

# NOW MORE THAN EVER

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2024

May 27 – June 3

National Reconciliation Week is an opportunity for us all to celebrate what we have done to deepen respect and trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians. It is also a time for us to commit to continue to walk together in the struggle for dignity and justice for Australia's First Peoples.

This year's theme, *Now More Than Ever*, reminds us that the struggle for justice must continue. While the referendum for a Voice to Parliament was not supported by a majority of Australians, the gap between First Nations Peoples and other Australians is still wide. In their 2023 – 2024 Social Justice Statement, *Listen, Learn, Love: A New Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Australia's Bishops tell us that, whatever the referendum outcome, non-Indigenous Australians need to keep supporting First Nations People in their pursuit of justice.

## Reflecting on the Referendum

As we prepare to take the next steps in the struggle for justice, it is good to take a moment to reflect on the Voice to Parliament referendum in 2023, how the outcome affected many First Nations Peoples and what their hopes for the future are.

The Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation is a collective in Western Sydney connecting individuals and families in a culturally appropriate way, and providing them with support and links to services to heal and bring the community together for the good of all.

Following the referendum, Baabayn ('Ancestral Woman' in the Gumbaynggirr language) issued the following statement:

*We come from the missions and the riverbanks and now we hold our eldership. In Aboriginal society, we listen to elders, not elite types. Why weren't the voices of elders listened to? Aboriginal people don't need to be told. We just know how we're treated. We know what colonisation did to us. Why were Australians so fearful? Why be fearful of people who have always looked after this country and made such a great contribution in the modern age? We haven't lost the fight.*

- **Statement from Baabayn Aboriginal Inc.**

## First Nations Perspectives:

*What about the people that are still down on the ground and just can't rise above all the things that are weighing them down? Oppression, homelessness, all kinds of things. We're very hurt. It was very disheartening, and it was even more disheartening when the vote came out.*

- Aunty Jenny,  
Emerton, NSW

*Six million people voted Yes. I thought that was a lot of people for us. Six million people. So where are we now? We're in a place that we were in before. Nothing's changed. Well, one thing changed – we found out there were a lot of people on our side. Not enough! Reconciliation is alive and well and still in this country. And you guys are the most important people in this process. Reconciliation is beneficial for Australia. It's beneficial for all Australians, not just us. And I think that's what people don't understand. Reconciliation is not about us taking things away from Australians. Reconciliation is about the recognition of us as the First Peoples. It's the recognition of the things that have happened to us and it's a relationship going forward.*

- Aunty Esme,  
Melbourne, Vic

### **Some questions for reflection and discussion:**

- Have you encountered many First Nations people expressing hurt about the referendum outcome?
- What is the source of the hurt?
- How would you respond to this hurt?
- What don't you know about First Nations Peoples?
- What does reconciliation mean?
- How could you support the struggle of First Nations Peoples for justice?

### **Resources**

Reconciliation Australia provides a [range of resources](#) to help you celebrate National Reconciliation Week:

### **Action**

Some of the things you can do during National Reconciliation Week and beyond are:

- Promote National Reconciliation Week in your newsletter and on your social media;
- Organise or attend a reconciliation event in your community;
- Join the Reconciliation Film Club;
- Join Voices for Reconciliation by recording and posting your local group or choir singing *Blackfella, Whitefella*;
- Start or continue conversations with local elders and communities about their concerns and priorities.

### **Prayers for Reconciliation Week**

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) provides a range of [prayers](#) you can use at services, events and privately during National Reconciliation Week, including a Prayer for National Reconciliation:

Creator Spirit,  
All creation once declared your glory,  
Your laws were honoured and trusted,  
Forgive us our neglect as our country approaches  
the most critical moment in its history.  
Listen to our prayer as we turn to you,  
Hear the cry of our land and its people,  
Just as you heard the cry of Jesus,  
your Son, on the Cross.  
Help us to replace our national shame  
With true national pride by restoring the  
dignity of our First People whose antiquity is unsurpassed.  
May our faith and trust in you increase.  
Only then will our nation grow strong and be  
a worthy place for all who wish to make their home in our land.

**AMEN**