

NATSIEC Statement for Week of Prayer for Reconciliation

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye with never a thought for the plank in your own?
Luke 6:41-42

"The theme for National Reconciliation Week "see the person not the stereotype" is also relevant to Christians as we start the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation," Executive Secretary of NATSIEC Mr Graeme Mundine said today.

"Reconciliation has two parts, first there is an acknowledgement that something is out of balance; an acknowledgement of sorrow and wrongs. The second part is to take action to make amends. We have seen significant actions in the past two years which have helped Australia move to a better understanding and acknowledgement of the pain and suffering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Actions such as the apology to the Stolen Generations, the Statement of Intent on health; even the flawed Northern Territory Intervention are all concrete steps towards reconciliation.

"As we celebrate these actions we must not lose sight of the fact that reconciliation is not only a political issue and is not something that the Government alone must instigate and act on. Certainly, they must show leadership and be proactive, but it is much more than that. If reconciliation is only addressed at a policy or issue level it loses depth and meaning and will not last," Mr Mundine said.

"True and lasting reconciliation will only come from a sustained change of heart at all levels of our community. One way we can come to a change of heart is to focus less on the specks in the eyes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and more on the planks in our own eyes.

"How often do we blame Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for their poverty, for the dysfunction that is too often evident in our communities; rather than asking ourselves, as individuals and as a society, how have we benefited from keeping Aborigines at the bottom of the pile? Can we honestly say that we have stared at the plank in our own eye; that we have wrestled with our own conscience; that we have taken actions in our own lives to open our hearts to true and lasting reconciliation? Until we do so we will not be reconciled," Mr Mundine concluded.

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The Week of Prayer of Reconciliation is from May 27th to June 3rd 2009.
Resources for the week are available from www.ncca.org.au/natsiec.