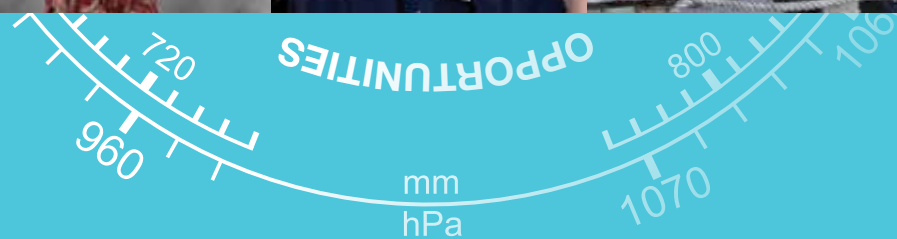


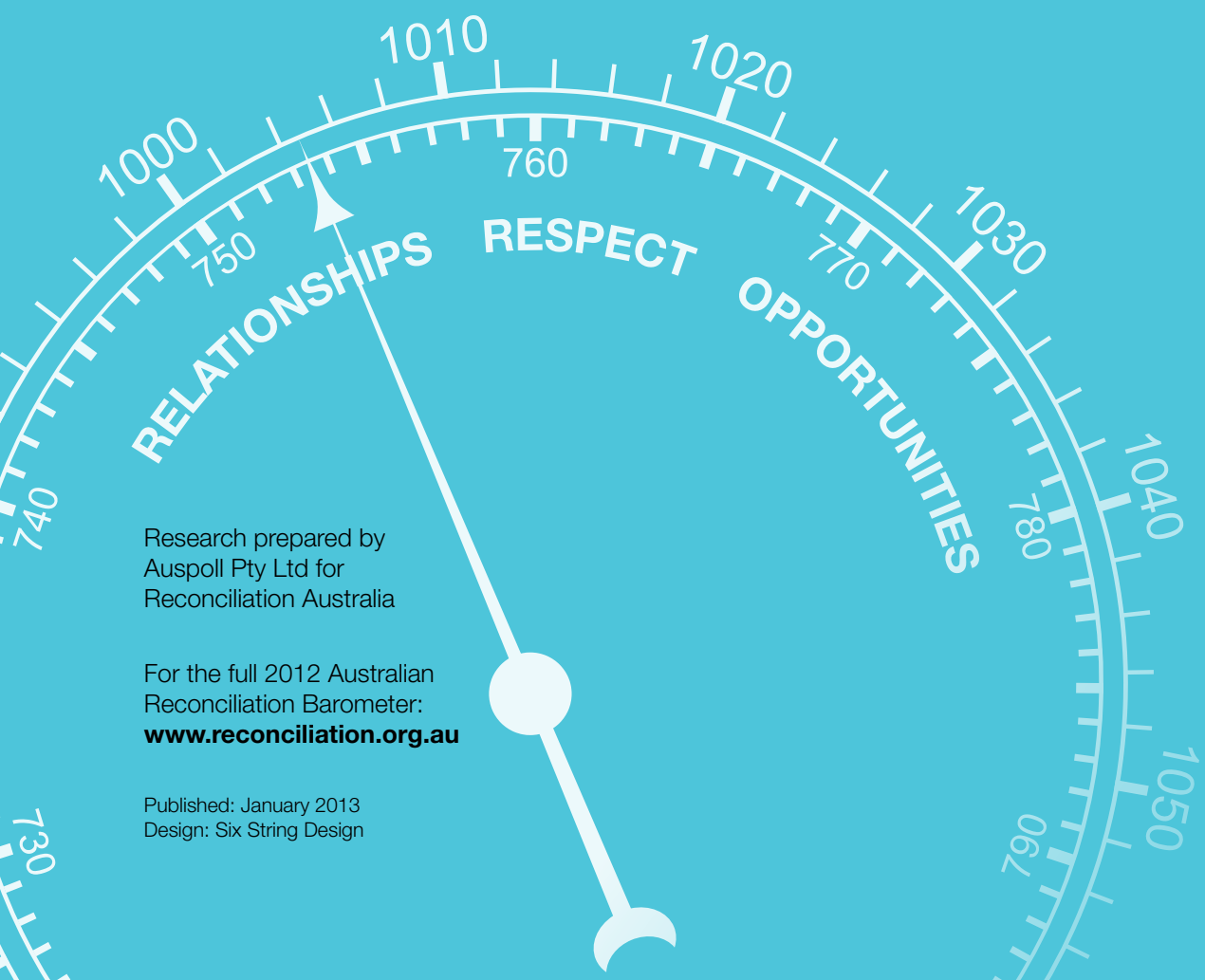


Reconciliation  
AUSTRALIA



# Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2012

An overview



Research prepared by  
Auspoll Pty Ltd for  
Reconciliation Australia

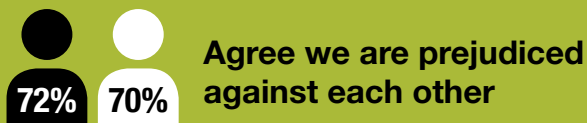
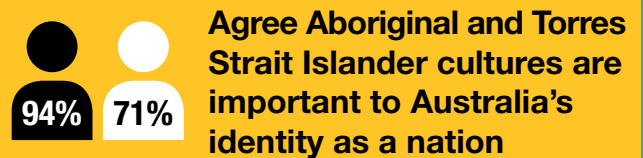
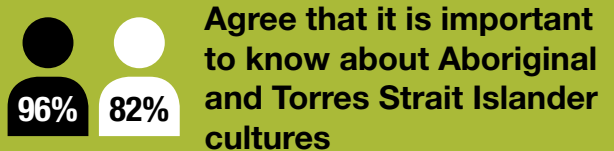
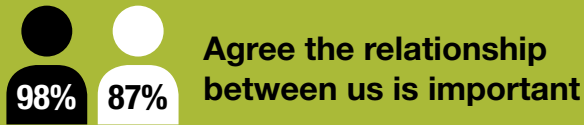
For the full 2012 Australian  
Reconciliation Barometer:  
[www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

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# Key findings for 2012



The key to building better relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians is first understanding the underlying values and perceptions that shape these relationships.



