

## Preview DVD Launch Mabo Day 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

### Introduction:

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Gadigal people and pay respects to the many generations of Elders as well as to the Elders in these present times. We express our thanks for your care of this land we call Australia.

In welcoming you all here today I want to mention some Apologies.

Our dearly loved Elder, Aunty Ali Golding is grieving the loss of her husband of 45 years who passed away last week. His funeral will be on Thursday.

Linda Burney is disappointed that she has other commitments.

Valwyn Wishart also sent her sincere apologies.

On behalf of the WRN it is indeed a pleasure to welcome you all here today and to have one of the WRN's Cultural Mentors, Rasmie Prior to launch this next chapter of activities.

National Reconciliation Week was initially launched in 1996 at the event in the Power House Museum. During this significant week on 29<sup>th</sup> May the Celebration of Women took place with 300 participating. This event gave birth to the Women's Reconciliation Network and many of the founding members are here present today.

Over the years the WRN has produced several publications the first one being the documentation and reflections of this watershed event titled "Healing our Nation through Women's Wisdom" in 1997.

The following year with funding from the Dept for Women an inspiring Video was developed, produced and launched in National Reconciliation Week 1998. The messages expressed in this video encouraged three of us to develop a guide-book for educators in senior secondary schools, universities and other institutions of learning and launched in 2005.

Since 2012 the WRN has organised public three Constitutional Recognition Forums, enabled by a Grant from the Recognise organisation. 1. Forum held in the Redfern Community Centre, 2. In the Paddington Community and 3. Ashfield Town Hall .

The most recent of these involved a partnership of working together with Marrickville Residents for Reconciliation, ANTaR Inner West group along with members from the Sutherland Shire Reconciliation Group. This formed a very creative team for this collaborative project.

This planning group was also grateful to have other interested individuals This produced the successful "Exploring Perspectives" Forum in the Ashfield Town Hall in March 2014 and recorded live on You Tube; made possible by a Film Maker contact.

**Mabo Day Celebration and "Exploring Perspectives" DVD Preview & Launch  
at the Block, Redfern Community Centre, organised the Women's Reconciliation  
Network on 3rd June 2014.**

Elaine Telford opened the gathering and welcomed Aunty Ali Golding, WRN's Aboriginal cultural mentor, who acknowledged Country. Auntie Ali talked about the Block, where she had lived for 27 years, and said that during that time, there were so many good families, so many good times, and it was the birthplace of all the Black organisations, such as the Black Theatre and others. She paid tribute to Pemulwuy, the ancestors and the Gadigal custodians, and said that the Block community were so proud, carrying on their traditions, which gave them strength.

Since 2012 the WRN has held 3 forums on proposed changes to the Australian Constitution to recognise the First Australians. The most recent of these was held at the Ashfield Town Hall, in cooperation with Marrickville Residents for Reconciliation, ANTaR Inner West and the Sutherland Reconciliation Group. This well-attended forum inspired the production of the DVD launched on Tuesday. "Exploring Perspectives" features the four keynote speakers. Jane Innes, who helped edit the DVD mentioned the significance of Mabo Day, and thanked the speakers appearing on the DVD, Professor George Williams, AO, Nicole Watson, Kirsten Gray and Jeff McMullen AM.

Rasme Prior, WRN's Torres Strait Island cultural mentor, spoke about her uncle, Koiki Mabo, who not only proclaimed and won his case upsetting Terra Nullius and proving that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Peoples, and that there is Native Title, but was also a teacher, an activist, and passionate about his culture. He established the first black school in Townsville. She also paid homage to her Aunty Kennedy, who guided and encouraged Koiki, and who said, "its not about the journey, what's important is getting there."

The DVD opens with Jacinta Tobin, a Darug woman singing one of her songs followed by Welcome to Country by Patricia Blackman, a member of the Ashfield Aboriginal Consultative Committee. The first speaker, Professor George Williams AO, talks about the time when the Constitution was written – a time when no recognition was given to anything that happened on this continent before 1788 and with the belief that the Aboriginal people were a 'dying race'. And although after the 1967 referendum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were counted in the census, racist powers were retained. And even the Racial Discrimination Act has been overridden twice in the last 15 years. No other nation today still gives power to its government to discriminate negatively on the basis of race.

Kirsten Gray, Muruwari woman and CEO of the NSW Reconciliation Council. speaks about the necessity of changing the Constitution because of unfinished business, and even then, it would not be a magic bullet nor the end of the process. She stressed the importance of respect.

Jeff McMullen, AM, praises the work of the Expert Panel, who have made recommendations on how the constitution should be changed. He said that the Constitution was based on deception, denial and exclusion and that the stain of discrimination must go. He also spoke about the need for recognition of self-determination and sovereignty.

