



# **Schools Reconciliation Challenge 2013**

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exhibition catalogue









I would like to congratulate everyone that has participated in the Schools Reconciliation Challenge for their tremendous efforts. This year's theme, *Say Something!* has been thoughtfully expressed in the artworks exhibited in this publication, showcasing the 2013 finalists.

While some people sing, others write and others speak, the Schools Reconciliation Challenge provides another important avenue for young people to unleash their creativity through art and say something about the Australia they wish to live in. The visual arts are a powerful form of self-expression which enables young people to share their experiences, aspirations and emotions with others. The arts also reflect the wonderful diversity of our world, our many cultures, traditions and belief systems.

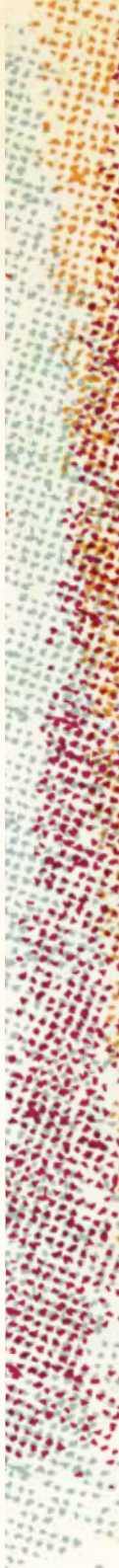
Reconciliation is a part of this nation's unfinished business. All the young artists that participated in the Schools Reconciliation Challenge have explored reconciliation and what that means to them. Through the artwork I have seen, there is great hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians to live together in harmony and share equally in the opportunities Australia has to offer. There is also great understanding that this will be achieved through mutual respect and by learning from each other.

I hope you are as inspired as I am by the enthusiasm of these young artists to take an active role in our nation's journey of reconciliation.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Garrett', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP  
Minister for School Education  
Minister for Early Childhood and Youth





## 2013 Schools Reconciliation Challenge: Say Something!

*The art of Reconciliation through the eyes of young people*

Throughout term one 2013, the NSW Reconciliation Council encouraged school students and their teachers to explore the connection between identity, Reconciliation, and visual expression in the Schools Reconciliation Challenge.

Reconciliation is about bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together and creating respect. To do this, Reconciliation means:

- recognising the distinct rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as the First Peoples of this land
- repairing past injustices
- fighting racism and discrimination
- closing the gaps in health, housing, education and employment

The artwork in this exhibition and catalogue explores the concept *Say Something!* Each work gives voice to the ideas and opinions of young Australians about Reconciliation and social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A reconciled Australia, based on positive and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, relies on an open dialogue; where all people have the right to Say Something and be heard.

These artworks are a selection of Schools Reconciliation Challenge entries by students aged 10–16 from across NSW, exhibited at the Australian Museum from May to July in 2013.



*Everyone  
has a role in  
creating a united Australia  
which respects this land of  
ours, values Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander cultures  
and heritage, and provides  
justice and equity for all.*



# Mapping My World *Victoria Ashley*

Kincoppal Rose Bay



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

*"I have created my own contemporary vision of relationships with people and landscape."*

My artwork is a way of expressing my voice as a young Indigenous person, and showing how different landscapes have shaped my identity – from my home in Warren to the urban Sydney environment where I board. I have designed my own patterns and symbols, inspired by nature, botanical illustrations, and my mum's artworks, to observe, respond to, and

explore connection to the natural environment. By drawing on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous art techniques, I have created my own contemporary vision of relationships with people and landscape.

