

# Reconciliation Victoria – doing reconciliation

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO OUR FUNDING SUBMISSION

CONTACT US ON 9662 1645 DEC 2008

## Our Aim: A Reconciled Victoria

We will be able to claim that reconciliation has occurred when Aboriginal people live in an environment in which they can participate equally in all aspects of society and the 'gap' across all social and economic indicators are closed. To achieve this, the wider community, led by governments, need to work in partnership with Aboriginal people to improve access, equity and the delivery of services to Aboriginal people.

We will have achieved reconciliation when Aboriginal people feel that their history and culture is understood and respected. In addition, fundamental to reconciliation is that the wider community understand, acknowledge and deal with the deeply and culturally imbedded racism that affects the daily lives of Aboriginal people in Victoria. Working to achieve all this is our aim. Another important aim is to work with Aboriginal people who are trying to sustain their culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

RecVic insists that funding for reconciliation must be made without competing for funds allocated to the development or provision of Aboriginal controlled or managed services. To suggest this 'them' or 'us' competition for funds, is mischievous, disingenious, divisive and destructive.

## Why: Reconciliation challenges

There have been significant government initiatives on Indigenous policies such as the 2008 Apology, Wannik and the close the gap commitment. However, there is still no policy framework for advancing reconciliation and changing the attitudes of non-Aboriginal Victorians who control and work in organisations that affect indigenous Victorians. It will be impossible to close the gap as long as racism toward Aboriginal people persists. The government has significant programs for Aboriginal people and communities but the effectiveness of these programs in the long term requires a safe environment for Aboriginal people in the general community. There is a need to educate and change the attitudes of non-Aboriginal Victorians – over 98% of the population – to increase their capability to respond to Aboriginal needs in order to create this safe environment.

Research shows that the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can't be closed unless racism is tackled. Tackling racism among the wider community is core business. RecVic has numerous programs tackling racism and celebrating Aboriginal culture and can continue to make a significant contribution by working with and encouraging non-Indigenous Australians to come up with actions that will have a tangible positive outcome for Indigenous Australians

Approaches to reconciliation need to be locally and culturally appropriate. Aboriginal culture and identity is place-based, with 21 current Traditional Owner groups and many other communities across Victoria. The work we do is in line with the recommendations in successive federal and state government reports and many research papers, calling for the need for state-based reconciliation groups. Not funding the organization would be a poor reflection on the Victorian Government's commitment to reconciliation and 'closing the gap'. **RecVic can continue to ensure that reconciliation solutions Aboriginal driven and locally informed.**

## How: Reconciliation action

As a small flexible organisation, RecVic is able to improve engagement of, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to work together. RecVic seeks continued Government funding to implement RecVic's 10-year plan for reconciliation in Victoria (See attachment for further details). With this funding RecVic will:

Build community support for reconciliation through:

- Community education: publications and media initiatives
- Support other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations
- Work in partnership with Reconciliation Australia
- Support the Wannik strategy by supporting schools to connect with local Aboriginal communities, through conferences and resources
- Conduct community education workshops with local governments, NGOs and community based organisations (eg sport and recreation, Scouts and Guides, faith and 'ethnic' groups) and where ever possible with corporate organisations
- Involve young people in reconciliation activities– for example, through the network of young non-Aboriginal people developed by our youth worker, to organise and attend events that promote understanding of Aboriginal history and culture

Work with local communities

- Strengthen existing Local reconciliation Groups and support new LRGs through strengthening links to Local Indigenous
- Bi-monthly regional networking meetings for Local Reconciliation Groups
- Annual Local Reconciliation Group conference and monthly newsletters
- Promote reconciliation activities and events throughout Victoria
- Plan and coordinate Reconciliation Week activities
- Support local councils in working with and responding to the needs of Traditional Owners
- Organise an indigenous presence at the Sustainable living festival which is attended by over 120,000 people

