



A 'How to' for Local Reconciliation Groups

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1. WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

Screen 1: What is this Toolkit for?


The Toolkit contains information to help individuals and groups at various stages of involvement with reconciliation.

It will assist people who want to start a local reconciliation group or sustain or grow an existing group. It may also be useful to people generally interested in reconciliation or those working for reconciliation in educational institutions, community organisations, faith groups, government or business. It will provide some context for those who have not been part of a Local Reconciliation Group before, including information about what local groups do and their history. It will help groups to plan what they want to do, manage themselves, fundraise, make the most of their strengths, build links with other groups, work with the media, have fun and make a difference.

Another important result of the Toolkit will be to allow Local Reconciliation Groups to define their goals and raison d'être earlier and more completely.

Moruya Local Reconciliation Group, NSW

Most of the material is very practical, with lots of 'how to' information and tips—how to decide your priorities, how to share the workload, how to prepare a media release, how to set up a learning circle etc. The Toolkit also links you to key documents produced by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation including the Council's Final Report [<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/finalreport/contents.htm>] which provides comprehensive information about the history of the reconciliation process. It also links you to the website of the foundation established to build on the Council's work, Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au], and to other excellent community resources.



The information will also support informal and enjoyable learning and skills development using the learning circle method.

The resource is primarily aimed at people in the wider community who want to work for reconciliation together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This acknowledges the fact that most Local Reconciliation Groups contain a majority of members from the wider community. Given Australia's history and the way we currently live, Indigenous and other Australians live largely separate lives in many parts of the country. During the life of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, many Local Reconciliation Groups sought advice from the Australians For Reconciliation network about working appropriately with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. This Toolkit has been designed to provide some general advice now that the Council and the Australians For Reconciliation network have come to an end.

That said, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations will also find much here that they can use. In the spirit of reconciliation, the Toolkit encourages a collaborative approach.


Screen 1.1: Why a Local Reconciliation Groups Toolkit?

The vision of reconciliation is:

A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all.

Reconciliation is about working towards this vision and others like it. As a social movement, reconciliation has some special qualities. Reconciliation:

- covers all ages, cultures and walks of life. It can involve whole communities and families. It is especially relevant for young people who will bear the legacy of today's decision and practices and who will carry ideas forward;

- 
- is learning about doing things differently. This is a significant challenge for everyone—particularly because non-Indigenous Australians often don't realise how little they know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, or the history of interaction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider Australian community;
 - deals with changes in power relationships and communication between sections of the community that have mostly lived separately.

Local Reconciliation Groups are important to carrying forward the reconciliation movement because they can stimulate useful actions and reconciliation activities in local communities. They acknowledge that each community has its own history, local dynamics, unique concerns, people, ways of working, assets, needs and problems. They recognise that local-level transformation often happens when people meet each other, build relationships and work together. They help build the partnerships with other community groups that are vital to achieving social justice at the local level.


In the end, each local group will find its own way to build dialogue and commitment to reconciliation. But there are precedents, principles, ideas and examples to learn from and build on. This Toolkit is about sharing some of these experiences and learnings.

Screen 1.2: Local Reconciliation Groups: sustaining reconciliation

'...it's important not to lose sight of the fact that reconciliation is basically a grass roots process. It's about people living and working together, and solving problems in local communities'.

Patrick Dodson, Chairperson, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1991-1997.

The people's movement is one of the most celebrated and significant outcomes of the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Local Reconciliation Groups have played an important role in building the people's movement and the reconciliation process



in communities across Australia. You might want to look at some background on the development of Local Reconciliation Groups and examples of some of the things Local Reconciliation Groups do.

Reconciliation has not ended with the Council's term. While the last decade has witnessed many achievements and changes, much remains to be done. The people's movement will take reconciliation forward, continuing the work of building better relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community. Local groups are central to this process. So, too, are the State and Territory Reconciliation Councils and Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au], the foundation established to build on the work of the Council. Reconciliation involves commitment at all levels—personal, local, state and national.

Screen 1.2.1: What do Local Reconciliation Groups do?

'A Local Reconciliation Group is a number of people who have formed into a group to support the reconciliation process and advance it within their area.'

Dr Evelyn Scott, Chairperson, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1997-2000.

Local Reconciliation Groups make active and relevant work happen at a community level, while establishing links between Indigenous and other people and organisations. They challenge attitudes, organise local activities, raise funds, negotiate with local government, work with schools and support national events like National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week (<http://www.atsic.gov.au/culture/naidoc/Default.asp#history2000>)


Many groups have taken a lead in their local community on issues such as local commitments, support for community consultations undertaken by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, running learning circles, educating themselves and their communities and disseminating resources.



They provide an example to those who might not be inclined to deliver full services to all sections of the community, in ways such as:

- Opening avenues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in schools and other community organisations through story telling, welcome to country, teaching about protocols, and as mentors for new roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Holding organisations accountable and questioning responses that are not appropriate.
- Working with local authorities to stimulate local reconciliation agreements and other long-term action.
- Hosting public events that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to tell their stories.
- Helping to rebut myths
(http://www.atsic.gov.au/fact_v_myth/amof/fact99/file_option.htm).
- Helping to change negative media images.
- Working with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to prepare articles for newspaper publication.
- Encouraging schools to teach inclusive history.
- Notifying libraries about available resources.
- Working with communities on National Reconciliation Week and the Journey of Healing (<http://www.journeyofhealing.com>)
- Supporting NAIDOC week
(<http://www.atsic.gov.au/culture/naidoc/Default.asp#history2000>).

Click here to see more examples of what Local Reconciliation Groups have done.



'...reconciliation must and does take place on many levels and in many forms. It relies on people, communities, organisations and governments doing things which suit their circumstances, needs and possibilities. There is no single blueprint for reconciliation, no one policy or action to make it happen, no magic formula to ensure success.'

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Final Report.

[<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/finalreport/contents.htm>]

Screen 1.2.2: The development of Local Reconciliation Groups


'To date, there are 396 Local Reconciliation Groups dispersed throughout the country.'

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation final report, page 66.

From its earliest days the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation encouraged local activity including the establishment and development of Local Reconciliation Groups. Many of them formed as a result of the introduction of Reconciliation Learning Circles across the country. Others were started by interested people in churches, workplaces, educational and professional institutions, and community organisations.

The numbers involved in the Reconciliation Walks during 2000—more than one million people—indicate that for many, reconciliation is a key issue for Australia's present and future.

In its Final Report [<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/finalreport/contents.htm>], the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation expressed its belief that these and other



events could not have taken place without ‘all the dedication, commitment and activity of all those who have worked for reconciliation “on the ground”’.

Reconciliation is now one of the most determined and vibrant people's movements in Australia's history. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians are increasingly working together to recognise and help heal the wounds of the past and move on together.

Screen 1.3: How to use this Website


This Local Reconciliation Group 'How to' information kit has been produced as a Web-based resource—to allow for easy updating and wide, low-cost distribution. You can also download and print a PDF file of the Toolkit. The material is organised into five sections:

- What is this Toolkit for?
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Setting up (or renewing) a Local Reconciliation Group
- What might your Local Reconciliation Group do?
- Keeping things going
- A Site Map provides an overview of the content of each section.

Screen 1.4: Resources used to develop this Toolkit

The Toolkit reflects the experiences of many people.

It draws on the personal experiences of the people involved in coordinating the Toolkit. Geoff Pryor was the Australians For Reconciliation Coordinator in the ACT and surrounding Local Government areas (1997-2001) and has worked for many years with Indigenous communities across Australia. David Shires and Joanne Crawford developed the Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. All three have had long experience working with a variety of community organisations, social movements and campaigns for change.



A number of people were particularly helpful in providing input to and comments on drafts of this material and we would like to acknowledge their contribution.

- Former AFR Coordinators with special thanks to Jeanie Govan, Shelley Reys, John and Elaine Telford and Tim Muirhead
- Former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation member Marj Thorpe
- Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Secretariat members
- Members of the Local Reconciliation Groups from Moruya and Cootamundra
- Dr Michael Leahy, Chairperson, One Fire Reconciliation Group, Geelong
- Participants at regional meetings held in November and December 2000 in Goulburn, Narooma and Melbourne.


We have also used a number of documents produced by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in compiling this Toolkit:

- *Reconciliation: Australia's challenge. Final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Parliament* [<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/finalreport/contents.htm>]
- *Local Symbols of Reconciliation: What we can do!*

Some material is also drawn from *Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people* [www.indigenous.qld.gov.au], one of a number documents produced by the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development to help non-Indigenous Queenslanders understand protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Toolkit also draws on the experiences of a range of social movements and community campaigners that are consolidated in three collections of resources:

Community Tool Box (<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>) © KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development (2000)]. This is a great online resource produced by the



University of Kansas, Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. The site is easy to navigate and includes help with common problems in working for community change.

