All parliaments and local governments pass formal motions of support for the documents of reconciliation.

2. The National Strategy to Promote Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights

This strategy proposes a number of actions, including some constitutional and legislative processes, to assist the progressive resolution of outstanding issues for the recognition and enjoyment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights. It aims to ensure:

- that all Australians enjoy, in daily life, a fundamental equality of rights, opportunities and acceptance of responsibilities; and
- the status and unique identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia, and achieve recognition, respect and understanding in the wider community.

Essential actions include:

EDUCATION

- Governments and their agencies, legal, cultural and educational institutions, Indigenous organisations, and the media work together to improve community awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples with distinct cultures, rights and status.

LEGISLATION

- All governments take steps to ensure the recognition and protection of Indigenous intellectual property as already occurs in some Commonwealth legislation.
- All governments ensure their policies and practices observe Australia's international Indigenous and human rights obligations.
- State and Territory governments consider giving magistrates and judges the discretion to take account of traditional laws in sentencing, as already occurs in some circumstances in the Northern Territory.
- Governments establish legislative processes to deal with the 'unfinished business' of reconciliation, allowing for negotiated outcomes on matters such as Indigenous rights, self-determination within the life of the nation, and constitutional reform.

AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION

- Government agencies, legal institutions and educational organisations develop and promote community awareness about the Constitution and its application in protecting the rights of all Australians.
- Within the broader context of future constitutional reform, the Commonwealth Parliament enacts legislation for a referendum which seeks to:
 - prepare a new preamble to the Constitution which recognises the status of the first Australians; and
 - **remove section 25 of the Constitution and introduce a new section making it unlawful to adversely discriminate against any people on the grounds of race.**

3. The National Strategy to Overcome Disadvantage

The National Strategy to Overcome Disadvantage aims for a society where Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders enjoy a similar standard of living to that of other Australians, without losing their cultural identity.

This strategy focuses on education, employment, health, housing, law and justice. Priority must be given to achieving comparable outcomes in health and education. Improvement in these areas is critical to advancing reconciliation. It is important that no person is disadvantaged by the inability of governments and service providers to communicate and cooperate in the delivery of services.

Essential actions include:

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

- The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) evaluates and updates its National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, agreeing on a framework for all governments and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to:
 - set program performance benchmarks that are measurable, include timelines and are agreed in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities;
 - ensure they have the information systems necessary to monitor performance; and
 - annually report their performance to parliaments, councils and their constituents against these benchmarks.

- Every five years, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission works with ATSIC to prepare an independent report on the nation's progress in addressing disadvantage.

PARTNERSHIPS AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- Peak business and community groups make commitments to overcome disadvantage, and encourage their members to make similar commitments.
- Services are designed and delivered in a way that is driven by local Indigenous people, strengthens local communities, and forges social coalitions and equal partnerships, drawing on and building the skills and resources of the community.
- Service providers, ATSIC and governments identify and eliminate systemic discrimination and racism, beginning with a review of their own practices.
- Governments adopt funding arrangements that are flexible and sufficient to meet local needs, and enable the pooling of funds across agencies and between the different levels of government.
- Employers link performance-based salaries in all sectors to improvements in Indigenous outcomes, where appropriate.

COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Indigenous communities, families and individuals take more responsibility for addressing the causes and consequences of disadvantage within their control.
- All Australians accept the responsibility to learn more about the causes and extent of disadvantage and reject racism and related behaviour.

4. The National Strategy for Economic Independence

The National Strategy for Economic Independence aims for a society where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities can share the same levels of economic independence as the wider community.

For most Australians, pathways to economic independence include getting a job and/or running a business.

In both of these cases, an education substantially improves the likelihood of success.

This strategy is not for everyone. For some, economic independence will be defined in terms of their traditional economy and lifestyle.

Essential actions include:

ACCESS TO JOBS AND RESOURCES

- All employers establish strategies for employing and training more Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Banks and other financial institutions actively adopt culturally-responsive banking and financing regimes and facilitate better access to capital.
- Governments increase the value of Indigenous assets by legislating for Indigenous intellectual property and cultural rights and by working in partnership with

Indigenous communities to protect biodiversity and rehabilitate and sustain lands and waters under the control of those communities.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

