

BRUMBY'S FALSE SOLUTION UNACCEPTABLE

Reconciliation Victoria's Co-Chair Vicki Clark today rejected the offer made by the government to temporarily fund the organisation. "This offer is unacceptable" she said, "to use money allocated for Aboriginal services to do the work of reconciliation will undermine the relationships Reconciliation Victoria has with the Victorian Aboriginal community. This is an offer made with the full understanding that we can do nothing but refuse it".

"The funding offered is also conditional on Reconciliation Victoria 'merging' with Stolen Generations Victoria over two years, because according to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Richard Wynne, the organisations "do very similar work". Ms. Clarke stressed that nothing could be further from the truth. Stolen Generations Victoria aims to support Aboriginal people, while Reconciliation Victoria aims to inform, educate and activate non-Aboriginal people about our history over the last 200 years, the impact of this history on Aboriginal people and how we can move towards a better future for all Australians".

Reconciliation is the responsibility of the Government. In 2000 then Premier Bracks made clear the governments view of reconciliation:

"as an ongoing responsibility of Government that needs leadership and support to ensure that the process of Reconciliation and its key themes of respect, understanding and addressing the past are embraced by the whole Victorian community"

In August 2008, Premier Brumby committed to "Close the Gap", which in part stated a commitment to:

"To working collectively to systematically address the social determinants that impact on achieving health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; to achieving improved access to, and outcomes from, mainstream services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to respect and promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including by ensuring that health services are available, appropriate, accessible, affordable, and of good quality".

There is now ample research to demonstrate that the social determinants of Aboriginal health are largely based on the attitudes, systems, lack of understanding and exclusion of Aboriginal people by the non-Aboriginal community. This is the work of Reconciliation Victoria.



"In the light of these government commitments it seems very odd that Reconciliation Victoria be forced to close its doors in Reconciliation Week! It also seems particularly cruel that the life line thrown at us is poisoned: it is very sad that the Brumby Government seems intent on pitting the reconciliation movement in Victoria in competition with Aboriginal services for resources and alienating it from the Aboriginal community."

"It is also ironic that this year's reconciliation theme suggests what we should all do - 'turn words into action'."

Rec Vic calls on the Premier, Mr. John Brumby, to provide leadership in the area of Reconciliation by releasing non Aboriginal-specific monies to support the continuation of the State's only peak reconciliation body. As things stand, Reconciliation Victoria will be close on the 30th of June – in just over four weeks!

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