The Citizen's Handbook: A guide to building community in Vancouver

(<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/>) is an extremely useful online resource covering a range of community organising and building skills including getting and keeping people, fundraising, facilitating, planning and evaluating. Vancouver-specific information is separated out so that most of the material will be useful to people living in other places. A print version can be ordered.

Community Actions Skills: Leaflet Set—An Australian resource put together by Bob Holderness-Roddam of The *Action Station* Community Action Consultancy in Tasmania, bobhroddam@trump.net.au. Contains very practical material on organising and campaigning including advice for office holders. The information in this Toolkit on writing to the newspaper and to your local parliamentarian is drawn from two of the leaflets.

Another resource that Local Reconciliation Groups may find useful is the **Free Management Library** (<http://mapnp.org/library/>)—an integrated online library for non-profits and for-profit organisations. It provides basic information on a huge range of topics including fundraising, risk management, insurance, planning and project management. For current information about reconciliation activities, have a look at these websites:

1. Reconciliation Australia website [www.reconciliation.org.au]
2. Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation [<http://www.antar.org.au>]
3. National Sorry Day Committee [<http://www.journeyofhealing.com>]



2. WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

Screen 2: Working With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

'Alertness, humility, respect and common sense are necessary adjuncts to goodwill in the process (of involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).'


Towards Reconciliation: Working With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

'It is necessary to seek out the representatives of the Indigenous people you are working with to ensure that you are working with the "right" people. This can be frustrating when non-Indigenous people involved may not understand the connections between groups, families and tribes.'

Victor Harbour/Fregon Anangu Group

If you are involved in a Local Reconciliation Group or want to set one up, you may already be working with local Indigenous communities. If not, start by involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, or at least consult with communities in determining your priorities or invite an Indigenous speaker to a meeting or event. You can find examples of local groups and communities working together plus a range of useful information in *Local Symbols of Reconciliation: What we can do!*

Some people establishing a Local Reconciliation Group feel it is important to do their own learning and thinking about the issues before seeking involvement from Indigenous people. For many groups, the Reconciliation Learning Circle has been a vehicle for this.



For others, hearing from and talking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an important way to start on the journey of reconciliation.

A first step in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is to recognise that, like any community, you can never *fully* understand all its complexities when you are not part of it. Among other things, this means that you need to:


- acknowledge and respect difference;
- as a local group, be guided by what your local Indigenous community says are its priorities, concerns and aspirations;
- recognise that protocols vary from community to community. Understanding what is appropriate is critical to communicating effectively. Talk with your local Indigenous organisations or networks about who to talk to and consult with; and
- find out about local Indigenous history. It will help you understand your local context and give you a basis for building a relationship with local communities. One of the most significant things a Local Reconciliation Group can do is foster commitment to reconciliation at the local level.

Screen 2.1: What are protocols?

'Protocols are an essential component when dealing with individuals and communities. Nowhere is it clearer than in Aboriginal communities. For many years unfortunately, these protocols were invisible to non-Aboriginal peoples who, for one reason or another, had no conception about what it might mean to treat and respect Aboriginal people as basic human beings.'

Jackie Huggins, former member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Protocol means observing customs and communicating in a way that is appropriate and relevant.



Different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have different cultures and different ways of doing things. Customs, protocols and ceremonies may vary from place to place, so you need to find out about the situation in your local area and who are the right people to talk to.

Indigenous people are generally careful about what they say and how they say it, particularly in unfamiliar situations with unfamiliar people. As in all societies, manners and protocols are very important. To cause offence or embarrassment to other people, directly or indirectly, is one of the worst breaches of social etiquette.

There are subjects that should always be treated sensitively and some that should be avoided. The latter includes discussion between the sexes, talking about deceased members of the community and repeating conversations with other members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community out of context.

'Protocol is extremely important. This involves the things we do and say. Even if your heart is in the right place and you are just wanting to do what is right you can find yourself offending someone. Working Together is important.'


Victor Harbour/Fregon Anangu Group

Non-Indigenous Australians need to realise that as Aboriginal people we are not going to share what we don't know about our culture—as that is very “shameful” and if you ask us a question we don't know, you've embarrassed us in front of our work mates, peers, friends and or family'.

Former AFR Coordinator in Darwin, Jeanie Govan.

Screen 2.2: Talking with the right people

The impact of past government policies of forced relocation has contributed to a situation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often living in communities that are not on their traditional lands. There is considerable discussion and debate in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the role of elders and particularly



how elders are defined. This can be an important issue if you want to consult with community leaders.

In many communities people recognise two types of elders, traditional elders and community elders. A traditional elder is an original descendent of the area who is actively involved in community issues. A community elder could be someone that has lived in the area for some time and who is recognised and respected for their community involvement. Any reconciliation group should encourage the representation and involvement of both traditional and community elders.


As with most communities, relationships come before anything else. Outsiders who are unable to form relationships with communities will find their efforts frustrated. The person who introduces you or your group to a community is important to your acceptance. Genuine efforts at building good relations may overcome barriers. Demonstrating your respect and sensitivity towards the political structures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their protocols and ways of communicating will help you build relationships.

Information is often spread by word of mouth in Indigenous communities. You need to identify appropriate channels of communication for the community you want to work with or your approaches may achieve little. This is important if you want to provide information about and involve Indigenous community groups in your activities. Appropriate channels might include established community consultative/liaison committees, local government, a land council or a local church.

If you want to understand more about kinship and family in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities you might look at Module 4, 'Family, kinship, culture and identity', in the Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit produced by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Screen 2.3: Consulting and meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities


This material is drawn from *Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people* [www.indigenous.qld.gov.au/], one of a number documents produced by the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development to help non-Indigenous Queenslanders understand protocols for consultation and



negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. You can read these online at www.indigenous.qld.gov.au or order a copy.

Different communities will have different approaches to meetings and consultations. Here are a few general tips for building better relationships. You might also want to look at the information on setting up a community consultative forum.

- Allow plenty of time when organising meetings. It may take some time to get the appropriate people together and meeting times may need to be flexible.
- The venue needs to be appropriate and accessible for the Indigenous community. What this means will vary; be guided by your networks or Aboriginal contacts.
In general:
 - If meeting indoors, recognise that people's comfort levels will vary in terms of ventilation, temperature, room layout, atmosphere etc. If possible, use a venue that is seen as accessible by all communities, such as a community hall or resource centre;
 - If outside, you might want to gather under a tree or near a river
 - Allow for smokers
 - Offer some refreshments and something simple to eat if possible.
- Clarify if there are costs for room hire or catering before the meeting.
- Avoid offending by stipulating a particular meeting structure. Find out the expectations of the local community by consulting with them.
- Allow time for meeting participants to consider any comments or issues raised and consult with their community before making decisions. One representative cannot speak for a range of different groups. They may also need to consult members of their own group before offering a view or making a decision.
- Seek assistance in setting up communication processes and channels with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Is there an established consultative committee attached to your local government council or in one of the local churches?



Can you approach the local Aboriginal land council? Using an existing committee may help you build on existing relationships.

- Building relationships comes before reaching joint decisions. Results come from established relationships and trust. The most important outcomes from consultations are often strengthened relationships and greater trust.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse. Check each step of the way that your approach is consistent with the protocols for each group you are dealing with and the group whose country you are working in. Sometimes people will not tell you your approach is inappropriate unless you ask—you just won't get much of a response.
- Success comes through open communication, respect, a real desire to improve relations within the whole community, and a willingness to move beyond existing power relationships.


Screen 2.4: Inviting Indigenous speakers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only 2% of the Australian population. Many Australians have limited direct contact with Indigenous people. Meeting and hearing from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is part of deepening the understanding of cultures and perspectives.

People from the wider community sometimes feel uncertain about how to approach Indigenous people to talk at a group meeting or get involved in an activity or event. Who should we approach? What is the appropriate way to seek involvement? How do we show our appreciation?

For their part, Indigenous people have expressed concerns about:

- the load on those people willing to address meetings and the problem of burn out
- being put in the position of having to 'teach' other people
- ensuring that arrangements appropriately recognise the contribution of Indigenous people in providing their time and skills.



The key issue is to get a balance between the desire to involve Indigenous people in an event or the ongoing work of your group and being sensitive to the commitment involved and the cost of their time. You might want to consider these points if you plan to invite an Indigenous speaker to an event or meeting.

1. Think about joining with another Local Reconciliation Group (or similar organisation) when planning a guest Indigenous speaker for a meeting or community event, to reduce the demand on their time and provide opportunities for networking in the process.

