In Brief: The State of Reconciliation in Australia

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia’s colonial history is characterised by devastating land dispossession, violence and overt and unapologetic racism. Reconciliation is the process of righting those wrongs. Reconciliation Australia’s 2016 report, The State of Reconciliation in Australia measures Australia’s progress in five keys aspects of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance. The report makes it clear that, although some progress has been made, there is still much to be done on our journey as a nation towards reconciliation.

This fact sheet provides a summary of The State of Reconciliation in Australia report’s findings, alongside goals across five key areas: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance.

Race Relations

• The level of contact and interaction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is low – at just 30 per cent.
• Only 26 per cent of the general population believe trust towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is high.
• 33 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had experienced verbal racial abuse in the six months before the survey.

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

Equity and Equality

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy less participation and access to life opportunities.
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to consider their living conditions are worse than other peoples and are more likely to see barriers to employment and education.
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have less enjoyment of their unique individual and collective rights.

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

• There is broad multi-partisan political support for reconciliation, but successive governments’ implementation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s recommendations has been mixed.
• Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services has decreased.
• Business and community support for reconciliation is increasing.
• Most Australians believe that political, business and community institutions should do more to advance reconciliation.

UNITY

• 65 per cent of Australians believe it is possible for Australia to be united.
• Over 70 per cent of Australians believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia’s national identity and agree that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a unique place as the First Australians.
• 76 per cent of people who support reconciliation policy don’t know how they can help further the cause.

HISTORICAL ACCEPTANCE

• 94% of Australians agree that wrongs towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occurred as a result of European settlement, but many are unsure of the details.
• Between 50% and 60% percent of the general community agree that past race-based policies have created today’s disadvantage.
• Australia is repeating some of the wrongs of the past, and urgent, well-considered action is needed to reduce the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in out-of-home care and in prison.

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

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

Goal: 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.