- Indigenous people and communities develop their existing competitive advantages in respect of their cultural assets and special knowledge of the land and the environment.
- Governments, ATSIC, and the private sector all research and develop successful business models that can be applied in regional and remote communities. Priority should be given to developing commercial activities on Indigenous-owned land.
- Private-sector organisations seek opportunities for joint ventures with Indigenous businesses. Governments promote such joint ventures.
- Governments and industry work in partnership with Indigenous communities to ensure their projects strengthen Indigenous communities by supporting the local economy and enhancing regional employment opportunities.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Schools, TAFEs, universities and other education providers, working with families, develop and implement flexible programs to improve student attendance, retention rates, academic results and career pathways.
- TAFEs and other vocational education providers target their programs to the employment opportunities in the local labour market, aiming for available jobs or business opportunities on the completion of training programs and schemes.
- With local community involvement, education providers, banks and other financial institutions develop money-management programs that increase the capacity of people to plan, save and invest in their future.
- Indigenous leaders actively encourage their people to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and experiences that are valued in the local employment market.

A Timeline of Reconciliation

("Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge" December 2000)

1837: Saxe Bannister, first Attorney General of New South Wales, makes a submission to the Select Committee of the House of Commons arguing that treaties should be entered into with Aboriginal people and that their rights to land should be respected.

January 1938: The Aborigines Progressive Association declared a Day of Mourning on Australia Day and held the first Aborigines Conference in Sydney. The Conference resolved to appeal to the nation to give Indigenous Australians full citizenship rights.

1963 The Yolngu people of Yirrkala send a bark petition to Federal Parliament protesting about the government's decision to grant a bauxite mining lease on their traditional land. Parliament sets up a bipartisan committee to investigate the grievances, which subsequently acknowledges the people's moral right to their lands.

1965 The Freedom Riders undertake a 3,200 km bus tour of northern NSW drawing public

attention to the racism, discrimination and social disadvantage endured by Aboriginal people.

1966 The Gurindji people at Wave Hill Station in the Northern Territory, led by elder Vincent Lingiari, stage a walk-off and extensive strike for better wages and living conditions leading to a demand for return of their traditional lands. Traditional land is handed back in 1975.

1967: Referendum sees 92 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth government power to legislate for Aboriginal people and to allow them to be counted in the Census.

1970 The Yirrkala people launch legal action against the mining company Nabalco and the Commonwealth in the NT Supreme Court (*Milirrpum v Nabalco and the Commonwealth*). The judge decides against them, ruling that communal Aboriginal title to land was a concept not recognised in Australian law.

1971 Neville Thomas Bonner becomes the first Aboriginal parliamentarian following his election as Senator for Queensland. A loyal Liberal, he crossed the floor on several occasions to vote on Aboriginal issues.

1972 On Australia Day Aboriginal people erect the Tent Embassy on the lawns outside Parliament House, Canberra, drawing attention to their feeling that they are 'foreigners in their own country so long as they have no legal freehold title to any part of Australia.'

1972: Prime Minister William McMahon makes an important statement signalling a major change from the old assimilation policy. The statement sets out a number of policy objectives, including the equal right of Aborigines 'to hold effective and respected places within one Australian society'. At the same time, they were to be encouraged to preserve and develop their own culture.

1972: The Whitlam Government establishes the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and makes a firm commitment to the policy of self-determination. The new Government also sets up the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

1973 Commissioned by the Commonwealth Government, the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission, headed by A E Woodward, examines matters related to Aboriginal land and its two reports recommend ways of recognising Aboriginal title.

1975: The Australian Senate unanimously endorses a resolution put up by Senator Neville Bonner acknowledging prior ownership of this country by Aboriginal people and seeking compensation for their dispossession. Federal Parliament passes the Racial Discrimination Act.

1976 Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls appointed Governor of South Australia, following a lengthy career in sport and community work and his investiture as a Knight at Buckingham Palace in 1972.

1976: The Fraser Government effects the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and brings the new legislation into operation.

1978: Dr H. C. Coombes initiates movement towards a treaty with Indigenous Australians.

1979: The Aboriginal Treaty Committee is formed and the National Aboriginal Conference calls for a treaty between the Commonwealth government and Aboriginal people. The Hon. Fred Chaney, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, welcomes the initiative and funds a nationwide consultation process.

1986: Pope John Paul II visits Alice Springs and makes a public statement saying 'There is a need for a just and proper settlement (with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) that still lies unachieved in Australia.'

1987: Aboriginal Affairs Minister Gerry Hand presents to the Parliament the statement *Foundations for the Future*, aimed at progressing the idea of a compact with Indigenous Australians.

1988 The Barunga Statement, written on bark and presented to the Prime Minister at the annual Barunga cultural and sporting festival, calls for Aboriginal self-management, a national system of land rights and recognition of Aboriginal rights.