2. Contact a relevant organisation for suggestions about speakers or local Indigenous groups you might approach. You might also ask whether a fee is involved in using particular speakers. The kinds of organisations you might contact include:
 - A local Indigenous organisation such as a land council, health or legal service, sporting team or other community group
 - your State or Territory Reconciliation Committee
 - Another Local Reconciliation Group
 - ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation). [www.antar.org.au]

3. When you have identified a speaker, make contact before the meeting. If you can, provide them with an indication of the range of participants. Check if they charge a fee for speaking at meetings or events. Ask if they would like you to organise transport to and from the meeting. Depending on the time of day and the distance they have to travel, you might also offer to provide a meal. The main thing is to acknowledge their contribution and demonstrate commitment to an equal exchange.



3. SETTING UP OR RENEWING A LOCAL RECONCILIATION GROUP

Screen 3: Setting up a Local Reconciliation Group


Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Francis Carroll, summed up the message of the day by encouraging participants to look to their local community for its Indigenous presence. 'We need to start in our own backyard'.

'One reconciliation information stall, seven women, lots of coloured balloons and a notice "Lane Cove Residents for reconciliation"—and another Local Reconciliation Group was formed!

Walking Together, July 1999

Establishing a Local Reconciliation Group is a valuable thing to do but you may want to check first if other local people have already done something similar. Even in fairly small communities, people may not know of all the activities that relate to their interests. You may be able to join, collaborate with or learn from other Local Reconciliation Groups or groups with similar aims operating within churches, schools or clubs.

If there is no Local Reconciliation Group in your district, you may want to get together with others you know are interested in reconciliation and start meeting regularly. Have a look at the steps in getting a Local Reconciliation Group off the ground. An important early step is to talk with your Local Government Council. Most are supportive of reconciliation and have a charter to work with local groups to enhance community harmony. It is quite possible that your local council will host the first meeting of your group, and maybe offer a permanent meeting venue, help with mail outs and publicity and offer to provide other on-going support.



The community development officer (or equivalent) is a good person to make contact with. Even if your group organises activities independently you might invite the relevant Local Government Councillors and staff to meetings and keep them informed of your plans. An increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being elected to local government and many councils employ Aboriginal staff. These people could be vital members of your group.

You might want to involve people you don't know in the group. If so, think about who might have an interest in reconciliation in your area. If this sounds too daunting, why not start a learning circle as a first step? You could do this in partnership with local Indigenous people where this is feasible.


Local Reconciliation Groups are what their members make them. They range from an informal group meeting every few weeks over coffee to a larger group with meeting rules and procedures, plans and positions on particular issues, or even a non-profit Incorporated Association.

However your group works, there are benefits in linking up with a wider network that includes other Local Reconciliation Groups and the State/Territory Reconciliation Committees. The Committees will play an important role in taking forward the wider reconciliation agenda. You might also check the Reconciliation Australia website [www.reconciliation.org.au] for ways you can get involved in the wider reconciliation effort.

Screen 3.1: Steps in getting a Local Reconciliation Group off the ground

These steps are a guide:

- Step 1** Research the issues that might require action in your district. Talk with local Indigenous people and organisations about what issues and projects they are working on and whether there are areas where collaboration or support would be helpful.
- Step 2** Collect information about reconciliation groups or other groups in your area with similar interests. Is there is an existing Local Reconciliation Group or similar group? You may be able to join or collaborate with them or learn from their experiences.

- 
- Step 3** Talk to friends, colleagues, acquaintances or other organisations you think might have an interest in reconciliation. Discuss the idea of joining an existing group or forming a Local Reconciliation Group to find out what they might expect such a group to do and if they would join with you.
- Step 4** Think about whether it is possible to establish a group together with Indigenous people in the community. Talk to local Indigenous organisations or networks about your ideas and about whether you could establish a group in partnership with them.
- Step 5** Meet informally with those you know are interested to talk about the possibility of forming a Local Reconciliation Group. Talk to your Local Government Council about your ideas and the sort of support they might provide.
- Step 6** Ask yourself whether you now have enough of a basis to form a group with the expectation that others could be attracted to join. If Yes, see Step 8. If No, try to find others who might meet informally with you.
- Step 7** Think about making your activities public through local networks, holding a public meeting, advertising in local or community media, meeting more friends-of-friends, accessing local school P&Cs, local women's groups and local Indigenous groups.
- Step 8** Call your first 'gathering', using some tips for facilitating groups to assist in making the meeting work. You can find a more detailed Facilitators Guide in the Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit. Think about how you will approach this first meeting. People's first impressions can influence the nature and level of their involvement.

The driving force behind many Local Reconciliation Groups, at least initially, is a chance to discuss what reconciliation means, exchange views and stories and learn about our shared history, particularly of the local region. The Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit provides structured resources to help you do this.



Screen 3.2: Who has an interest in reconciliation in your area?

‘Reconciliation starts with you and your community. Regardless of what you do, big or small, it all counts.’

Walking Together, April 1998.

Finding out who in your community is concerned about or involved in reconciliation helps you to: identify people or groups you might collaborate with or should involve in your plans; what actions will meet local needs, issues that require resolution, are realistic and likely to be supported; and whether all the important issues have been considered.


You can identify the people, groups and organisations that need to be informed, consulted or involved in some way by asking some questions or looking at types of individuals and organisations.

As your group evolves, the mix of people who will be interested in what you are doing may change so you might want to think about this issue and make new links on a regular basis.

Screen 3.2.1: Questions to identify who is interested or needs to be involved

To be successful, reconciliation needs to involve all Australians in some way. So your group will probably hope to get many people aware of, interested in and then involved in its activities. But some people will have a more direct and immediate interest than others. Asking some questions can help you to identify people, groups and organisations that need to be informed, consulted or involved in some way in the issues your group plans to work on.

- Who are the traditional owners in the area?
- Who will be affected by your group’s work?
- Who has detailed knowledge about the issues you want to work on?
- Which groups or specialists take a particular interest in these issues?

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- Who knows about Indigenous places and issues in the area?
 - Who makes decisions that affect the issues you are working on?
 - Who can help?
 - Who needs to be kept informed?
 - Who will be interested?
 - Which government agencies should be involved? What are their resources?
 - What are the expectations of the community?

Screen 3.2.2 Types of individuals and organisations who might be interested

People or organisations interested in reconciliation will vary according to your location and what issues you are working on. But they might include the following:

Indigenous communities, organisations and individuals (traditional owners or custodians, local Indigenous community members, land councils, Native Title organisations, Indigenous heritage officers, State or Territory offices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Councils, Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au]).

Local government (elected representatives or councillors, relevant council officers advisory committees and regional organisations of councils).

Community organisations (such as Rotary, Apex or other service clubs, residents groups, faith communities, sporting, youth and women's organisations).

Commonwealth, State or Territory government departments.

Schools and educational institutions.


Other associations, organisations and individuals (such as chambers of commerce and progress associations, regional development or industry organisations, regional tourism associations, individual businesses).



Screen 3.3: A possible agenda for your first meeting

You might find these points helpful in developing an agenda for your group's first meeting. Change or add to it as appropriate to your circumstances.

- Where possible, invite an appropriate local Indigenous person to welcome the group to their country. This is to acknowledge the traditional owners of your region. If a local Indigenous person cannot make the meeting, then the meeting Chairperson should publicly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land you are meeting on.
- Chairperson outlines reason for meeting and format, asks those present to respect each other's views and to be non-judgemental. (If the group agrees to keep meeting, you might want to decide on some guidelines for working together, either at this meeting or your next one).
- Chairperson asks participants to share the reasons that brought them to the meeting. (You may want to record your group's interests, skills, goals and commitments, either at this meeting or later, as a basis for planning some group objectives).
- If a guest speaker is present, invite the guest speaker to speak. This may be followed by discussion and clarification of issues.
- Participants may want to workshop ideas about reconciliation. The chairperson might follow up by highlighting the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's vision of reconciliation: 'A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity to all.'
- The group might identify the barriers to achieving this vision and what might be done at a local level to overcome these barriers. It may be useful to do this in small groups. Record ideas and outcomes (eg on butchers paper).
- Having identified some key issues at the local level, what is the next step? The group may want to discuss this now, or people may prefer to reflect further and discuss next steps at a subsequent meeting.
- Arrange details of any next meeting with everyone present (venue, time and date, program etc).

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- Allocate follow-up tasks among participants. Interested people will generally be pleased to have something to do.
 - Finish the meeting on time and thank everyone for coming.

Screen 3.4: Sorting out practical details

Once your group is formed you will need to sort out some basic practical details.