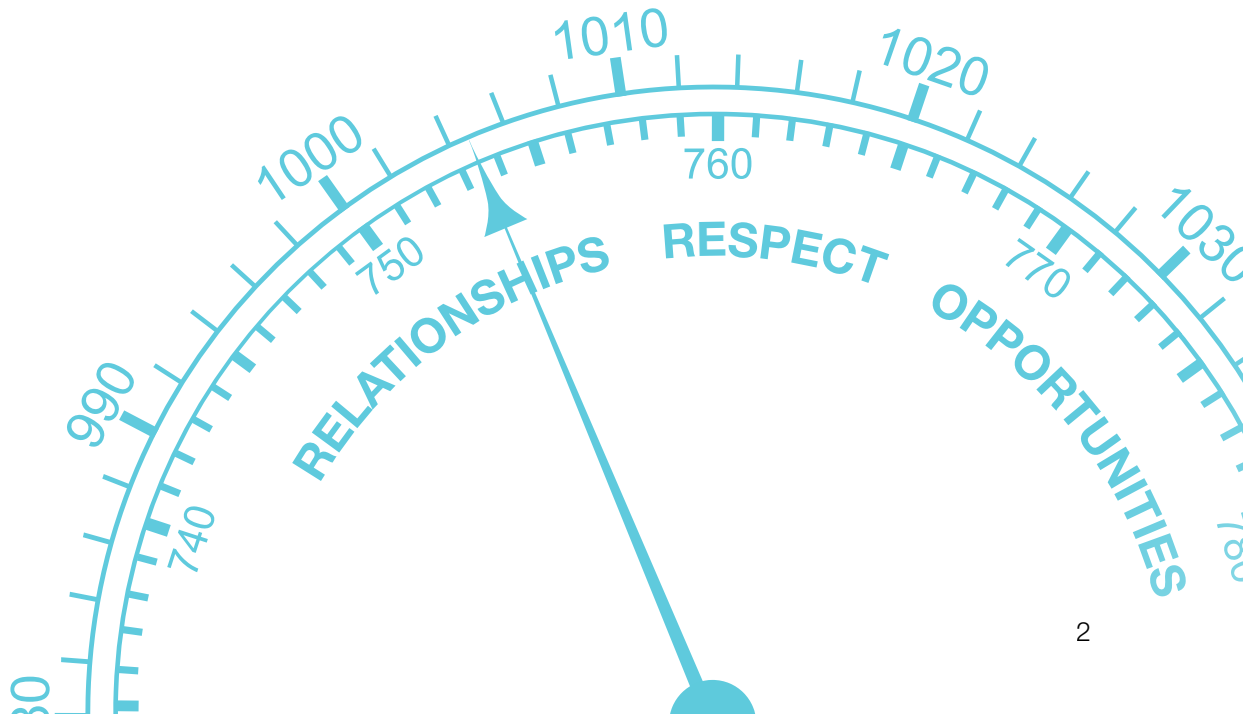
# What is the Australian Reconciliation Barometer?

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer is a biennial national research study that measures the progress of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. First conducted in 2008, the 2012 Australian Reconciliation Barometer is the third study in the series.

If we are to build better relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians we must first understand the underlying values and perceptions that shape this relationship. As the study continues we will be able to track changes in these values and perceptions.

This overview highlights key findings of the 2012 Australian Reconciliation Barometer, conducted for Reconciliation Australia by Auspoll and completed in September 2012. To read the full report, go to [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au).

Please note that all percentage figures in this report are rounded. Accordingly, totals may not add up to 100 per cent.



## Measuring changes in the relationship

Our vision is for a reconciled Australia where there is national pride of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, shared prosperity amongst all Australians and improved levels of trust between First Australians and other Australians. We believe the path to achieving this is through building strong relationships, greater mutual respect and improved opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Barometer tracks our progress towards a stronger relationship through our perceptions of how we think the relationship is going and whether we think it is important. It also tests for high levels of trust and low levels of prejudice as these are indicators of a strong relationship.