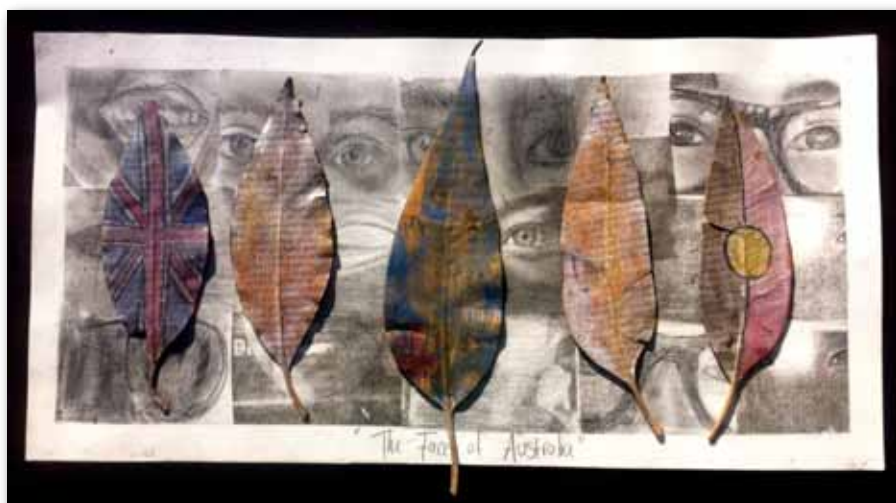




## ***Faces of Australia*** *Gia, Violet, and Natasha*

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### **Reddam House**



**Highly commended, years 7 & 8**

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This artwork is about the diversity of cultures in Australia and shows how everyone is different and special in their own unique way. It explores the notion of past, present, and future in Australian culture. It relates to Reconciliation because it explores how different people can come together in the present to remedy the injustices of the past, and to create a better future. Reconciliation means coming together and embracing differences.

*"Different people can come together in the present to remedy the injustices of the past, and to create a better future."*





# *Endless Connections* William James

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Mowbray Public School



Highly commended, years 5 & 6

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*“Reconciliation  
is a puzzle that we need  
to keep working on  
for the future.”*

This artwork is about people with different cultures and backgrounds coming together. Each puzzle piece represents someone different.

All the pieces together represent respect. Reconciliation is a puzzle that we need to keep working on for the future.





# Australia's Future

*"This artwork says something about the multicultural, shared future of Australia."*

Parramatta North Public School



Highly commended, years 5 & 6

This artwork says something about the multicultural, shared future of Australia. It is about students' perceptions of Australia now and their hopes for its future. The words in the speech bubble reflect their ideas about Reconciliation, and the photographs demonstrate the diversity that makes up Australia today.

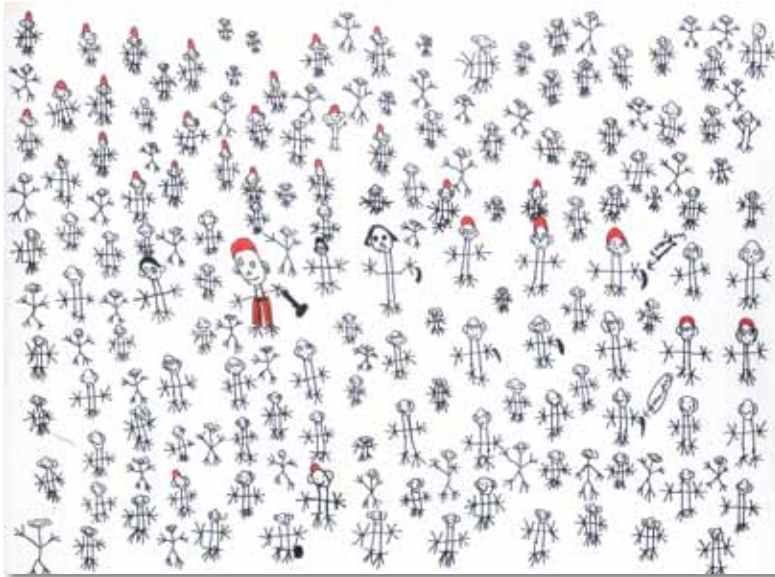




# 1000 Men – Blind Leading the Blind

Blake Parrott

Lawrence Public School



Second prize, years 5 & 6

*“Look  
and help others, they  
are people too and they  
have something to say.”*

This artwork is about blind people leading the blind. Some people have eyesight but are blind to the world around them. Reconciliation relies on seeing people beyond their skin, communicating with one another, and respect. I have a vision problem and sometimes I want to say “look and help others, they are people too and they have something to say.”



## *It's Time* Taylor Hewen

Henry Lawson High School

*"I want to remind people that non-Indigenous Australians have only been a part of Australia for a very small time in comparison to the long rich Indigenous history."*



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

This artwork is about the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the original custodians of Australia, and the need to right the wrongs of our country's past. The hands on the clock point to the people's hands reaching out because it is time to move forward. It is time Indigenous Australians have proper recognition and equality, and are included in Australian history, society and culture. I want to remind people that non-Indigenous Australians have only been a part of Australia for a very small time in comparison to the long rich Indigenous history.



# *We're Listening* Noah Cohen Stoddart

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## Reddam House



**Second prize, years 7 & 8**

*“Reconciliation means acknowledging the original custodians of this land and going forward together.”*

We're Listening is about how communication between non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is improving and growing just like the technologies of today. It shows that we are working together to create a better and more advanced future. Mobile phones, which are a communication tool used by all different types of people around the world, symbolise this process. Reconciliation means acknowledging the original custodians of this land and going forward together.