Where and when you will meet and how your meetings will work are not minor details. Venue and timing need to be appropriate for both Indigenous people and people from the wider community. If you don't get these things right, people won't participate—either because they don't feel comfortable or they can't get there. Have a look at the section on consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for ways to ensure an environment that is welcoming for Indigenous people and others. Ask local Indigenous people to suggest a venue.

Think about what ground rules you will use to help make your meetings productive. Other practical matters might include food and drink (eg whether people will contribute money for coffee, biscuits etc or everyone will bring something). You may also want to discuss whether you will charge a small membership fee to cover costs such as postage or phone calls. You might also want to agree on some principles for sharing tasks so that no one person bears too much of the load.

Screen 3.5: Do you need formal positions and office bearers?

If your group is an informal one you may not need to think about the roles and responsibilities of members. However if your group grows or you start working on a project in your community, you may want to think about how your group operates.

Giving people specific responsibilities is one way to ensure everyone is involved and any work you decide to do is shared around. It can also help the group deal with other organisations (by giving people a title to use) and help other organisations or individuals relate to the group (they know who to talk to about which issues). But people need to be honest about how much time they are able to contribute.



Would it be useful to have someone facilitate your group's meetings? You could share the task around the group, designate one person as the facilitator or ask your Local Government Council or faith group whether they could provide a facilitator. Whoever does it might find the tips for facilitators useful.

You might think about whether you need a chairperson/convenor? Could the leadership role be shared between an Indigenous person and someone from the wider community? Do you need a secretary (the person who usually has responsibility for taking and distributing minutes or other communications with group members)? Do you need a treasurer (someone to keep a record of any income or expenditure)? What about a membership coordinator to identify interested people or follow up everyone who has had some association with the group? Do you need someone to coordinate a newsletter to keep members informed?

Whatever you decide, the main objectives are to make use of people's interest and skills, keep people involved and share the workload appropriately.


Screen 3.6: Establishing some ground rules

Your group might want to agree on some basic ground rules for how it will operate and how meetings will be conducted—eg. listening to one another, letting everyone have a say, respecting people's right to hold different views.

Have a look at the suggested guidelines for working together and add to or change them to meet your needs. The main thing is to agree on some principles that everyone feels comfortable with and that recognise that people have a range of motivations for getting involved in a Local Reconciliation Group, including simply learning more. You might want to record the group's agreements and make a copy for each member, to minimise misunderstandings and conflict.

Screen 3.6.1: Suggested guidelines for working together

The way your group works is critical to reconciliation. Indigenous people may be reluctant to speak if the ground rules for doing so are not clear, particularly in areas where they may not have experience in speaking up and participating. Have a look at the section on working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You



may want to talk with local Indigenous groups about what other points need to be added.

These are a few ideas you might find useful. Your group may want to change them or add some additional points such as 'having fun'. The main thing is to agree on some principles that work for you.

1. Listen carefully and actively, making sure the group hears what each member has to offer.
2. Maintain an open mind. Explore ideas you might have rejected in the past.
3. Try hard to understand the point of view of those with whom you disagree. Understanding an opposing viewpoint doesn't mean adopting it, or even being sympathetic. In fact, it can make you a better advocate for your own views.
4. Help keep the discussion on track. Try to make your own comments relate to the main points being discussed.
5. Speak freely, but don't dominate. If you are a good talker, encourage others. If you tend to be quiet, try to have your say more often. Remember you only need to make your point once.
6. If you don't understand, say so. Chances are, others will feel the same way.
7. Value your own experience and understanding. Everyone has a contribution to make.
8. Be prepared to disagree. Conflict is healthy and can help a group progress. But focus on the issue, not the person, you disagree with.
9. Try not to become angry or aggressive; it might discourage others from putting forward their ideas.

Screen 3.7: Mapping your interests, skills, goals and commitments

What beliefs, skills, strengths, contacts, knowledge, wisdom, fears and hopes do members bring to your group? If you are establishing a new group, or if there has been an influx of new members to your group, you may want to take some time to get to know one another in a relaxed way.



One option is to break into pairs, with one person asking questions of the person sitting next to them before switching roles. Try to find out something about the person, their background, what they do, any special interests, and why they joined the group. After five minutes or so, each member of the group should introduce their 'pair' to the larger group. Alternatively, begin with each person telling a story that conveys some things they think are important about who they are and what they believe. Allow time for follow-up questions to each other.

You might want to write up some of the key points that come up in a simple table. Sometimes groups get caught up in the detail of projects and activities and forget why they got involved and what they can contribute.

Who are we? <i>(interests, beliefs etc)</i>	What skills do we bring?	What do we want to achieve?	How will we work together?

Screen 3.8: Gaining new members and keeping them

Most Local Reconciliation Groups, over time, experience changes in membership. There is no one formula for maintaining membership numbers over an extended period of time.




Some of the factors that can help are:

- having a clear purpose
- satisfying the personal interests of members
- meeting atmospherics and group dynamics are welcoming, positive and conducive to exchange and learning
- allocating tasks, sharing the work around, making everyone feel they and their work are valued
- profile in the local community through good publicity and word-of-mouth networking
- achieving some successes
- effective internal workings (usually the result of a structure and processes that are appropriate)

Achieving these qualities is all about people. Groups need good, dynamic, inclusive leaders, people to share tasks and members that acknowledge different cultures, aspirations and life circumstances. At some point most groups need to think about activities to bring in new members and keeping existing members.

Screen 3.8.1: Activities to bring in new members

- Take out local community advertisements.
- Record the names and addresses of people with whom contact is made at any organised event.
- Follow up all inquiries and contacts.
- Prepare a simple, written handout about the group with contact details.
- Provide information to key local organisations and individuals (eg local politicians, local government, schools, businesses, libraries etc).
- Get the group included in any local 'directories' (some Local Government Councils have them).
- If your group has the capacity, develop, monitor and keep up-to-date a web site.


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- Meet regularly and publicise this widely.
 - Try to have a contact point for inquiries.
 - Identify membership expansion as a task for some members.
 - Acknowledge and welcome new attendees to meetings and help new members to feel at ease by using names, avoiding acronyms and explaining processes.
 - Ask every member to bring along one prospective member each year and when they come, welcome them by giving them a task to do.

Screen 3.8.2: Keeping members—it's all about people!

- Don't assume things; talk with people about their interests and priorities, what they like and what might be done better.
- Ensure there is some fun in the activities of the group.
- Plan and hold review meetings through the year on future directions and activities.
- Share responsibility for various tasks so that 'good' and 'bad' jobs are shared.
- Don't let people just drift off. Check why they are not coming (there may be good reasons that are unrelated to the group)
- Practice what we strive for in reconciliation—recognise differences and address conflicts in a sensitive manner.
- Acknowledge personal achievements and contributions (eg success in running an event, special unheralded efforts).
- Remember the value of working together.

Screen 3.9: What does it take to sustain a local group? Views from AFR Coordinators

These are some comments made by the former Australians for Reconciliation Coordinators (the AFRs supported the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in each state and territory, facilitated local activities and worked with local groups).

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- In the end it's up to the group itself. Local Reconciliation Groups won't work unless the group 'owns' the ideas, projects and concepts. In practice this often boils down to key individuals being energetic enough to catalyse and sustain the group but such leaders need to be surrounded by a larger group that will also make contributions. It seems from experience that a sustainable Local Reconciliation Group depends to some extent on how strongly the passion burns in the breast of some of the members and also on whether the group has managed to achieve some notable successes in what it has attempted to do.
 - It is very helpful for there to be a clear focus to the activity of the group, to develop a plan at the beginning on how they're going to work, how they will operate, how to run meetings.
 - Local groups should link to the bigger picture and/or activities of other groups.
 - It helps to link up with and have support from well-resourced people such as Local Government officers, or others.
 - It helps to generate a lot of ideas for action early in the piece. If there's nothing to do Local Reconciliation Groups will fall apart.
 - The group also has to be able to accommodate different interests within its membership, but has to be engaged in bringing about change in the community, not just about educating its own members.
 - Keeping people in touch with one another is important. Set up a telephone or email tree to spread the load and get messages out quickly.

Screen 3.10: What does it take to sustain a local group? Views from Local Reconciliation Group members

These are suggestions from members of Local Reconciliation Groups.


- Indigenous members of our community speak to us of the importance of simply forming friendships between Indigenous people and others, via social events such as barbecues. Advertise meetings in local papers in the free community announcement section.