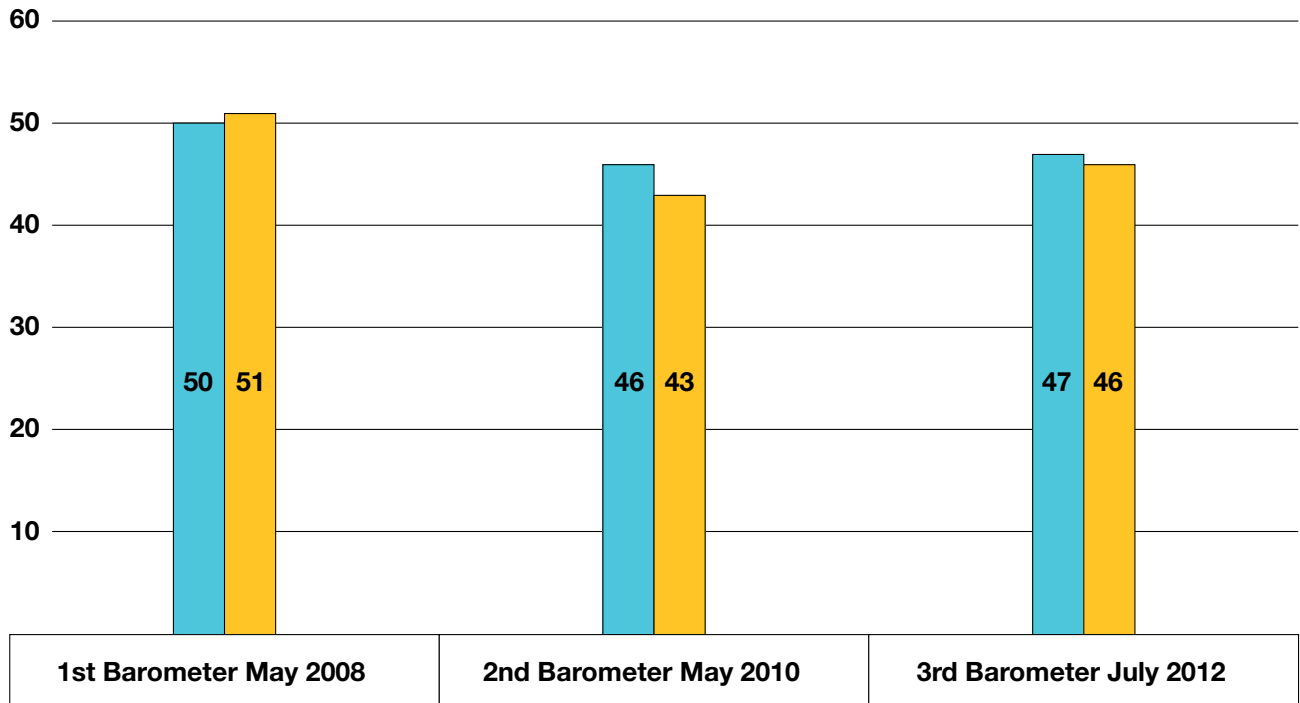
The Barometer measures respect based on our level of understanding and pride in the cultures and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We believe that as the level of knowledge and understanding increases, more Australians will share in the pride that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians feel for their histories and cultures.


The first Barometer was conducted in 2008, shortly after the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples and captured the positive mood of the nation towards reconciliation. In 2010, there was a decline across a range of indicators however it is encouraging that this trend was reversed in 2012. Most results increased on 2010 levels however they are still slightly below 2008 levels (see graph 1).


Overall the key findings from 2008 are still true today. Australians believe the relationship is important but they do not think it is very good. They would like to know more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.

It will take a generation to see significant change in the perceptions and attitudes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians towards one another. Improving levels of trust and reducing levels of prejudice will happen slowly as we understand each other better and communicate more.

**Graph 1: How has our perception of the relationship changed since 2008?**



 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who believe the relationship is fairly/very good

 General community respondents who believe the relationship is fairly/very good

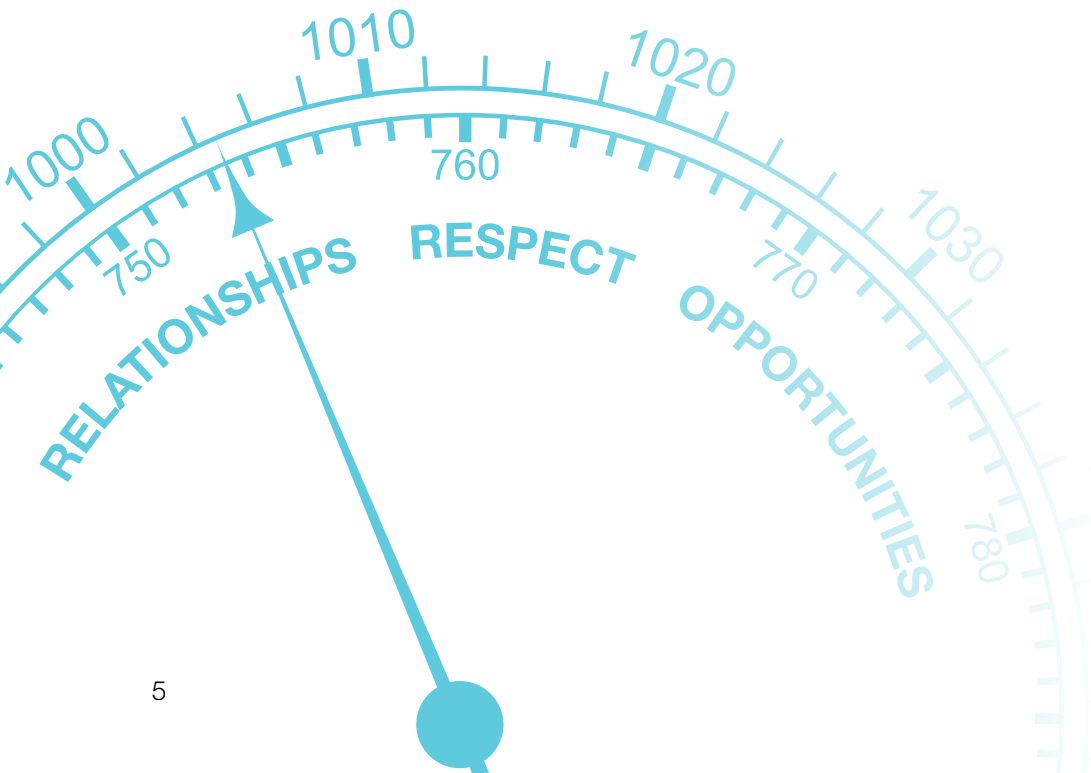
Results displayed in percentages

# RELATIONSHIPS

The Barometer found that most Australians believe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is important, however only around half believe it is strong and improving. This indicates that there is good will but it is not yet translating into better relationships.