# Reclaiming Words Grace Lee

North Sydney Girls High School



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

This artwork is about the reclaiming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander words in Australian place names. Many Indigenous languages have been lost as a result of colonisation. By incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in modern Australian society, we can recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of this land. The artwork shows the historic divide of cultures, with one side of the speech bubble displaying the English place names, and the other showing the name originally given by Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation means recognising Indigenous culture, speaking out, closing the gap, and respecting all cultures.

*"By incorporating  
Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander languages in modern  
Australian society, we can recognise  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
peoples as the original custodians  
of this land."*



# Actions Speak Louder than Words

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Fairvale High School



First prize, years 7 & 8

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This artwork is about showing respect and bringing everyone together. It reflects on the importance of actions as a form of communication, and the necessity to act on the things we say in order to more actively promote and maintain Reconciliation within the community. Within the artwork, students have used their body as a tool to communicate their understanding about

Reconciliation. They utilised common body gestures to reinforce what they believe are important messages and actions in the Reconciliation process.

Reconciliation means bringing everyone together by acknowledging the past and working together for a shared future.

*“Reconciliation means bringing everyone together by acknowledging the past and working together for a shared future.”*





## *Rainbow Serpent* Stella Hickey

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Wyndham College



**Highly commended, years 9 & 10**

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This artwork uses Aboriginal symbols and the colours of the Aboriginal flag to show respect for Aboriginal people. This, in conjunction with the image of the students holding hands, expresses support for Reconciliation.





## Off the Wall *Tara McIntyre & Stage 3 Students*

### Cronulla Public School



**Third prize, years 5 & 6**

*“Respect,  
tolerance and  
understanding for  
Indigenous people  
and special  
places.”*

This collaborative artwork gives a public voice to the young people who contributed to it, by allowing them to visually represent their ideas about Reconciliation. The students were asked to reflect on the importance of what ‘we say’ and then express their views on how we communicate in the world we live in. Their ideas, thoughts, and feelings are represented in the collaged speech bubble, and include themes of respect, tolerance and understanding for Indigenous people and special places.

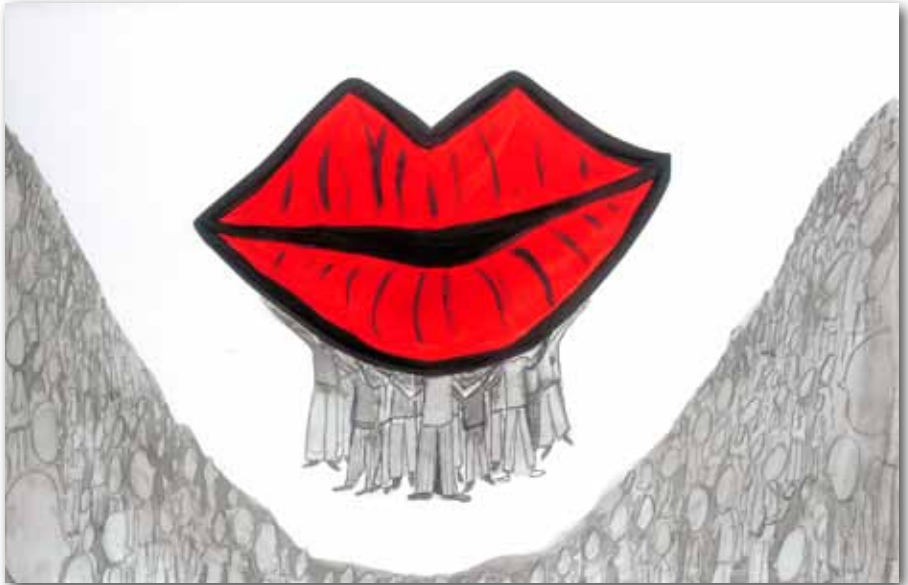




## One Voice Edwina Waters

*"We are all sisters, we all listen to and support each other, so that we all have the opportunity to determine our futures and succeed."*

St Vincent's College



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

This artwork reflects my experience as part of a boarding house community, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students live together as one family and speak together. It represents the social equality in this community. We are all sisters, we all listen to and support each other, so that we all have the opportunity to determine our futures and succeed. A single voice does not always have the power to change the future, but as a collective of sisters, we are stronger, and can ensure that the future is brighter than the past for all Australians.





