



### What is the Council trying to achieve?

The Council has been established to try and improve relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

The Council's vision is to bring all Australians together to respect the land and sea and learn to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, so that everyone can have justice and a fair go.

### These are the issues the Council is working

The wider community has a limited understanding of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Council has heard many positive stories about people working together at the local community level and would like to let other people know about these examples so they can benefit from these ideas.

The land and sea is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the Council will try to help the wider community understand why.

Culture and heritage is valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Council will try and encourage the wider community to see these cultures as part of our unique national heritage in a way that respects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait owners of these cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have strong links with their history. The Council will look at ways of giving all people a chance to learn about the history that has shaped our relationship with each other since contact between us. Most people know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disadvantaged in health, housing, employment and education. The Council will ask the community to think about these problems and encourage local activities to respond to these needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people end up in gaol more often than other people. The Council will assist in finding ways of getting the whole community involved in reducing the custody rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders want to control their own lives. The Council will help the community come to understand what this means.

The Council will also talk and listen to all Australians about whether things would be made better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community by formalising the relationships between them through a document, a change to the Constitution, or some other change in the law.

### Will the reconciliation process help?

The reconciliation process is a way of dealing with problems that have been with us for many years.

The first part of the process is to develop better understanding in the wider community about what has happened to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders over the last 200 years, so that people understand the factors that have led to current differences between us. Then the Council will talk to people around the country and in all parts of society about these differences so that we can look at ways of dealing with problems.

The Council gives people an opportunity to have a say about what will improve understanding and create bridges of trust and respect between us. For example, we need to know not only about whether a formal process, such as a document or change to the Constitution would help, but also about the ways groups and individuals work together in their own communities on practical tasks to build better relations and acceptance.

### What will happen?

The Council will be holding meetings with communities and organisations across the country.

Committees will be established to look at important community sectors such as the rural, mining, industries and the media. Also to oversee the important process that may lead to a change to the Constitution or a formal agreement such as a document.

There will be a major Conference in June 1994 to discuss the views that have come forward as a result of the meetings that are currently being organised and to work out the next steps to advance the reconciliation process. The Conference will advise the government about these challenges and what can be done.

**How will your community be involved?**

The Council will keep sending information to communities and other groups about what is happening. We will invite community and other leaders to talk to the Council about issues of concern. Where it can, the Council will meet with local communities and groups.

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