When asked about specific aspects of the relationship, it becomes clear that we need to focus our efforts on building strong foundations. The low levels of trust suggest we are less likely to start relationships to begin with—and they are more likely to break down.

High levels of prejudice reflect low levels of understanding about one another. This is partly explained by the limited personal contact that many in the general community have with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As a result, most Australians' views about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are shaped by secondary sources, like the media, that may not present a balanced perspective.

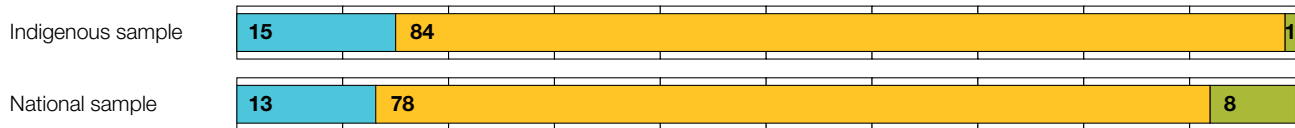




### Agree the relationship is good



### Agree we trust each other



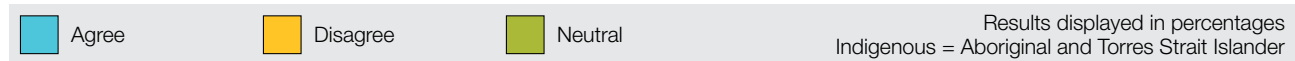
### Agree we are prejudiced against each other



### Agree the relationship is important



### Agree the relationship is improving



Results displayed in percentages  
 Indigenous = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

## Momentum for stronger relationships is building

Since the first Barometer in 2008, we have continued to see high levels of good will to improve the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. The challenge has been to convert the good will into action.

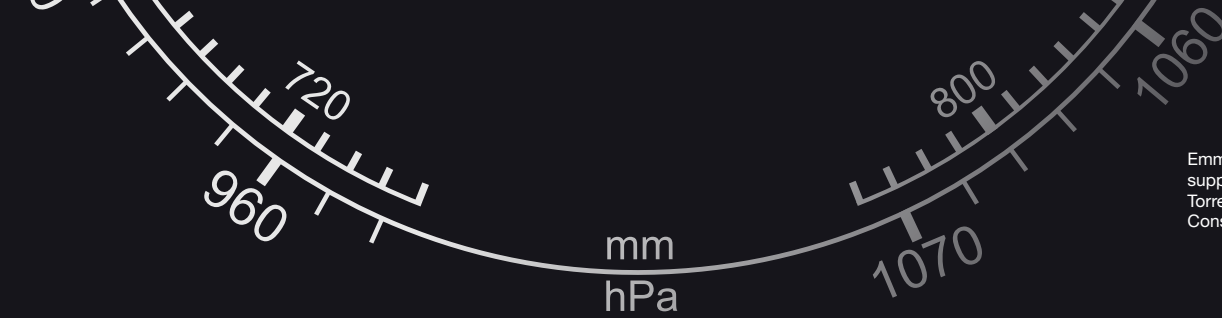
Non-Indigenous Australians are increasingly taking practical steps to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2012, a record number of people celebrated National Reconciliation Week. Around the country Australians participated in storytelling workshops; attended art exhibitions and concerts; and took part in cultural walking tours and bike rides around places of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These small actions brought people together throughout the week.

We are working more closely than ever before to achieve positive outcomes. For example, over 1,000 university students are mentoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students as part of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience. The program is a unique opportunity to build relationships and learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It benefits the mentor just as much as the student.

There has also been greater recognition of the need to work together to solve problems. It is encouraging that the Australian Government's Framework for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians 'Engaging Today, Building Tomorrow' emphasises a new approach based on partnership. In the private sector, a growing number of businesses are developing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

It is important that we build on this positive momentum. If individuals and organisations continue to take up opportunities to build relationships, and the trend towards working in partnership continues, the level of trust will build and prejudices will be broken down. However the launch of the national anti-racism campaign 'Racism, It stops with me' this year is a reminder that racism is still a significant issue and we have a long way to go.



Emma Donovan and Renee Geyer support recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution. Image, Amanda James.



## Redfern community: boxing their way to a better relationship

You wouldn't think a one hour boxing session held three times a week would be instrumental in changing a whole community. But that's just the effect the 'Clean Slate Without Prejudice' program has had on Redfern.

Held at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE), the program is driven by respected Aboriginal mentor Shane Phillips and Superintendent Luke Freudenstein from Redfern Local Area Command. At 6am every Monday, Wednesday and Friday the pair can be found barking orders—jab, cross, one, two!—to the growing number of young Aboriginal men and women now attending the boxing class.

"We started out with a targeted program for 15 kids in 2009," Shane says. "From there it grew and now we've got over 20 young blokes who we've seen change by doing the program."

"They're involved in work and going to school—they're contributing to society and it's had a positive effect on the whole community."

