

# 2016 AUSTRALIAN RECONCILIATION BAROMETER



**RECONCILIATION**  
AUSTRALIA

# FIVE DIMENSIONS OF RECONCILIATION

## Race Relations

All Australians understand and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous cultures, rights and experiences, which results in stronger relationships based on trust and respect and that are free of racism.



## Equality and equity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate equally in a range of life opportunities and the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised and upheld.



## Unity

An Australian society that values and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as a proud part of a shared national identity.



## Institutional Integrity

The active support of reconciliation by the nation's political, business and community structures.



## Historical Acceptance

All Australians understand and accept the wrongs of the past and the impact of these wrongs. Australia makes amends for the wrongs of the past and ensures they are never repeated.





# OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY AND THE AUSTRALIAN RECONCILIATION BAROMETER

**In February 2016, Reconciliation Australia released its landmark report, *The State of Reconciliation in Australia*, the first report of its kind since the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation handed its final report to Parliament in 2000.**

The Report offers the nation a strong vision and shared language from which to imagine a reconciled nation in the future across five interrelated dimensions of reconciliation; race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance. Australia can only achieve full reconciliation where there is substantive progress across all five areas.

## **Reconciliation Australia**

Reconciliation Australia is the national lead organisation for reconciliation in Australia. We partner with business, government, education and the community sector to achieve our vision for a reconciled, just and equitable Australia. The Australian Reconciliation Barometer (the Barometer) is one of the tools to assist us to understand how the nation is performing on its reconciliation journey.

## **The Australian Reconciliation Barometer**

The Barometer is a biennial, national research study, conducted by Reconciliation Australia since 2008. The Barometer measures attitudes and perceptions towards reconciliation, and maps our progress towards the five dimensions of reconciliation.

In 2016 the Barometer surveyed 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and 2277 Australians in the general community across all states and territories. This is the largest sample size the Barometer has ever surveyed.

## **Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2016**

The 2016 Barometer tells us that since 2014 an increasing number of Australians are proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and believe these cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation. Almost all Australians continue to view the relationship between each other as important and many believe that it is possible that all Australians can be united.

The Barometer findings reveal that the majority of Australians maintain positive attitudes towards reconciliation. However, disappointingly, there is significant evidence that these positive attitudes have yet to translate into improved behaviours across a wide range of sectors in Australian society, including the workplace, law-enforcement agencies, and the education and community sectors.

More Australians, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians, now agree that Australia is a racist country. This racism is reflected in increasing incidents of prejudice experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

The Barometer also identifies continued misunderstandings between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians. Both groups believe they offer more trust to the other than is returned. Reducing the perceived "trust gap" is critical to improving confidence in relationships between First Australians and the wider Australian community. Further, there is still misunderstandings within the wider Australian community about the causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality.

It is encouraging to note that in relation to settlement in Australia, more Australians now accept key facts about Australia's past institutional prejudices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and feel that the wrongs of the past must be rectified before all Australians can move forward.

In assessing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours within both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the general Australian community, there are some positive signs of progress. The findings also show us that there is still much to do to achieve our vision of a reconciled nation across the five dimensions.

# RACE RELATIONS

All Australians understand and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous cultures, rights and experiences, which results in stronger relationships based on trust and respect and that are free of racism



## Key findings

Almost all Australians—Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous—think the relationship between each other is important. Yet too often, this goodwill is not reflected in behaviours.

Almost all Australians, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, think the relationship is important.



**97%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and **89%** Australians in the general community **feel our relationship is important.**

This includes **76%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and **48%** Australians in the general community **who think the relationship is very important.**

There are gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous trust for each other.



**46%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians believe they have high trust compared to **34%** who think **Australians in the general community have high trust for them.**

**25%** Australians in the general community believe they have high trust compared to **19%** who think **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have high trust for them.**

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who believe they have high trust is increasing (**46% in 2016 vs 39% in 2014**), whilst the number of Australians in the general community who believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have high trust remains low (**19%**).



Racism, both perceived and actual experiences, is increasing.



**57%**

**39%**

**57%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians now agree Australia is a racist country, **compared to 48% in 2014.**

**39%** Australians in the general community now agree Australia is a racist country, **compared to 35% in 2014.**



**37%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians **have experienced verbal racial abuse** in the last 6 months **compared to 31% in 2014.**



# EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate equally in a range of life opportunities and the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised and upheld



## Key findings

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more likely to feel barriers to accessing material and cultural rights. Misunderstanding surrounding these barriers in the general Australian community provides a challenging environment for change.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are less likely to feel that they can be true to their cultures or personal beliefs compared to other Australians in a number of different settings.

**47%**

vs **68%** in interactions with police or the courts.



**53%**

vs **66%** in interactions with the general community.



**52%**

vs **64%** in interactions at work.



**46%**

vs **63%** in interactions with government departments.

In the general Australian community, there are varying perceptions and attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being responsible for their own disadvantage.



### In the general Australian community

a third agree

**32%**

a third disagree

**32%**

a third neither agree or disagree

**36%**

that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are responsible for their own disadvantage.

### Living Conditions

**27%**



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians consider their living conditions to be worse compared with the majority of people in Australia vs **15%** Australians in the general community who feel the same way.

