

THE DEATH KNELL TOLLS FOR RECONCILIATION IN VICTORIA

In a meeting held today between representatives of the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) and Reconciliation Victoria Inc. (Rec Vic) the Brumby Government confirmed that it will no longer resource the reconciliation movement in Victoria by de-funding the state peak body, Reconciliation Victoria Inc.

Despite the Brumby Government's public commitment last year to 'closing the gap' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and health outcomes, the Brumby Government appears to be uncommitted when it comes to the difficult task of addressing cultural misunderstanding in the general population. "If we don't close the gap in our relationships we will never close the gap in health outcomes," says Rec Vic CEO, Frank Hytten.

In an open letter to the State Government dated 24th April, high profile local Aboriginal filmmaker and musician Richard Frankland said, "We cannot let Reconciliation Victoria disappear, we do not need to see the back of it, we need it, not just Indigenous Australians, but all Australians. We need a vehicle to carry our voice into every lounge room in Australia, we need a vehicle that carries our voice into the streets, we need to be reminded of not only where we have come from, but where we can go together."

In the face of much community support for Reconciliation Victoria, including receiving letters from Indigenous leaders, community, church and local reconciliation groups, the Brumby Government announced today its refusal to fund Reconciliation Victoria beyond its current funding period, due to expire on 30 June 2009.

Reconciliation Victoria, has been funded by the State Government for the last 7 years to the meagre tune of only \$200,000 per annum, and has worked tirelessly to promote an inclusive Australia and one which encourages and educates non-Indigenous Australians to value the rich and vibrant living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Due to today's announcement, the Council of Reconciliation Victoria will be forced to close the organisation's office at the end of June.

Reconciliation in Victoria is needed! Acting Aboriginal Co-Chair of Reconciliation Victoria, Vicki Clark, asks the Government to explain, without a body like Reconciliation Victoria, "Who is going to continue this unfinished business?"

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