"We started out with a targeted program for 15 kids in 2009," Shane says. "From there it grew and now we've got over 20 young blokes who we've seen change by doing the program."

Shane and Luke are joined each morning by a mix of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous police officers and community members who've decided to take an active role in building bridges between the police and the local community. It's a far cry from the situation that faced police just five years ago.

"The Block was always a hot spot but the tensions felt there previously almost feels like a life time ago," says Police Youth Liaison Officer, Veronica Sarrasco. "As a police officer, you wouldn't be able to go to the Block on your own, but last week I went there in full uniform and was greeted with hugs and handshakes ... every second person knew who I was and that's because of 'Clean Slate Without Prejudice'."

Between 2008 and 2009, the percentage of robbery offences in Redfern committed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths dropped by 80 per cent. By 2011, it was down a further 44 per cent with rates of repeat offences also in sharp decline. Although the statistics tell an impressive story, it's the relationships and reduced level of prejudice between the two groups which Shane says have made the difference.

"The culture of both sides not talking to each other has changed because of the really simple things," he says. "The simple thing of having a routine together where we all get up at 5.30am to come here and sweat—everyone is equal and everyone drops their guard."

"While that happens they engage with each other, they talk and they actually see each other."

Participants of the program are also asked to give back to the community through mentoring others



Shane Phillips in action with the boxing team at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence. Image, Rebecca Gallegos.

“I care about the pride of the Aboriginal boys and whether they’re in employment, staying out of crime and staying off drugs and alcohol.”

and speaking publicly about the program at events organised by Redfern police.

Superintendent Freudenstein is himself personally invested in building and maintaining good relationships between Redfern police and community members. Running the Clean Slate Without Prejudice program is just one of the community programs he’s involved with.

“I care about my community,” he says. “I care about the pride of the Aboriginal boys and whether they’re in employment, staying out of crime and staying off drugs and alcohol.”

It’s been a long journey for both the police and people of Redfern and while the journey is still continuing, it’s clear that a renewed focus on relationships and trust is paving the way for a more optimistic future.

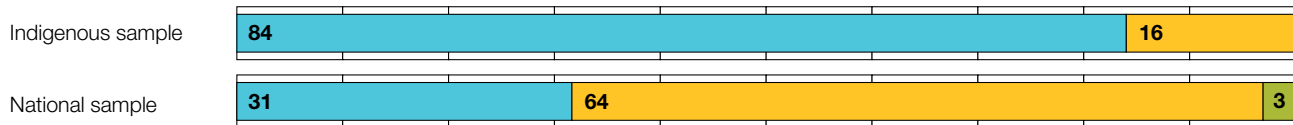
# RESPECT

Knowledge and understanding are at the heart of respectful relationships. Learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians builds greater awareness and empathy, based on understanding rather than perception. It also facilitates greater appreciation of their ongoing contribution to Australia's development.

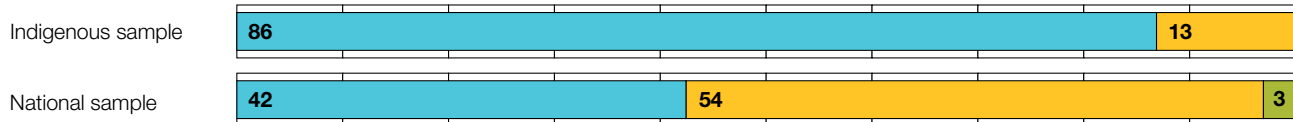
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Barometer found that the general community has far less knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The gap in knowledge and understanding may go some way to explaining the high levels of prejudice that exist between us.

Encouragingly, the Barometer found a clear aspiration to learn more. Respondents in the general community believe it is important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and that these cultures form an important part of Australia's national identity. While only half of those surveyed in the general community feel personally proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Reconciliation Australia believes this will increase as Australians learn and understand more about the First Australians.

## Knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures



## Knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories



### Agree that it is important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures



### Feel personally proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

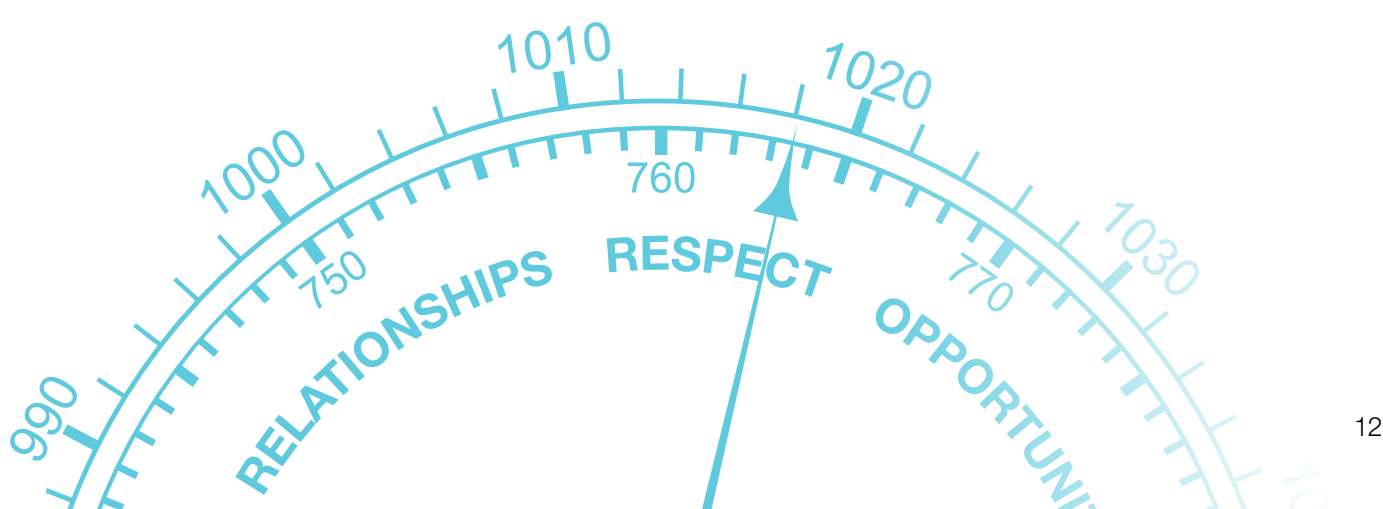


### Agree that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's identity as a nation



■ Agree    
 ■ Disagree    
 ■ Neutral

Results displayed in percentages  
Indigenous = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander





## Establishing a culture of mutual respect

The Barometer reflects a clear need to increase the amount and quality of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. A number of changes across the media and entertainment industries will give a stronger voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and will give non-Indigenous Australians a more balanced perspective on issues.

In December 2012, the National Indigenous Television (NITV) channel was launched nationally as a free to air digital channel. The Media Reconciliation Industry Network Group is working to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the media including presenters, directors, producers, technical crew and journalists.

Changes are also happening in schools and workplaces. The new national curriculum will ensure that students learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures every year in a range of subjects. In workplaces, increasing numbers of employees are undertaking cultural awareness training to better understand how their own cultures, as well as the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, shape their values, beliefs and behaviours.

While knowledge and understanding build respect, expressing that respect by recognising and celebrating the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to Australia drives respectful relationships. The Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in 2008 and the current conversation about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the Constitution are important steps towards more mutually respectful relationships.





2012 Senior Australian of the Year  
Laurie Baymarrwangga with members  
of her community in Arnhem Land.  
Image, Bentley James and courtesy  
National Australia Day Council.

## Aunty Joan Hendriks: taking time to listen builds genuine respect

Aunty Joan Hendriks, a Ngugi elder from South East Queensland, is passionate about sharing cultures. With an Aboriginal mother and Irish American Catholic father, she has seen her life's goal to bring the two cultures together.

She believes stories are the foundation stones for building understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

"I've got this real passion about dialoguing—whether it's about Western or Indigenous Education—and the three aspects of relationships, respect and responsibilities all play an important part in taking us forward," Aunty Joan says.

"It's sometimes good to get away from the horrors of reality, you know, talk about some of the good stuff that's going on—that's where the growth comes from."

It was only in the 1980s when Aunty Joan's own children were grown up that she started to explore her Aboriginality. She then began speaking around

"It's sometimes good to get away from the horrors of reality, you know, talk about some of the good stuff that's going on—that's where the growth comes from."

Queensland, and around the world, about justice and reconciliation.

These days, with a Masters in Arts, and a Doctorate in Theology along with a swag of prestigious awards to her name, Aunty Joan now spends her time inspiring the next generation of leaders as 'Elder in Residence' at Brisbane's Lourdes Hill College.

School Principal Robyn Anderson says Joan's role is to help educate the girls to be leaders, so they can build relationships—respectful, life-long-relationships—and develop a shared understanding.

"Unless you know a person's story, you don't know them and you can't heal or have a good relationship so we love having Joan around talking about Aboriginal issues and sharing stories," Robyn says.

"Aunty Joan is so wonderful with stories and being with people—when she's sitting with someone she has an engaging, powerful connection, this ability to make them feel as though they are the only person in the world. It's these qualities that mean Joan has a big impact on the school. It's simply something you can't quantify."

The respect Aunty Joan has from students and teachers alike is clearly evident as she walks around the school grounds. But this isn't what motivates her. It's not about personal accolades.

"You don't do it to feel good about yourself, you do it because someone else gets something out of it," Joan says.

"This morning I raced down to the uniform shop and there was a chorus of voices from a group of about 20



“You don’t do it to feel good about yourself, you do it because someone else gets something out of it.”

Aunty Joan Hendriks with Lourdes Hill College students Natia Burns (left) and Toomiriki Burns (right) in the school’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre. Image, Kylie Kluger.

Year 8 girls: ‘Hello Aunty Joan! Congratulations for being one of the finalists in the Australian of the Year Awards.’

“You know, deep inside me, it brings tears when I know that there’s this younger generation growing up that can show that respect to me as an Aboriginal woman. And particularly since the finalists have been announced it’s something that I’ve really picked up... you know that strong respect for elders—for our people.”

While Joan says there has been a notable change in attitudes from non-Indigenous people she points out it’s a two-way street for all of us.