Nicole Watson, a member of the Birri-Gubba People and Senior Researcher at Jumbunna House of Learning UTS, mentions differences of opinion and diversity amongst Indigenous people, and that people like herself want more than constitutional recognition. She urges everyone to read the report produced by the Expert Panel and stresses that self-determination is what is really needed, and that means a treaty should be the next step. She also speaks about racial aspects of the law in the high number of Indigenous people in prisons and the Northern Territory intervention.

What came out of the forum was the need for respect, reflection, recognition, working together and ACTION to spread the word. After the conclusion of the DVD, people were asked to comment.

People liked the clarity, passion, variety, diversity and simplicity of language at the forum.

A general discussion followed on ways to promote and distribute this DVD "Exploring Perspectives".

The meeting concluded with Helen Kearins performing her beautiful and topical song 'Write the First Chapter'.

Copies of the DVD "Exploring Perspectives" will be available in August 2014 along with a Conversation Circle Guide. WRN Communications Contact is: Email:

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File WRN - Recognise  
DOCS Library  
@ 5 Aug. Faculty ?'s

"Exploring Perspectives"  
Reflective conversation guide

2014

**Context:** We invite you to engage in a series of sessions reflecting on the DVD you have seen about 'Recognition of the First Peoples of Australia in the Australian Constitution'.

The following conversation guide follows a natural reflective conversation structure. (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) The questions are open, and not prescriptive, and you can tailor them to suit a particular group, situation and time frame.

**1. George Williams' Excerpt:** *This set of questions are clear and succinct.*

**Objective:**

What are some of the key words and phrases you picked up from George's presentation?

**Reflective:**

What are some of the feelings you experience when you listen to George?

Were you surprised or shocked at any point in this talk? If so, by what?

**Objective/Interpretive:**

What would you say is George's key message to the Australian people?

What does George mean when he says the Constitution 'fails Aboriginal people'?

On what grounds does the Constitution fail?

What are the key points of Sections 127 and 25? *What are the implications?*

What are the implications for us as a nation, for you and me?

**Decisional:**

What questions or concerns would you want to raise?

Who would you raise these with, and how would you raise them?

What do we need to be doing to begin to right the injustices?

What else could we be doing as a nation or as individuals?

**Kirsten Gray's Excerpt:**

**Objective:**

Do you recall any of the guiding principles laid out by the Expert Panel of any] proposal for change? What are these?

What does Kirsten say 'Reconciliation' is about? (3 Rs – Rights, Relationships & Respect)

**Reflective:**

What feelings did you have whilst listening to Kirsten? *Is there another to option to add?*

**Interpretive:**

What does Kirsten present as key misconceptions held in parts of the community?

What misconceptions and misunderstandings do you encounter in every day life?

What do you understand as the connection between the 1967 referendum and the proposed referendum on 'Recognition'?

Kirsten said the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation had stated that there are the two?

aspects of the reconciliation process. Do you recall what they were? (*practical measures to overcome disadvantage; structural and symbolic actions*)

Why do you think this is, or is not, important?

How would you talk about the power of symbol?

What would be the key issue if we left the Constitution the way it is?

In what Kirsten presents, what are the implications for us as a nation?

**Decisional:**

What are the implications that emerge, for both you & /your networks, for next steps, if we contemplate Kirsten's statement:

*'I don't think our journey for rights or equality ends with constitutional recognition'?*

## **Jeff McMullen's Excerpt:**

### **Objective:**

Share some of the key words, phrases, images do you remember from Jeff's presentation?

### **Reflective:**

What feelings did you experience whilst listening to Jeff?

What grabbed your attention in Jeff's Presentation?

### **Interpretive:**

What do you believe is Jeff's central point? (*denial – we are still White Australia*)

What does Jeff identify as the key issues for Indigenous Australians, that need to be addressed? (*health, education, sovereignty, leading to self determination*)

How would you talk about the relationship between these issues and the pursuit of Recognition of the First peoples in the Constitution?

### **Decisional:**

What steps does Jeff identify for the journey towards real Recognition of the First Peoples of Australia?:

**How do you think the nation should proceed?**

## **Nicole Watson's Excerpt**

### **Objective:**

What words, phrases and images do you recall from Nicole Watson's presentation?

What were the three concerns that Nicole raises?

What are the key issues that Nicole believes need to be addressed, before Recognition in the Constitution is credible?

### **Reflective:**

What feelings did you experience while listening to her?

What are the key issues that Nicole believes need to be addressed, before Recognition in the Constitution is credible?

### **Interpretive:**

What evidence is presented to support the key task of achieving a Treaty and self determination?

### **Decisional:**

What recommendations for related to how the nation could proceed, do you see emerging from Nicole's presentation?

## **Reflection for entire DVD:**

What stirred you? Surprised you? Shocked you?

What questions do you have about views expressed by the various speakers or the issues they raise?

Where do you see connections/common themes with other speakers or other Indigenous or non-Indigenous views, that you have encountered?

What did you learn?

If someone was to ask you what this video was about what would you tell them?

How is this message best delivered to a cross section of the Australian population?

How do you see your role, or that of your organisation, in participation in awareness raising, or debate around this issue?