North Sydney Girls High School



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

*“The two buildings of equal height with people standing on them shaking hands represent equality and unity.”*

This artwork says something about Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians. It shows us being united and standing on equal ground. The two buildings of equal height with people standing on them shaking hands represent equality and unity. The background shows the merging together of the Aboriginal flag and Australian flag, symbolising the coming together of cultures.





# AMAROO (Beautiful Place)

Decoda Knowles & Abbey Bain

Barrenjoey High School



First prize, years 9 & 10

The text is juxtaposed with the traditional Torres Strait Islander headpiece, symbolising beauty. We would like to say our land is beautiful, Indigenous languages are beautiful, and they must be appreciated and respected. Only when we cherish, appreciate and love our place, our history, and our country can we move forward to make a brighter future together. Navajo artefacts, in the United States, have long been admired and adored. This artwork shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are just as beautiful and unique. This is a positive work challenging the audience to re-examine the way they view our traditional cultures. A fresh new look on what is Aboriginal. Reconciliation means re-examining our history, challenging our viewpoints, and discussing and encouraging new and honest interpretations.





# Growing Together *Jacob Davidson*

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## Reddam House



**Highly commended, years 7 & 8**

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*“By  
acknowledging the  
past, we can come together  
to grow and respect one  
another.”*

This artwork is about speaking out and helping others. The maps represent the different places we have come from and our connection to the land. The tree shows how we are growing together with Aboriginal people to make a new future. By acknowledging the past, we can come together to grow and respect one another. Even though there are cracks in Australia’s history, by sharing stories and listening to each other we can understand and grow.





## What is Right?

Hawkesbury High School



Second prize, years 9 & 10

This artwork is about speaking out about Reconciliation, culture, and community. It is a message for all that we are one. It is inspired by the idea that "when your heart is adjusted to the earth, you see yourself as one family in one home - Planet Earth" (AEK conference 1999). We must work together and listen to each other, and most importantly, care for each other. It is then that we can understand and respect each other. Our art speaks out and tells our 30 stories. Join us and place your story alongside ours.

*"Our art  
speaks out and  
tells our 30 stories.  
Join us and place your  
story alongside ours."*





*"This artwork is about the respect and harmony we aim to achieve between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people."*

## Harmony Jill He

North Sydney Girls High School



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

This artwork is about the respect and harmony we aim to achieve between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people. The Aboriginal flag and Australian flag are merged together to form the prominent symbol of yin and yang. This signifies how diversity is essential for a society to function in a balanced way, and represents the coming together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The quote "strength lies in differences not similarities" sits in between the contrasting colours of red and blue, suggesting that everyone needs to speak up about Reconciliation so we can understand and appreciate one another.





## Recon"see"liation Grace Kwon

North Sydney Girls High School



*"Reconciliation means reflecting on past wrongs, seeing situations from the other person's perspective, apologising and coming together by seeing beyond difference."*

Highly commended, years 9 & 10

Each year on Australia day, people celebrate the arrival of the First Fleet. However, for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people this event is remembered as Invasion day because this was the day they had everything taken away from them: their land, their people, their rights and their freedom. This artwork encourages the audience to understand the perspective of Indigenous Australians, reflect upon the impact colonisation has had, and to truly say Sorry. Reconciliation means reflecting on past wrongs, seeing situations from the other person's perspective, apologising and coming together by seeing beyond difference.





# Fences Falling Down

James Sheahan Catholic High School



*"All the fences and barriers that were put up in early Australian history are now being slowly broken down, allowing Aboriginal culture to regenerate."*

**Third prize, years 7 & 8**

This artwork is a sculpture, designed to be installed in different locations. All the fences and barriers that were put up in early Australian history are now being slowly broken down, allowing Aboriginal culture to regenerate. This artwork is an attempt to let Aboriginal cultures stand proud and be valued in Australian life. It follows the history of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous relations. Each panel depicts part of the story, ending with the third panel which shows how Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people are trying to understand and respect each other, so that they can live and share their lives together.





# *We have our ups and downs*

*Taylor Beale & Pika Ksela*

## Killara Public School



### Highly commended, years 5 & 6

Throughout Australian history, Aboriginal people have suffered and struggled for their rights. In this artwork, we are trying to acknowledge the past and look towards the future. It is about closing the gap and healing Australia's past wounds. Even though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the original inhabitants of this country, they are often made to feel like they do not belong. We are a democracy and have a responsibility to speak our minds, particularly to help those who are suffering injustices. This artwork brings you into the future and past at the same time and shows that through Reconciliation, society can mould together even when there are many different parts.