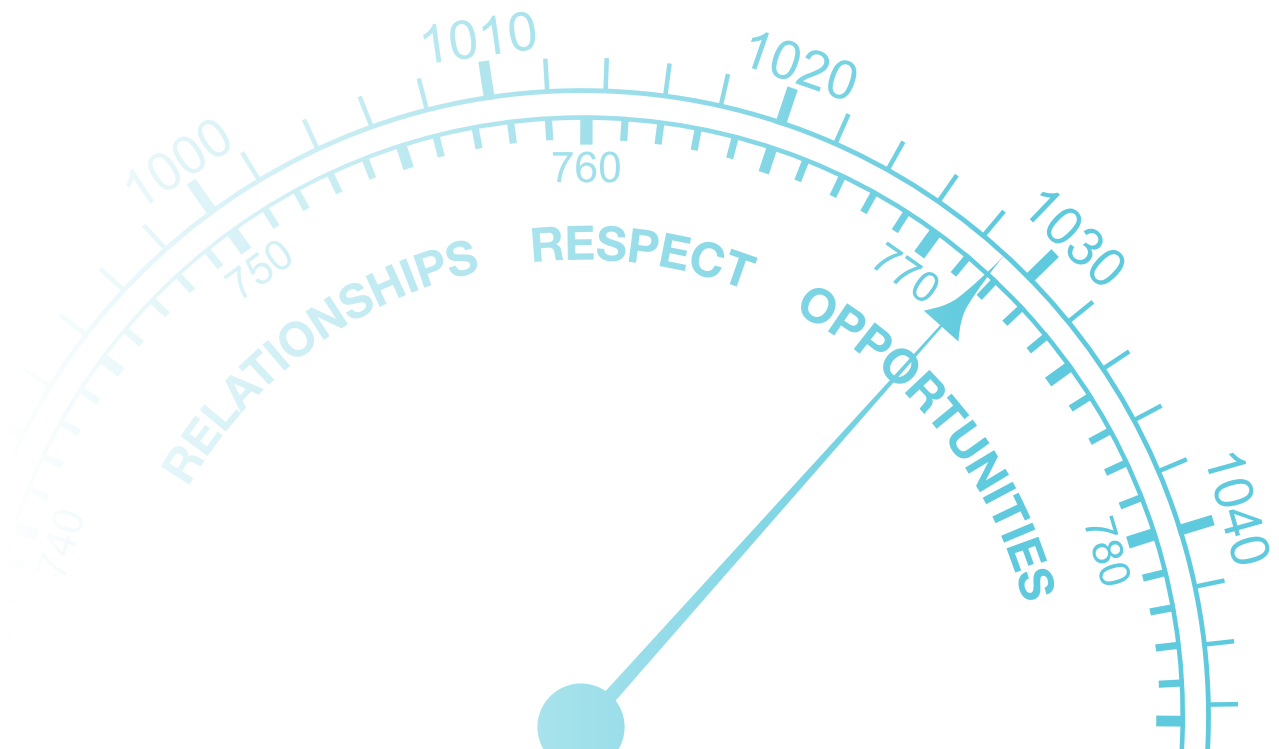
“We, as Aboriginal people, have also got to take time to listen if we’re going to have genuine respect. It’s a gentle walk and you never stop learning.”

# OPPORTUNITIES

The Barometer found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians do not believe they have the same level of access to opportunities as other Australians. They are aware of ongoing inequality in social and economic circumstance and believe that being born Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander makes it harder to achieve.

General community respondents are less likely to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have fewer opportunities or that being born Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remains a barrier to achievement in Australia today. They do, however, overwhelmingly recognise the need for ongoing assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve economic and social equality.

The difference in perception suggests that there are obstacles to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians taking advantage of opportunities, which non-Indigenous respondents are less aware of. This result is not surprising given the relatively low levels of understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples among the general population. It also suggests that many people underestimate the extent and impact of racial and cultural prejudice.





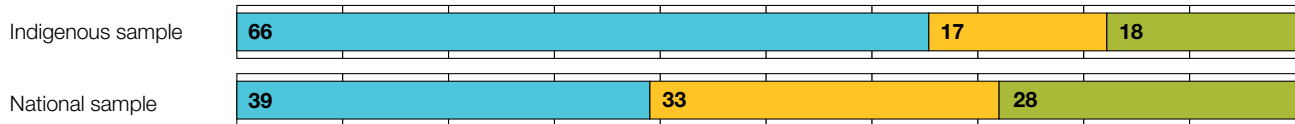
### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have equal or greater access to opportunities



### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians need help to reach equality



### Being born Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander makes it harder to achieve



Agree
  Disagree
  Neutral
 Results displayed in percentages  
Indigenous = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

## Creating sustainable opportunities

A reconciled Australia will be one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples control their life choices and participate fully in the economic and social opportunities enjoyed by the wider community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are driving progress towards this goal, delivering health, economic and social services to their communities. Many of these organisations were recognised during the 2012 Indigenous Governance Awards. The Chair of the Awards, Professor Mick Dodson AM noted:

“The high quality of applicants and finalists made this year’s decision the hardest yet—the slimmest of margins separated the finalists, because they are all excellent.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are succeeding across the arts, sports, business and in the professions they pursue. This year we saw record numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were recognised in the inaugural Australian Financial Review and Westpac ‘100 Women of Influence Awards’ for their leadership in business and the community.

There is still a long way to go to reach equality in health, education and employment. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations are driving change, we all have a role to play.

Organisations with a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) provide a successful model of how to support and work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. They build sustainable outcomes on a foundation of strong relationships and cultural respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The partnerships between organisations with a RAP and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and run suppliers provide an example of what can be achieved when strong relationships have been built. Since 2009, RAP organisations have purchased \$58.2 million worth of goods from certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, making a significant contribution to the growth of this sector.

David Saunders learns about the Yolngu culture from Djawa (Timmy) Burarrwanga, traditional owner of the Bawaka homelands, NT.  
Image, Rebecca Gallegos.



## Leighton Contractors and MG Aboriginal Corporation: More than just a job

For Stuart Dyson, working with MG Aboriginal Corporation in the East Kimberley has been life changing. What started out as a typical bid by Leighton Contractors soon became a personal journey of reconciliation.