Provide state-wide leadership on reconciliation

- Work with government and fellow organisations to develop a state-wide framework to progress reconciliation at the local level
- Support Aboriginal voice and capacity to initiate and manage their activities (as requested and as resources allow)
- Lead a co-ordinated approach to reconciliation in Victoria through continued development of policy and other forums
- Support the implementation of Reconciliation Action Plans in corporate, government and community settings
- Develop policy options, workable guiding frameworks and advise Government on reconciliation issues
- Work with the Victorian community to develop sustainable and workable solutions to native title
- Work towards a sustainable model of promoting reconciliation in Victoria
- Develop a business plan to attract non-Government funds, building on income to date

<b>RecVic's capability and achievements</b>
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RecVic is confident that continued Government funding will be a worthwhile investment because we have the capacity to work towards reconciliation as evidenced by our past achievements. Reconciliation requires trust with Aboriginal communities and our considerable achievements have only been possible through our long term commitment and capability to connect with communities. We have trustworthy relationships with and are informed by a wide range of Aboriginal people through:

- building and nurturing relationships with Aboriginal communities and leaders and forming partnerships
- convening state-wide coordination meetings on the 1967 Referendum Anniversary and annual Reconciliation Week activities

- working supportively with the Stolen Generations Organisation, the Aborigines Advancement League, the Fitzroy Stars Football Club and others
- supporting Aboriginal-led projects, particularly with assistance with governance and other infrastructure
- facilitating Aboriginal participation in mainstream policy development and,
- our bi-cultural governing Council

We work strategically with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders, and have undertaken a wide range of community education, including:

- convening local government roundtable and working with MAV, LGPro and VLGA
- running an annual conference for local government and local reconciliation groups
- forming education working groups including Unity Foundation, Education Foundation, Oxfam, LaTrobe University, VIYAC and VAEAI (references available from these organisations) and education institutions
- working in partnership with Reconciliation Australia to promote the Reconciliation Action Plan program
- extensive public education activity: regular newsletters to 2,000 recipients, website, major state-wide conferences, events, over 50 school visits, numerous media presentations and over 50 workshops or speaking engagements per year
- generating around \$30,000 per year in additional income to augment core Government funding
- developing policy options and workable guiding frameworks together with Government on reconciliation issues (we are currently working with DHS on the anti-racism framework)
- Assisting government departments, local government and schools to develop Reconciliation Action Plans (we are currently assisting DHS)
- Developing practical resources to further reconciliation
- Conduct Cultural Competency Training

### **RecVic's support needs**

An organisation such as RecVic has a vast terrain to cover, both geographically and in terms of informing, engaging and activating non-Aboriginal people as to the ways and means of reconciliation. We currently work in schools, with Local Reconciliation Groups, with NGOs, local governments, faith and 'ethnic' groups, and more generally across the community with small organisations. We also try to target young people and corporations and need to get out to the middle and more distant suburbs of Melbourne, as well as regional cities and smaller towns.

The tasks of Reconciliation were created by 220 years of history. They will take decades to resolve. RecVic believes that Reconciliation should be a specific part of the work of the State Government and adequately, securely and recurrently funded as a 'whole of government' response, with clear leadership from the Department Premier and Cabinet. As such we have submitted a 10 year proposal. This level of secure continuity will enable the organisation to build connections and networks, knowledge and expertise, tested tools and projects that work and can be replicated elsewhere.

The budget for the employment of sufficient staff and related resources to be effective across these areas is \$612,000. It is for this amount that we are seeking funding. The attached submission outlines with greater detail the specific targets and measures. With this a firm and secure base, Reconciliation Victoria will be able to attract additional funding to develop, supplement and initiate projects across each of the areas listed as target areas in our submission .

Further, RecVic currently does not have DGR status (tax exemption for donations above \$2). This makes receiving large grants or donations from non-government sources all but impossible.

<b>Other information</b>
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FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

This paper is necessarily brief. It can be supported with much more detail as requested – our application for funding support titled “10 years of Reconciliation”, the submission to the Education Department (based around Wannik), Annual reports of the work in past years, testimonials from Aboriginal and other organisations, a full budget and more detailed reports of each area of work/project in which we have been engaged. We can also provide the theoretical and research-base from which we have developed our operating framework.

**PLEASE CONTACT**

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