

# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use

4pm Friday, January 22, 2010



## ANTaR Makes Australia Day Call for A Year of Re-commitment to Addressing the Unfinished Business of 'Reconciliation'

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) called on governments and community organisations to revisit the reconciliation process and in particular address the unfinished business.

"Despite the apparent resolve of governments to close the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, progress is slow; our politicians and policy makers continue to scratch their heads and wonder why," ANTaR spokesperson, Dr Peter Lewis said today.

"As Victorian Aboriginal leader, Muriel Bamblett, said at last year's Human Rights Oration in Melbourne, the gap in health and wellbeing will only start to close if the gap in our relationships and our understanding of our national story is also closed. As long as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel like aliens in their own land, the impact of cross-cultural misunderstanding and racism will remain an impediment to addressing Indigenous disadvantage."

2010 represents the tenth anniversary of the historic Corroboree 2000 and the many Reconciliation Walks throughout the country, the Sydney Olympics, when a Cathy Freeman victory seemed to momentarily unite the nation, and the Final Report of the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation*. The *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation* ran extensive workshops across the nation and, through the most widespread consultation process in the nation's history, developed a *Declaration Towards Reconciliation*, a *Roadmap Towards Reconciliation* and a suggested legislative framework to address the unfinished business of reconciliation, including constitutional change to recognize the status of Indigenous peoples and a negotiating process towards treaty making.

"In many ways the Year 2000 was a moment in time when the nation began to create a vision of an Australia where the injustices and wrongs dealt to the First Peoples by colonisation were 'righted': an Australia which recognized the First Peoples' proper place in Australian society and provided land justice and social justice through agreements and treaties," Dr Lewis said. "Until we resolve the issue of our foundation as a polity imposed upon rather than negotiated with the First Peoples, we will remain a 'nation' with little vision."

"So on Australia Day 2010, a day many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples refer to as Survival or Invasion Day, we are calling upon the Federal Government in particular to revisit the documents and promises of the reconciliation process and recommit to a process of negotiation with the Indigenous community around ensuring the proper place of Australia's First Peoples in the nation."

**Media contact:** Dr Peter Lewis 0400 586 617