“Before the tender was issued, I spent 18 months in the Kimberley region working with key stakeholders trying to understand what they wanted from the project,” Stuart says. “We spent quite a bit of time with MG Corporation to try and understand their challenges, the demographics of their people and the challenges that they face.

“I’ve since moved to the Kimberley because I wanted to be part of the community—I wanted to stay here and make a difference to MG people for the foreseeable future.”

As one of the Kimberley’s leading Aboriginal organisations, MG Corporation is responsible for managing the benefits transferred under the Ord Final Agreement to the Miriwung Gajerrong people—the native title holders over their traditional country in the East Kimberley. In 2010 Leighton Contractors were successful in securing a tender with MG Aboriginal

Corporation to begin work on the expansion of the irrigation scheme. Aboriginal people now account for more than 20 per cent of the workforce employed on the Ord Stage 2 Project with plans for that number to increase as the project moves into the next stages.

As Director of Indigenous Outcomes for Leighton Contractors, Stuart says it’s been important to create a culture of trust, understanding and transparency so the best economic and social outcomes can be achieved for Aboriginal communities living in the Kimberley.

“We work closely with MG Corporation to ensure that appropriate services are being provided in the areas of employment, training and business,” Stuart says. “We also work closely with Indigenous businesses to ensure they are taking advantage of the opportunities being presented.”

Employees also have the opportunity to participate in programs to do with financial management, accommodation and health needs. A dedicated team called MG Services, initially set up by Leighton and now run by MG Corporation, provide a solid support network for local Aboriginal employees. MG Services Manager, Craig Bonney says all of the programs have been a joint venture.

“Together we’ve created initiatives such as flexible roster arrangements that support the needs of our people who need to balance work and family commitments,” says Craig. “We’ve also managed to up skill and deliver training to every Indigenous person on the project including the national accreditation of 50 plant operating tickets.”

“I’ve since moved to the Kimberley because I wanted to be part of the community—I wanted to stay here and make a difference to MG people for the foreseeable future.”





“It’s about using this project as an opportunity to create a mutually stronger future for everyone.”

Image courtesy Leighton Contractors.

The ongoing success of the partnership between MG Corporation and Leighton Contractors can also be attributed to how both organisations have created relationships, both with each other and the community, based on mutual respect.

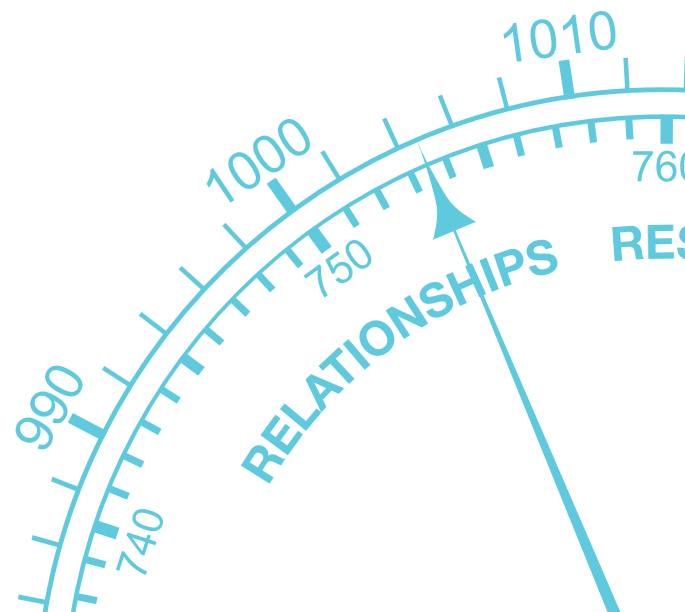
“Our shared vision of improving the opportunities for local Aboriginal people, together with the individuals involved, has made this a successful venture,” Craig says. “It’s about using this project as an opportunity to create a mutually stronger future for everyone.”

“When you consider that the town of Kununurra up until October of last year in total employed around 80 local Aboriginal people, and in less than 12 months we’ve managed to double that—I think that’s a fantastic outcome for this community.”

## What can I do?

In your workplace, school and community group, or as an individual, there are many things you can do to build better relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, peoples and cultures through our cultural awareness website at [www.shareourpride.org.au](http://www.shareourpride.org.au)
- Take part in events or organise your own during National Reconciliation Week from 27 May to 3 June; visit [www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw)
- Read the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) toolkit and think about developing a RAP in your workplace, school or community group [www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans)
- Sign up as a friend of Reconciliation Australia through Facebook [www.facebook.com/ReconciliationAus](http://www.facebook.com/ReconciliationAus) or follow us on Twitter [twitter.com/RecAustralia](http://twitter.com/RecAustralia) to keep in touch with news and developments
- Check out the new free-to-air National Indigenous Television (NITV) channel
- Get involved with your state or local reconciliation group. Contacts are available on our website at [www.reconciliation.org.au/home/about-us/state-councils](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/about-us/state-councils)
- Talk at home, work or with friends about the results of the Barometer. To put the results in context, you could reflect on your own relationships with friends and family by asking:
  - Q. What are the essential ingredients of good relationships?
  - Q. Who do you trust and what makes you trust them?
  - Q. What makes you feel respected?
  - Q. What things are you most proud of and why?





National Indigenous Youth  
Parliament representatives  
Hayden Gibbs O'Neill and  
Letisha Jarden with Masepah  
Banu at the Canberra launch of  
National Reconciliation Week  
2012. Image, Cole Bennetts.



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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to elders both past and present.