*"We are a democracy and have a responsibility to speak our minds, particularly to help those who are suffering injustices."*





*"For many years we have disregarded the thoughts and opinions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and deprived them of equality."*

## **Oblivious** Meredith Cheng

North Sydney Girls High School



**Highly commended, years 9 & 10**

This artwork is about how Australia has failed to respect the traditional owners of this land. For many years we have disregarded the thoughts and opinions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and deprived them of equality. The zip on this Aboriginal woman shows how she has been prevented from speaking out for her rights. The black and white colours and the men in the background represent how we have dismissed the true owners of this land. If we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners of this land, treat them with respect, appreciate their culture, and let them Say Something, Australia will be a better place for everyone.





# The Process of Evolution

Hannah Rubinstein & Rachel Bowen-James

## Reddam House



Highly commended, years 9 & 10

*“Rather than letting progress and material things dominate our lives and displace culture, we should utilise technology to bring culture into our lives in new and interesting ways.”*

This artwork explores how the pursuit of technological advancement in Australia has been undertaken at the expense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and rights. In today's world, people are preoccupied with having the newest iPod, the latest computer, and the ability to be connected to everyone and everything at the click of a mouse. However, most do not take the time to learn about the First People of this land, on whose home our society has been built. The three middle images of this artwork demonstrate the merging of two different cultures, both of which can play an important role in Australian society. Rather than letting

progress and material things dominate our lives and displace culture, we should utilise technology to bring culture into our lives in new and interesting ways. Reconciliation means coming together, embracing difference, and educating each other.





## 2 Different Environments *Harley Walsh*

Petersborough School



Third prize, years 9 & 10

*“Reconciliation is about making a commitment to recognise Indigenous Australians, work together and improve understanding.”*

We Can Work Together. Harley used charcoal and water colours to reflect that although we need industry and technology for the growth of our area, we must not forget or exploit the land on which it is built, and the animals, plants and people that are the original inhabitants.

Reconciliation is about making a commitment to recognise Indigenous Australians, work together and improve understanding.





*Aboriginal  
people deserve to be  
recognised. We need  
to meet together.*

This artwork is about our local region, Yuin country, and the important place of Aboriginal people as the original custodians of the land and the keepers of knowledge and tradition. The artwork is looking towards a positive future for all people and animals; one in which we can all move forward and learn together. The boomerang is Mt. Gillamatong, which is central to our local area. One of our Aboriginal students, Declan, calls over the mountain to Ella saying 'Look to the future'. Animals and plants are interspersed between tools, current, past and future, including iPads, boomerangs, and spears. Our artwork explores the importance of traditional technologies and knowledge of ecology in land management.

Our artwork is a statement about the importance of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It recognises the importance of Aboriginal knowledge and connection to land, and the important place of technology in empowering the Reconciliation movement. Aboriginal people deserve to be recognised. We need to meet together.



## 2013 NSW Reconciliation Outreach Program

Throughout March and April this year as an addition to the regular Schools Reconciliation Challenge program, the NSW Reconciliation Council team and Yuwaalawaay artist Lucy Simpson travelled around urban and regional NSW talking about Reconciliation and exploring Aboriginal art and design with students in special needs schools. The workshops aimed to increase access to the Schools Reconciliation Challenge for special needs students, and explore different ways of *Saying Something*.

Despite facing a number of learning barriers, the young people who participated in these workshops showed incredible spirit and engagement, with each student bringing their own unique flair to the artistic process. Many of the students used non-verbal communication; therefore visual story telling proved a highly accessible avenue through which they could express themselves.

### Reconciliation Art Workshops

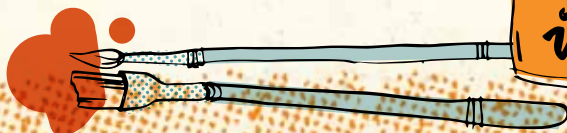
Passing around emu feathers, banksia pods, seeds, and pipi shells from Yuwaalawaay country, students touched, explored and listened while Lucy shared stories of family, land, culture, and home. She talked about the importance of symbols and image association in Aboriginal design, before helping the students set out to create their own stories through sketching, etching and printing.

The colourful array of artworks produced by these young people was truly inspiring, as was their energy, enthusiasm and willingness to explore new ideas and activities.

Anyone can *Say Something* about Reconciliation. It's just a matter of finding your voice and expressing it in your own unique way.









The Schools Reconciliation Challenge is an annual project run by the NSW Reconciliation Council with support by



Additional thanks to

Aboriginal Affairs NSW and Family  
and Community Services NSW





[www.nswreconciliation.org.au](http://www.nswreconciliation.org.au)