- Try to get feature articles and photos in local papers.
- A regular meeting is vital—without it there is no focal point. But don't meet too frequently or demand too much from people. We try to 'pace' ourselves.
- Attend local events (community festivals) and hand out brochures
- Become aligned with other like-minded groups (eg. Uniting Church, Neighbourhood Houses)—a ready made audience
- Be prepared to visit sites, organisations, events, activities
- Visit local groups, schools and give talks
- Have some 'wins'
- Keep positive
- Keep everyone involved
- Listen to new ideas
- Have plans which the group's activities are linked into and which will enable some early successes—eg:

Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
Bridge walk National Reconciliation Week BBQ	Local employment strategy	Treaty or agreement

- Use imagination
- We encouraged people to stay long term and learnt slowly as we went (through contact with Aboriginal people).

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- Operate at a speed that lets everyone move together—therefore need Co-chairs for the group, because there are cultural issues involved.
 - Leadership style is important—status, ego, power are all inhibitions to success.
 - Learning to do things differently provides quite difficult challenges and involves more complex learning by all.
 - Slowing down to listen and learn.
 - Involving ‘couples’ worked for us and kept people coming.
 - Have activities in the community and be part of community activities, to keep the flow of people and ideas coming.
 - Respond to and initiate dialogue about reconciliation in the media, local councils and schools.
 - Effective communication and a well developed/publicised program. Having a community focus/ownership.
 - A series of activities, varied in nature, at regular times throughout the year, possibly once every quarter. It is important to obtain interesting speakers, both Aboriginal and other, to draw people in and inform potential participants.
 - Keep current and in touch with where the reconciliation process is at, community views and debates and discussions affecting issues you are working on.
 - Ensure high participation of sceptics because they are a target group.
 - Link with other community groups, especially those you want to influence like local councils and possible sources of funding and other support.
 - Alternate external activities with discussion or listening (or business-type) meetings
 - Include and listen to all members.
 - Keep up a public profile.
 - Look out for developments, eg. among organisations in the community and respond to their interest in reconciliation issues.



4. WHAT MIGHT YOUR LOCAL RECONCILIATION GROUP DO?

Screen 4: What might your Local Reconciliation Group do?


Some groups will want to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture and hear the views and perspectives of Indigenous people. This might involve setting up a learning circle or finding out about the influence of Indigenous cultures in your area and recognising it in some way, as a local symbol of reconciliation. Others will want to discuss how they can contribute to reconciliation in their workplace or school. Some may feel they need to know more about the concerns and priorities of local Indigenous people before deciding how the group might best promote reconciliation. Others will have joined through concern about a specific local issue. Some may want to be part of the wider reconciliation process, by making contact with State or Territory Reconciliation Committees or joining Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au] (membership is open to Local Reconciliation Groups).

Some groups will be very informal and prefer to let their activities emerge through discussion rather than plan anything. Others may feel that working towards a specific objective is important for sustaining energy levels and commitment and drawing in new people.

This section includes information to help you decide what you want to do and how to do it. There are examples of what other local groups have done, material to help your group map its interests and skills, agree on an objective, develop strategies and an action plan to make it all happen. Wherever possible, activities should be a collaborative effort with Indigenous partners. This may require considerable low-key discussion and thought before considering any specific action.

Screen 4.1: What activities are Local Reconciliation Groups involved with?

This is a sample of the huge variety of activities Local Reconciliation Groups have been involved with. It includes activities of specific Local Reconciliation Groups as well as the kinds of things many groups have done. It's intended to give you some ideas about what is possible, not limit your thinking.

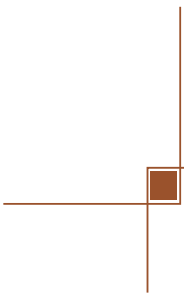


In many cases, Local Reconciliation Groups focus on supporting the local Indigenous community in their efforts to protect and promote their culture, record their history or secure equitable access to services and opportunities.

A small group of Mosman people has been meeting since March 1998 to promote understanding of Aboriginal culture and history. Members include local residents, clergy, school personnel and council members. Projects include: planning a booklet on local Aboriginal history; organising a lecture by Mick Dodson; discussion of naming a track on Bradleys' Head to commemorate the Borogegy people who once lived in the area, following a guided walk noting significant points such as rock carvings and removing rubbish.

Curtin Local Reconciliation Group: List of the year's activities:

Session	Topic
1	Objective setting
2	History, based on Learning Circle Kit
3	Part 1 of <i>Frontier</i> video
4	Local Aboriginal speaker
5	Visit to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve to look at local Indigenous places
6	Part 2 of <i>Frontier</i> Video
7	Planning meeting
8	Visit to Indigenous Education Centre
9	Keynote speaker
10	Evening at local music centre
11	Twilight Fare and Alfred Deakin Fare Stalls


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- 12 Further discussions with Indigenous members of the Indigenous Education Unit
 - 13 Evaluation and reflection with ACT AFR Coordinator


Westfield Park Primary School was the first metropolitan school in Perth to host a visit from the reconciliation Van. This van—a mobile classroom—has been touring country Western Australia for the last couple of years to teach Aboriginal history and culture and to foster respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

'The family day (in Dubbo) ... attracted more than two hundred Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who enjoyed dancing, story telling, poetry readings, and bush tucker cooked in the traditional style.' *Walking Together*, December 1997.

Other possibilities include:


- Organise a reconciliation sporting or social event such as a BBQ or picnic and invite people from both the local Indigenous and wider communities.
- Find out about the Indigenous history of your area. Ask a local Indigenous person to talk to your group.
- Talk with your school, club, sport association, or workplace about forming a Learning Circle group.
- Talk with your local school about what they can do to advance reconciliation. Many students, primary and secondary, across Australia have participated in activities such as painting, writing stories and inviting local Indigenous people to their school to talk about the dreamtime stories and Indigenous history of their area.
- Encourage your local library to carry, and promote, local Indigenous history.
- Consider drafting a formal Statement of Reconciliation for your organisation or group. This is more than symbolism; making a pledge provides an opportunity to think about what reconciliation means to you and what you can do to advance it.

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- Talk to others, your family, friends and work colleagues about reconciliation and how to advance it within your community.
 - Prepare and distribute reconciliation resources at your workplace, club, faith group or school.
 - Set up a reconciliation information stall at events such as fairs and fetes, conferences, exhibitions and other special events and gatherings.
 - Lobby your local council to promote reconciliation, and to instigate long-term reconciliation projects, both practical and symbolic (eg. flying flags, acknowledging local Indigenous history and developing local agreements to cover relevant issues such as service delivery, native title etc).
 - Encourage local business to display posters and make available reconciliation materials from their reception and customer areas. Many already do this.
 - Talk to your local Council or local Indigenous organisation about what is planned for National Reconciliation Week. You may be able to participate or help with arrangements.
 - Organise for your group or organisation to do something for National Reconciliation Week. Then contact your local newspaper, radio and television stations and ask them to promote it.
 - Ask an Indigenous community member to lead a heritage walk through your area and invite members of your community.
 - Encourage your local faith community and/or leader to observe the Week of Prayer that runs parallel with National Reconciliation Week. It provides an opportunity to recall the spiritual values on which reconciliation rests.
 - Get, make or have produced a reconciliation badge and wear it all week.
 - The *Roadmap for Reconciliation* produced by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation towards the end of its term contains four national strategies. These strategies set out what the Council considered the most important actions for individuals, communities, organisations and governments. They recommend ways to transform our commitment to reconciliation into actions, so helping the nation put right the legacy of the past.



Look at this in your group and see if there is something that is appropriate for local action. Where possible, do this together with local Indigenous people.

- Contact your state or territory reconciliation committee for ideas about priority issues, or networks you might get involved with.
- Assist with fundraising or distribution of materials for Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au]*—*the independent foundation established to continue to provide and promote community education about the need for reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider community. Local Reconciliation Groups can also become members of Reconciliation Australia.
- Have a look at *Local Symbols of Reconciliation: What we can do* to see what other communities have done and how they went about it. You might:
 - Encourage schools and other institutions to install Indigenous public art projects such as reconciliation murals on school walls, with the help of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and students.
 - Arrange permanent display space for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, art or other artefacts in council chambers, a local museum, shop front or culture centre.
 - Develop a reconciliation garden, park or playground.
 - Review tourist information, including pamphlets, brochures, etc for inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content.
 - Encourage local authorities to interpret Aboriginal place names and to use Indigenous names or words from local Indigenous languages when naming streets, parks etc. Some of the names could honour Indigenous heroes.
 - Assist with the review of library collections for inclusive historical content.
 - Develop local guidelines for the integration of appropriate ceremonies and customs into public ceremonies.
 - Research and record local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, which can then be included in school curricula.



Screen 4.2: Learning about the past and present: Reconciliation Learning Circles

Representatives from Local Reconciliation Groups in Ipswich and the Gold Coast spoke of their positive experiences with learning circles. Gold Coast Reconciliation Movement representative Anna Bridle said a large number of people had embraced the movement after being involved in learning circles. ‘We are really pleased to have the [learning circle] kit. The learning circles both empower people and inform them.


