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MEDIA RELEASE

NRL Grand Final plants a hand for recognition

Reconciliation Australia and ANTaR are encouraging ‘footy fans’ at this Sunday’s NRL Grand Final to plant a hand to recognise the contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make in sport—and the broader community.

A sea of 20,000 hands will be used to create the ‘Flag of Unity’, designed by Aboriginal artist Adam Hill, using the colours of the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian flags.

The event will take place between 12noon and 5pm this Sunday, 2 October, in Cathy Freeman Park outside ANZ Stadium as part of pre-NRL Grand Final entertainment.

South Sydney Rabbitohs player and You Me Unity Ambassador Rhys Wesser will join in the activity that also marks the end of public consultations about constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“Recognition and reconciliation go hand in hand—and I reckon no one knows this better than footy players.

“As a player, I’m recognised as much more than a bloke who loves to kick a footy,” Mr Wesser said, “as a role model for young Indigenous kids, I can help to build self-esteem and give them the backbone that enables the power to move on, the power to learn.”

Over the past six months, consultations have been held across Australia to ask people how the Australian Constitution could be changed to recognise the culture, heritage and great contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The ‘Flag of Unity’, based on ANTaR’s Sea of Hands installation that was first developed in 1997, is designed as an act of recognition. It is also a call for formal recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation's founding document, the Constitution, as the next step in our reconciliation journey.

Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Leah Armstrong said she is pleased to be partnering with ANTaR on this fantastic initiative.

“The Sea of Hands is a fantastic way for individuals to stand up and show support for reconciliation and constitutional recognition.

“Adam Hill’s design, The ‘Flag of Unity’ represents the important place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures in our national identity,” Ms Armstrong said.

ANTaR National Director, Jacqueline Phillips, also expressed her enthusiasm about the initiative.

“As a symbol of community support for reconciliation and recognition, we’re delighted to be bringing the Sea of Hands to footy fans at this important time in our nation’s history.”
The Sea of Hands marks the end of the consultation period as the Panel appointed by the Australian Government prepares its report on how constitutional change could be achieved.

Reconciliation Australia is the peak body promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

ANTaR is a national advocacy organisation dedicated specifically to the rights - and overcoming the disadvantage - of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For more information, please go to www.youmeunity.org.au.

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