### Education

**48%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians disagree that the Australian education system prepares children well to find a job vs **42%** of Australians in the general community who feel the same way.

### Employment

**30%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians disagree that employers in Australia follow the equal opportunity laws vs **26%** of Australians in the general community who feel the same way.



# UNITY

An Australian society that values and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as a proud part of a shared national identity





## Key findings

There is wide agreement amongst Australians that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation and that it is possible to become united.

Pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is increasing amongst Australians.



**91%**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in **2016** vs 85% in 2014

**agree they are proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.**



**60%**

Australians in the general community in **2016** vs 57% in 2014



**93%**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in **2016** vs 87% in 2014

**agree that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's national identity.**



**77%**

Australians in the general community in **2016** vs 72% in 2014

Many Australians believe that it is possible to become united.



**66%**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians **agree**

**68%**

Australians in the general community **agree**

# INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The active support of reconciliation by the nation's political, business and community structures





## Key findings

Many Australians believe more should be done by community, business, government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to reduce problems of prejudice. However, experiences of racial prejudice continue to increase in workplaces, shops and law enforcement settings.

Many Australians believe community, business, government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations need to do more to reduce problems of prejudice.



### Australians who think that institutions can do more to reduce prejudice and discrimination

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample	National sample
Government departments	78%	58%
Private sector businesses	69%	47%
Community sector organisations	65%	46%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	54%	55%

The percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who have experienced racial prejudice in the past 12 months has increased across many different settings.



**18%**

In interactions with **employers** in 2016 vs 13% in 2014.



**20%**

In interactions with **local shop owners** in 2016 vs 14% in 2014.



**29%**

In interactions with **police** in 2016 vs 16% in 2014.

# HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

All Australians understand and accept the wrongs of the past and the impact of these wrongs. Australian makes amends for the wrongs of the past and ensures these wrongs are never repeated





## Key findings

More Australians in the general community now accept key facts about Australia's past institutional prejudices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. More Australians now recognise the need to rectify past wrongs before all Australians can move forward.

More Australians in the general community now accept key facts about Australia's past.



**68%** in 2016 vs **65%** in 2014 **accept** that government policy enabled **Aboriginal children to be removed from their families without permission until the 1970s.**

**67%** in 2016 vs **64%** in 2014 **accept** **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people did not have full voting rights throughout Australia until the 1960s.**

**64%** in 2016 vs **59%** in 2014 **accept** **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were subject to mass killings, incarceration, forced removal from land and restricted movement throughout the 1800s.**

**57%** in 2016 vs **53%** in 2014 **accept** **Australia was owned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the time of colonisation 1770.**

More Australians, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, now recognise the need to rectify past wrongs before all Australians can move forward.



**44%**  
in 2016 vs **37%** in 2014

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians** who now feel that the wrongs of the past must be rectified before all Australians can move on.

**28%**  
in 2016 vs **23%** in 2014

**Australians in general community** who now feel that the wrongs of the past must be rectified before all Australians can move on.

# What must we do as a nation?

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer provides evidence that we are making progress towards achieving our vision for a reconciled, just and equitable nation. We still however, have much to do as a nation, across all sectors of society and as individuals, if reconciliation is to be realised. It is imperative that we:

## **Invest in and support public anti-racism campaigns and resources**

Reconciliation can only progress when positive relationships, built on trust and respect and that are free of racism, exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. Racism remains a lived reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As a nation, across all sectors of society and as individuals, we must leverage support for public anti-racism campaigns and resources. We must also maintain strong legislative protections against racial discrimination and take leadership to promote a zero tolerance approach to racism and discrimination.

## **Invest in and grow respectful relationships with Australia's First Peoples.**

Reconciliation Australia knows that stronger relationships built on trust, shared knowledge and respect are essential to creating a more prosperous and reconciled nation for all Australians. To do this we as a nation must work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representative bodies. We must provide support for the national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples – and these efforts must be underpinned by the

principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the right to self-determination.

## **Commit to constitutional recognition**

Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a long-sought milestone on Australia's reconciliation journey. Critical to reconciliation is the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia in our nation's founding document, the Constitution. In addition to constitutional recognition, matters such as treaties, agreement-making and sovereignty are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These issues must be addressed if we are to achieve a more unified nation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are our proud part of our national identity.

## **Recommit to and expand on the Closing the Gap targets**

Long-term, consistent and coordinated efforts by all sectors of Australian society are critical to improving life outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consistent, well-developed and evidence-based policies and programs, which work to build trust and support among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are critical.

The Closing the Gap targets provide a common and transparent framework for all governments to work towards equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is essential that we invest in delivering these targets so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same life opportunities as all other Australians.

## **Truth, justice and healing – develop a deeper reconciliation process for Australia**

Australia's colonial history is characterised by the dispossession and marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We cannot change the past, but we can learn from it. We must acknowledge the wrongs of the past, understand the ongoing impacts of these wrongs and ensure these wrongs are never repeated. Until historical wounds are healed in this way, they will continue to diminish our nation's ability to realise its full potential.

**To find out more and to read the full report: [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)**









**RECONCILIATION**  
AUSTRALIA

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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of Country and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.