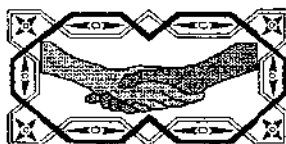


S. sunshine
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R. reconciliation
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CALOUNDRA BRANCH

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The Chairperson,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Reference Committee
On the Progress of National Reconciliation,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.



Dear Sir,

Re: Submission by ANTaR in relation to Reconciliation Progress.

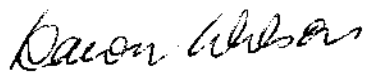
We write to support the submission by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) Inc. in relation to reconciliation progress. Like so many other Australians we were greatly heartened by such things as the original (and following) Sea of Hands and the Walk Over the Harbour Bridge, and walks over other bridges. These expressions by ordinary people occasioned hope, but are useless unless they are taken on board by people in authority.

We acknowledge, with ANTaR, that there have been positive trends, but the shifts that we observe are small. It is almost as if delaying long enough will achieve the result of assimilation, with the problem taken care of. So we are concerned about 'practical reconciliation' and its implications in relation to assimilation and consequent loss of Aboriginal identity – its customs, its spirituality, its knowledge of this great land of ours – from which we can all benefit.

The statement taken from the Commonwealth Government's response to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's Final Report of September, 2002, if taken as is, could be interpreted as saying that Aboriginal people's culture must give way to the culture of the general community. The loss of a culture – its spirituality, language, identity – is the loss of a people, the destruction of a people. We trust that this is not the meaning of that statement and would seek reassurance from your Committee of Inquiry that this is not the case. When people from other countries of the world come to Australia and accept citizenship, there is an undertaking to become a part of a culture. The Aboriginal people, however, as original inhabitants of this land, must surely be entitled to our recognition, acceptance and respect, especially if we expect it of others.

We draw attention of the Committee to the failures related to reconciliation progress outlined in the ANTaR submission, particularly to leadership and commitment at the national level, the level where decisions are made that affect all of us. Here many attitudes are set which affect the judgement of the people. We request that the Committee make itself aware, in any deliberations made, of the spirituality that evolved within the Aboriginal people over hundreds of thousands of years, the wisdom they accumulated about their place and the need for their care of the land, and seek to preserve that heritage, viewing it as a living reminder of the need to recognize and thank these original occupants of our country.

Yours sincerely,



(Dawn Wilson)
Secretary,
Sunshine Coast Reconciliation Group (Caloundra)