Walking Together, July 1999

Many Local Reconciliation Groups grew out of learning circle groups established to discuss and learn about reconciliation. A Reconciliation Learning Circles Kit has been developed to stimulate discussions. It enables people who want to know more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures and reconciliation to explore them in their own way and at their own pace and identify things they can do to further reconciliation in their local area.

A learning circle is a group of people who meet regularly to discuss and learn about issues that concern them, their communities or the wider society. Learning circles have been used by a wide range of people and organisations, in many different countries, to learn about many different issues. Learning circles can be held anywhere—in private houses or in meeting rooms, schools or halls or in the shade of a tree.

A learning circle is built around the principle that everyone has something to contribute and everyone has something to learn—a principle that fits well with the goal of reconciliation.

Organising a learning circle is straightforward. You don't need teachers or subject experts. People learn through discussion and sharing life experiences, often supported by resources on the issue they are interested in. Decisions about what the group will focus on and what action to take, if any, are taken by the group. A facilitator, often a member of the group, helps the group to work together effectively.



The aim of a learning circle is not to learn a lot of facts or for everyone to reach agreement but to provide each person with the chance to increase their understanding of the issues and the tools and confidence to act on their beliefs.

Screen 4.2.1: Organising a learning circle

Learning circles are a great way to learn more about and explore issues that interest you. Swedish people obviously think so—around 1 million people (out of a total population of 8 million) participate in a learning circle each year.

It doesn't matter how a learning circle group is formed. It can be a group of friends, members of a community group or people that don't know each other but share a common interest in reconciliation.

You may want to promote the learning circle—to your organisation's members, in your workplace or to the general community. You might advertise in your local paper, through community notice boards or use 'word-of-mouth'.

Your learning circle will need a facilitator. This might be a person with some experience as an adult educator or group leader. In many cases a member of the group will take on the role, or the role of facilitator will be shared so that a number of people can get some experience.

Facilitating a learning circle can be lots of fun and it's not hard. The tips for facilitating a group provide an introduction and the Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit includes a detailed guide. See if your local library has a copy. You might also check with your State or Territory Reconciliation Council about where you might obtain a copy.

The organiser of the learning circle will also need to address some practical matters such as enrolling members, finding an appropriate venue, determining costs (if any) for participants (eg to cover things like room hire or photocopying), and ensuring participants receive the information and materials they will need before the first meeting. The section on consulting and meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has some points to consider in choosing a meeting place. Once a group is established the practical tasks can be shared among the group.



Screen 4.3: What do you need to know to promote reconciliation in your area?

Former AFR Coordinator in Darwin Jeanie Govan, was asked “What are your most successful strategies in getting people to think about, and become involved in, reconciliation?” Her reply? ‘Get people to take on their own personal journey of reconciliation. To begin by exploring where they come from and a simple step such as finding out where your home town got it’s name from.’

Local Reconciliation Groups often start by providing a forum to learn about local Indigenous history and culture. As they learn more and share stories, groups often see how they might promote reconciliation in their area.


Some local groups decide that their role is to support the local Indigenous community’s own efforts to secure justice. Other groups may use the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* to identify issues or get ideas about appropriate local actions. However your group decides it can best support reconciliation, knowing something about local context will help you work effectively.

You may also need to collect some specific information about the issue you plan to work on, including checking what has been done before and what information is already available.

Screen 4.4: Identifying issues

There are many ways to identify issues that your group might want to address. How you do this will depend on your circumstances.

Often, Local Reconciliation Groups are formed to address local community issues or needs. If this is you, you probably have a clear idea about what you think the key issues are that need to be addressed. If your group is made up of Indigenous people and people from the wider community, you may know that these issues are priorities for local Indigenous communities and organisations. But don’t just assume that because your



group thinks something is a good idea and is willing to put in the time, everyone else will welcome the initiative. Discuss your ideas. Talk to a wide range of people about the issues that matter most from their perspective.

You should also look at the key documents produced by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation at the end of its term. *The Roadmap for Reconciliation* and the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* were the results of an extensive consultation process. Your group might want to link its ideas with the overall objectives identified by the Council. You might also look at the report on *Local Symbols of Reconciliation: What we can do!* Finally, your state or territory reconciliation committee will have information that might give you ideas about what your group might do or current projects it could get involved in.

If you want to find out more about an issue in your local area you could consult with stakeholders or tap into the community's knowledge and views. You may end up with lots of information and ideas—if so, you should probably decide some priorities.


If the group plans to ask questions of Indigenous people, be sensitive about what is being asked. Have a look at the material on protocols before you start. Approaching your group's work thoughtfully and systematically helps ensure you don't inadvertently cause offence or alienate people that you may want to involve at some point.

Screen 4.5: Consultation

It is often important to seek a broad range of views about an issue before making a decision. Consulting widely with stakeholders and interested people can take time but it is critical to working effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It also helps ensure a decision will be well informed, practical and widely supported.

Consultation:

- allows those affected by decisions to provide information to decision makers about their views and needs and enables them to be part of the solution to problems or issues;
- informs people about what is being planned;
- publicises your group's activity.




Check first with local or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks about meeting and consulting with local communities and about local protocols. You may want to consider a community consultation forum to seek views from the wider community—either as a one-off event or as a regular activity.

Screen 4.5.1: Setting up a community consultation forum


This is an example of the steps involved in holding a community consultation forum, taken from *Local Symbols of Reconciliation: What we can do!* But check first with local Indigenous organisations about what is appropriate.

1. Organise an appropriate venue, time and date. Choose a venue that is convenient, well known, free and will encourage people to come. You could try the local council, meeting room, or a school meeting room.
2. A guest speaker often draws people. The speaker should have a local profile and personality.
3. Prepare advertising material—something simple like a flyer often works well. Include all the details, a map if required and a contact phone number.
4. Advertise your meetings in local newspapers, community billboards on radio and, if possible on TV, in the windows of local shops, in newsletters of churches, service groups, etc, amongst friends, in other community groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land councils, the local government council and on notice boards.
5. Make sure you have all the equipment you need (eg. chairs, tables, whiteboard/butcher's paper, overhead projector, pens/textas, tape, blue tack). Decide how you want the seating arranged. Think about whether you need nametags and refreshments (and cups, plates, spoons etc).
6. Decide who will chair the meeting. If you plan to have ongoing meetings, will people share the role of chairperson and minute-taker or will these roles be assigned to specific people? Do you want formal or informal meetings? You will need to have ideas proposed and seconded and majority voting and decide on how many participants are required for a quorum. Decisions about how meetings will be run should be written down for future reference.

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7. Where possible, it is a good idea to invite a local elder to welcome the group to their country.
 8. Prepare the agenda. If you plan to have formal meetings the agenda needs to include items such as: a welcome to country, minutes of the last meeting, business arising, correspondence, finance, individual issue items, other business, and next meeting details.
 9. Prepare an attendance sheet for circulation, asking for details such as names, contact phone numbers, addresses, organisations represented, email etc. Consider having a sheet that invites people to volunteer for different jobs (eg. a sub-committee) on certain activities (such as fundraising) or to be one of the officers, such as treasurer, secretary or chair.
 10. The Chairperson should outline the format and reason for the meeting. Set the tone of the meeting by stating that each person's contribution is important and ask everyone to respect each other's views.
 11. Break into smaller groups if the whole group is too large. An agreed summary can be brought back to the larger group for discussion or decision.
 12. Discuss now the tasks that are to be done before the next meeting and agree on who will do what.
 13. Try to keep to time. Your meeting is probably not the only thing participants may have on that day or night. If necessary, signal that time is running out and ask what the group would like to focus on. Carry over items to the next meeting if necessary. Thank people for their attendance and assistance.
 14. Make sure that the minutes or notes, along with the next meeting's agenda, are circulated several days before the next meeting, to give attendees time to think about their contributions and how they can assist in progressing towards the group's goal.

Screen 4.6: Gathering information about an issue

Your group may decide to work on a specific issue or problem in your area—indeed, it may be that your group has been formed to address a particular local issue or need. You



might be seeking to increase employment opportunities for young Indigenous people in your local area. What information do you need to determine if your idea is appropriate, get people involved, develop the idea and build support? You might start by asking yourselves some questions:


- Who is affected by the issue (positively and negatively)?
- What are the consequences of the issue (eg for individuals and the broader community)?
- What are the economic and social impacts of the issue (benefits and costs and who they affect)?
- What is the history of this issue in our community?
- What are the barriers and how can they be overcome?
- What resources are needed and where can they be obtained?
- What timeframe are we going to work to in addressing the issue?

