

MEDIA RELEASE



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BRUMBY GOVERNMENT TURNS ITS BACK ON RECONCILIATION

It has been revealed today by a reliable source from the ALP that the Brumby Government will no longer resource the reconciliation movement in Victoria.

Despite receiving letters from Indigenous leaders, community, church and local reconciliation groups, the Brumby Government has refused to fund Reconciliation Victoria in the coming financial year.

Reconciliation Victoria, a not for profit organization funded by the State Government for the last 6 years has worked tirelessly to promote an inclusive Australia and one which encourages and educates non-Indigenous Australians to value the rich and vibrant living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"They haven't even been able to get a meeting with the relevant Minister, Peter Batchelor", ANTaR Victoria Chairperson, Dr Peter Lewis said today. "The Board of Reconciliation Victoria will be faced with the real possibility of needing to close their office in late July. This means that the focus at this year's Reconciliation Week from May26- June 3 may be on holding a wake for reconciliation in this state."

"When it comes to reconciliation, the Brumby Government has commitment issues," he said. "It is important to remember that Reconciliation Victoria was established and provided with state government funding as part of the Victorian Government's response to the reconciliation documents of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 2000. In fact, the Bracks Government stated that the State government

'views Reconciliation as an ongoing responsibility of Government that needs leadership and support to ensure that the process of Reconciliation and its key themes of respect, understanding and addressing the past are embraced by the whole Victorian community'. They even gave reconciliation a capital R."

"Recent studies including the *In Our Own Backyard* report by Flinders University and *The Impact of Racism on Indigenous Health in Australia and Aotearoa: Towards a Research Agenda* report by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, demonstrate that a significant underlying cause of disadvantage and poor health in Aboriginal communities is the prevalence of racism and cultural misunderstanding in the general community," Dr Lewis said. "That's where Reconciliation Victoria comes in, as a partner with Aboriginal leaders in promoting cultural respect for the first peoples of Victoria."

"Despite its public commitment last year to 'closing the gap' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and health outcomes, the Brumby Government appears to be uncommitted when it comes to the difficult task of addressing cultural misunderstanding in the general population. If we don't close the gap in our relationships we will never close the gap in health outcomes."

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