1988: Australian Heads of Churches issue a statement, *Towards Reconciliation in Australian Society - Reconciliation and Aboriginal Australians*, arguing for just and proper settlement of differences and the healing of division.

1990 The Commonwealth Government establishes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to develop and administer Aboriginal policy and programs. Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue is the first chairperson.

1990: New Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Robert Tickner announces Government's intention of seeking greater cross-party agreement on Aboriginal Affairs.

January 1991: Minister Tickner releases discussion paper outlining proposals for advancing reconciliation, including an education campaign and the establishment of a Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

February 1991: Robert Tickner appointed as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

May 1991: Minister tables Report of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* which inquired into the deaths of 99 Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The final recommendation supports the concept of a process of reconciliation, with Commissioner Elliott Johnston commenting that 'All political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided.'

June 1991: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act is passed in the House of Representatives with unanimous support.

August 1991: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act is passed in the Senate with unanimous support.

February 1992: The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation holds its first meeting in Canberra.

June 1992: High Court hands down its *Mabo* decision, recognising special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land.

September 1993: First National Indigenous Business Conference in Alice Springs.

1993: International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

September 1993: First national Week of Prayer for Reconciliation with support from all major religious groups.

October 1993: Meeting at Fitzroy Crossing of representatives of the Kimberley Land Council and Aboriginal pastoralists, the Pastoralists and Grainhandlers Association, and the WA Farmers Federation - the first wide ranging meeting in 100 years between these groups.

December 1993: Launch of the *Australians for Reconciliation* network as a means of broadening communication between the Council and the wider community.

December 1993: Native Title Act passed by Federal Parliament recognising native title and providing a process by which native title rights can be established.

March 1994: First meeting of the Joint Council on Aboriginal Land and Mining (J-CALM), representing the first occasion when senior mining company executives and senior Aboriginal leaders have come together to discuss issues of mutual concern.

July 1994: The Uniting Church National Assembly formally apologises for past wrongs and pledges to work in solidarity with the Aboriginal and Islander Congress.

July 1994: Council holds its first cultural awareness training for journalists in the Kimberley region of WA.

November 1994: *Walking Together: The First Steps* is presented to Parliament, documenting the lessons learned during the first term of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

1994: The Australian Football League releases a new code of conduct on racism which receives strong endorsement from the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

March 1995: Council presents *Going Forward: Social Justice for the First Australians* to Prime Minister Paul Keating. This major document contains 78 recommendations covering a range of issues including access to land, protection of culture and heritage, and the provision of adequate health, housing and other services.

July 1995: Government amends the Flags Act to give official recognition to the Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

February 1996: Aboriginal, pastoral and environmental organisations on Cape York sign the *Cape York Land Use Heads of Agreement*, showing that organisations representing disparate interests can agree on diverse land uses. The agreement is seen as the first step towards a

possible Regional Agreement as defined in the Commonwealth Native Title Act.

May 1996: Council launches the first National Reconciliation Week at a luncheon hosted by Prime Minister John Howard, Opposition Leader Kim Beazley and Democrats Leader Cheryl Kernot.

June 1996: Council announces grant to the Deans of Australian Medical Schools for the development of a cultural awareness training module for medical students.

June 1996: Council convenes Key Stakeholders Meetings on Native Title with representatives from indigenous organisations and from the pastoral, farming, mining and exploration industries, to exchange views on native title issues and discuss possible agreed positions.

May 26-28 1997: Australian Reconciliation Convention, convened by the Council. Attended by 1,800 participants, this event becomes an historic landmark in the reconciliation process and stimulates a grassroots people's movement around the country.

December 1997: Considerable growth in the number of local reconciliation groups and strengthening of the peoples movement for reconciliation in the six months since the convention.

February 1998: Council identifies three major goals for its final term: a Document of Reconciliation; Partnerships to achieve social and economic equality for Indigenous people; and a people's movement to sustain the reconciliation process beyond 2000.

June 3 1999: Launch of Council's Draft Document for Reconciliation.

July-Dec 1999: Public consultations on the draft document.

27 May 2000 At Corroboree 2000 Council ceremonially presents the national reconciliation documents to national leaders and the people of Australia. The following day, more than 250,000 people join the People's Walk for Reconciliation across Sydney Harbour Bridge.

May-December 2000 Hundreds of thousands of Australians join other bridge walks across the country.

December 2000 Council presents its final report, including recommendations, to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Parliament.

1 January 2001 Centenary of Federation and the end of the life of the Council.