Above all, talk regularly with your local Indigenous networks about your plans; reconciliation is a shared process.

Screen 4.6.1: What information is already available?

The information you need may already be available in oral or written form. Possible sources include:

- the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>], Indigenous land councils and community organisations
- other Local Reconciliation Groups (you can find some examples of what other groups have done. Have a look at the *Local Symbols of Reconciliation* document or some issues of *Walking Together*)
- the Reconciliation Australia website [www.reconciliation.org.au]

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- state or government agency records or national, state and local libraries and archives
 - universities, research organisations and museums

When you find information, note exactly where it came from or is stored—this gives your information greater credibility and means it can be checked or relocated. Remember that information is influenced by the culture and intention of the person recording it, so records may not be comprehensive or accurate.


People in your community may also have a lot of information that can help you. You can tap community knowledge and views in a range of ways—by talking to individuals, doing oral histories, surveys and holding community workshops or focus groups.

Screen 4.6.2: Tapping into community knowledge

In Mandurah WA, a seaside town an hour's drive from Perth, the Women's Circle held a ceremony on the foreshore. The Women's Circle is a group of Aboriginal and other women who meet once a month in Mandurah to exchange stories.

The Eurobodalla Walking Together Group, together with ANTaR, arranged Story Telling sessions each Tuesday morning of the school holidays in 2000 to spread knowledge of Koori life and culture and to introduce children to an important part of Australian heritage.

Collecting community knowledge can help you find information that may not be recorded on paper, and highlight the significance of particular issues to the local community. You can do this one-on-one or with groups.




Oral history involves interviewing people in a structured way to record their recollections about a place, event or period. Community workshops involve meetings with people from different groups in the local community. They are designed to draw out local knowledge and opinions about the issues, places or events that are valued by the community. This method gives people the opportunity to share their knowledge, to learn about what is important to others, and to act together. Before you start an oral history project, make sure local people are happy about your group doing it—they may have plans to do it themselves, or you may be able to collaborate on the idea.

Screen 4.7: Projects involving Indigenous heritage places

For many Australians, learning about local Indigenous history and culture is very important—but it is a process that requires care. The *Draft Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places* contain three principles you need to know:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to be involved in decisions affecting their cultural heritage and in the ongoing management of their cultural heritage.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have rights to speak for the place, and/or have interests in the place, should be identified and involved in decisions affecting that place.
- Decisions that have an effect for Indigenous people at the local level need to have full local level involvement.
- Any project that touches on Indigenous heritage places should be done in collaboration or cooperation with Indigenous communities.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>] in Canberra can provide advice on many aspects of Indigenous heritage studies. It has an extensive library and programs for Indigenous



people and has published an excellent encyclopaedia that is available on CD-ROM. The Institute can be contacted at GPO Box 533, Canberra, ACT, 2601. Phone (02) 6246 1111.

Specific information on bibliographic resources on Indigenous heritage is also available on a CD-ROM called *ATSIROM*, available from RMIT Publishing GPO Box, 12477, A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001. Phone (03) 9349 4994.

Screen 4.8: Identifying priority issues

If your group has been consulting with the local community and collecting and analysing information, you may have more information and possibilities than you can deal with. Setting priorities can help you be effective. Reconciliation is a shared process so this should be done in collaboration with Indigenous people wherever possible. Some questions might help identify the highest priorities:


- Will the situation worsen if something isn't done about it?
- Can or should other groups or organisations or your Local Government Council take responsibility for this issue or problem?
- Do we have the knowledge, skills and resources to deal with this problem? If not, are we likely to be able to develop these in the near future?
- Who do we need to involve as partners to address the issue?

Screen 4.9: Setting your objectives

Some Local Reconciliation Groups have taken a relaxed and unstructured approach to their work and found that the exchanges that have taken place as a result have worked for them.

Often, though, reconciliation is only one of many activities Local Reconciliation Group members are involved in. People in the group want to make the most of their time together and to see results for their efforts. A clear objective that everyone agrees on can help.

Your objective tells you and others what you want to achieve. This may be to find out more about local Indigenous history and culture and to discuss these issues together. It may be



to support your Indigenous community's campaign to have local Indigenous history taught in local schools. Objectives come in all shapes and sizes. If your objective is not clear it will be harder to explain to others or determine whether a particular strategy is likely to help you achieve it.

Defining objectives as a group helps to develop a shared vision and ensures everyone knows exactly what they are working towards and why. Planning involves thinking through issues before taking action, allowing time for reflection on the core issues of reconciliation, including how you will work and the issue of protocols.


When you are writing your objectives, start with a clear statement of the problem that needs to be addressed. Use this to write a clear, general statement of the changes you want to see—what the problem/issue will look like if you are successful. As far as possible, make your objectives specific, measurable, achievable as well as realistic, relevant and timely.

Screen 4.10: What strategies will you use?

OK. So you have clear and realistic objectives, you have consulted the people who need to be consulted, especially local Indigenous organisations and involved them in discussions and decisions about your plans. The next step is to develop strategies that are appropriate, creative approaches that address your particular situation and will help you reach your objectives.

Working as a group lets you draw on everyone skills. Brainstorm ideas first before you start analysing what is likely to work. You might find these tips useful in developing some strategies:

- Brainstorm ideas about the obstacles you anticipate having to overcome in order to reach your objectives. This will help you work out what strategies are needed.
- Brainstorm ideas about how you might achieve your objective. These are your possible strategies. Once you have a list of ideas, for each one ask yourselves
 - How will it help us reach our objective?
 - Is it feasible? What resources are involved (eg. people, money, materials, equipment and facilities, time, knowledge, skill, political influence, status, energy)?

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- Will it have enough impact to make it worth doing?
 - What positive and negative effects will it have?
 - Will the strategy be undertaken in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people?
 - Will the strategy enable Indigenous people to work as a team with the group?
 - Will different people from different backgrounds be able to work together straight away on this strategy or will there need to be some learning and sharing first?
 - Look for strategies that help achieve a number of objectives simultaneously, or require the least resources.
 - Think about timing, order and how the strategies fit together. Do some of them need to be done before others? Will some strategies reinforce others?

Screen 4.11: Developing an action plan

Your strategies tell you *what* you intend to do to reach your objectives. But *how* are you going to make it happen? What concrete, measurable events, activities, actions or tasks must occur?

In reconciliation, often the really significant outcomes are not immediately tangible. They are the sort of personal awareness that comes from individual introspection, reflection and understanding. But ensuring these outcomes are achieved is as important as developing action plans for more obviously concrete objectives.

Your action plan needs to address some key questions. Who is responsible for what? What resources are involved? When will the activities take place? In what order? How will we know our strategies are working? It doesn't have to be long and detailed or overly formal. A concise action plan is often more effective. The main thing is that it helps you know what you need to do and when, so you get where you want to go.

Screen 4.11.1: Who is responsible for what?

Your action plan needs to give someone responsibility for each action or activity needed to reach your objectives.



These questions should help you do this:

- Who needs to be consulted before the plan is adopted?
- Who needs to approve the plan?
- Who will be the project manager?
- Who will monitor the results?
- Who will review and revise parts or the entire plan when necessary?
- Who will track ongoing work on the plan (minutes of meetings, records of changes agreed, documents etc)?
- Who will be contacted in an emergency or crisis?
- Do we need a management committee representing key interests, or some other decision-making group?

Conflict can sometimes arise during the development or implementation of a plan. You might want to agree on a process for dealing with conflict as part of your plan.

Screen 4.11.2: Implementing your plan

If your plan is reasonably detailed, it may be useful for someone in the group to take on the role of project manager or coordinator. If the project is a large one, this may involve setting timetables, managing a budget, allocating resources, assigning responsibilities and keeping a record of progress and decisions. If the project is less elaborate, you may just want someone in the group to keep the ball rolling.

Think about what you need to monitor to be sure that the results you want are being achieved. For example, you might want to know if the community's awareness of reconciliation is changing as a result of your efforts, or if the number of Reconciliation Learning Circles in your area has increased.

Keep everyone involved in what you are doing and update your plan as people come and go and new interests and issues are identified, new information is obtained or circumstances change.



5. KEEPING THINGS GOING

Screen 5: Keeping things going

You've got a local reconciliation group up and running. You've decided what to focus on, at least for the next little while. Dealing effectively with practical tasks and challenges can help you work well as a group, enjoy yourselves and make a difference.


In this section you will find some material to assist you with some of the issues you may need to deal with in the ongoing operation of your group. Things like running effective meetings, fundraising, dealing with conflict, developing allies, working with others and communicating your message about reconciliation. Some groups may even reach a point where they want to think about incorporation.

Screen 5.1: Making meetings work

Do you ever feel as if you are always in meetings? Is every meeting essential, focussed and effective? Are new people made to feel welcome and included? Or are there frequent meetings that go on forever, but never seem to make any real decisions? One factor that can affect the sustainability of a group is how its meetings work. Good meetings can be planned for and managed. This might sound formal but it's really about making good use of time and getting the outcomes you want.

There is a need to be especially thoughtful when planning meetings with Indigenous communities. There are good sources of information about meetings involving Indigenous people and the wider community. Use your local Indigenous networks, or, if this is a new experience for you, contact the Indigenous organisations in your community and/or your state, territory or local government area with responsibility for Indigenous issues. You may need to adapt the general suggestions in this section in light of your discussions.

In some Aboriginal communities, meetings are not the usual way decisions are reached. Decisions happen in a more informal manner. The process of learning about how Indigenous communities do things is an important part of reconciliation.



Think about whether some of your gatherings could be run along the lines used by local Aboriginal communities. Trying to incorporate Indigenous ways of talking and making decisions into your group's meetings can be a really useful and revealing exercise. It is often a good way to highlight important but subtle differences between cultures. It can show you that ways of working or talking that are second nature to you and that you assume everyone does are actually very culturally specific—and often inappropriate for other cultures.

However you plan to meet, it will usually help you achieve the outcome you want by preparing well, being organised and following up meeting outcomes.

Sometimes it may be useful to think about a meeting in four stages:

Stage 1: Planning the meeting (Agenda and goals)

Stage 2: Setting up the meeting (Logistics)

Stage 3: Running the meeting (Chairing/Facilitating)

Stage 4: Follow up (After the meeting ends)

Screen 5.1.1: Stage 1 - Planning the meeting

1. **Decide the goal of the meeting**—Is it to plan a community forum? A membership drive? A fundraising event? Decide on a clear goal for the meeting. The agenda becomes your road map for getting there. It should enable decisions on all the points you need to cover to achieve your goal.
2. **Do your homework**—If you need information or research for the meeting, get it before the meeting starts.
3. **Decide who needs to be there**—does the whole group need to be there, or just some of the members (say a sub-committee or the Executive)?




4. **Plan with others**—Get together with others who might have good ideas or who need to be involved in the meeting. Brainstorm and then write an agenda.
5. **Develop a good agenda**—List the amount of time you plan for each item. Distribute the agenda well before the meeting so people can prepare.

Screen 5.1.2: Stage 2 - Setting up the meeting

1. **Start and end on time** even if all the participants are not there. People will learn to arrive on time in future.
2. **Record attendees**. One option is to circulate an attendance list. This can also give you contact details for the future, including for people from other organisations.
3. **Meeting spaces** should be accessible and if possible, an appropriate size for the group. If you need to set up the meeting room, get there early.
4. An **informal meeting before or after** the main meeting is a good way for people to talk and socialise, particularly if the meeting involves people from other organisations.
5. **Regular meeting times** are useful (eg. the first Wednesday of each month). People will start to keep the date free. But don't have a meeting just to meet. Always have a clear goal.

Screen 5.1.3: Stage 3 - Running the meeting

1. **Introductions**—As chair or facilitator, get everyone to introduce themselves and introduce yourself and your role.
2. **Get agreement** on the agenda and rules for the meeting so everyone participates and is satisfied with it.

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3. **Start and end on time.** Try to keep to the agenda time limits. If the group wants to go beyond the time set aside for the issue, ask for agreement from the meeting.
 4. **Finish** each agenda item by summarising the conclusion out loud. Then move on when no one objects. This is important for writing the minutes of the meeting.


Screen 5.1.4: Stage 4 - Following up on the meeting

1. Find out how participants felt about the meeting, what could be improved etc.
2. Make any follow up calls required, send out correspondence arising from the meeting (eg. minutes).
3. Summarise the meeting by listing date, time, participants, decisions made and issues to be followed up or use minutes. Minutes are a record of key activities and outcomes from a meeting and should include:
 - When the meeting took place (date and time)
 - Participants' names and titles
 - Brief coverage of each agenda item including key issues raised, what ideas were offered, by whom and what solutions were agreed.
 - What tasks etc were assigned and to whom and any deadlines agreed
 - What follow-up action will be taken after the meeting and who is responsible.

Screen 5.2: Facilitating group discussions, activities and meetings

'Facilitate' means 'make easy'. A good group facilitator helps make the activities of the group easier. If your local group is planning a major meeting or event, or bringing the community together to talk about an issue, you may find it helpful for someone to act as a facilitator (this could be a group member). Having someone facilitate a meeting can make it easier to be focused and productive, share ideas and make decisions.

Facilitation is a valuable skill to have. It can also be lots of fun. You don't need to be an expert to do a good job of handling group dynamics so that your group works productively.



The main qualities a facilitator needs are to be open-minded, friendly, a good listener and sensitive to the needs and interests of group members. The tips for facilitators outline some key principles to help you get started.

Screen 5.2.1: Keeping things on track: tips for facilitators

Be relaxed and comfortable. Go through any papers, resources etc before the meeting. Check the meeting place—is there space for the group to divide into smaller groups? Is there a white board/black board/butcher's paper?

Set a friendly, relaxed and respectful atmosphere from the start. Make sure everyone knows each other (name tags/sticky labels help). Check everyone has any background material needed. Check peoples' goals for the meeting and review the proposed agenda to make sure everyone understands and agrees on how to proceed.

Try to involve everyone in the discussion—if this isn't happening naturally, try something like 'let's get the full range of views in the group on this issue'. If some people tend to dominate, try 'those are interesting points. Let's see what others think'.

Create a secure and comfortable environment for participants to express their views. Avoid a sense of competition and ensure everyone has opportunities to identify issues or ideas they don't understand.

Value participants and their views—if a group feels valued, they will assist you in setting a cooperative mood. Use people's names. Draw conclusions based on people's contributions.

Don't allow others to interrupt while someone else is speaking.

Ensure the group establishes **clear rules** about issues such as respect and confrontation as part of its 'ground rules' for working together.

Encourage quiet people.

Be an active listener. Listen carefully to what people are saying so you can help guide discussion.



Try to stay impartial when there are disagreements. Your role is to further the discussion and draw out the different viewpoints.

Conflict is OK if it's focussed on the issue not the person. Everyone has to feel safe about expressing their views, even if they are unpopular.

Pauses and silences are OK. They probably mean people are thinking.

Help people connect with the issues being discussed — by encouraging participants to tell their own stories and draw on their own experiences.

Regularly intervene to summarise where you think the discussion has got to.

Ask the 'hard' questions, point out issues that people are ignoring, help the group examine its own assumptions.

Use questions that encourage discussion rather than yes/no answers, eg. 'Why do you disagree with that point?' rather than 'Who agrees/disagrees?'

Screen 5.3: Effective decision making

The decisions you and your group makes will affect people. They will also demonstrate your values and set examples for others.

Decision making can create potential difficulties unless your group is aware of cross-cultural issues. Sometimes well-meaning non-Indigenous people don't appreciate the processes that Indigenous communities use in making decisions. This issue is of great significance if the group feels it would like to act on something that directly affects an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. Before you go too far, check with your local Indigenous contacts or networks.

Some ways of making decisions may fit better with particular contexts and cultures. Similarly, the level of consultation you need and who makes the final decision will vary with the nature and the complexity of the issue and how much support is needed for the decision. Nonetheless, there are some basic steps in making a decision that the group might find useful.



Screen 5.3.1: Who gets to decide

Should decisions be made by a single person, a committee, or by the entire group? When determining who will make decisions about an issue or about particular types of decisions (for example, spending money) think about how important the decision is to the group, the time available and whether the decision requires specialised expertise. Consider also the interest and time others have in making decisions and whether widespread involvement in the decision is important to achieving commitment to the outcome.

The extent of support you want can influence *how* a decision should be made—is a majority enough or do you need consensus? Particularly when working at the community level, you may need to allow considerable time for consultation, discussion and debate before any decision is made. Issues such as gender, culture, ethnicity and disability can effect how people participate. Think about whether specific arrangements are needed to ensure people's views are heard.


Consultation is important to achieving broad acceptance for a decision. But be clear about what role consultations will play in the final decision making process, and the difference between consultation and decision making.

Screen 5.3.2: Steps in making a decision

How does a group (or office holder) make a decision? Individuals have their own style and approach. How people work in an organisation or group will also be influenced by the general culture of that group.

The following steps set out some general principles that your group may find useful, particularly for more important decisions. Talk with local Indigenous organisations about what is appropriate in specific situations. You may need to adapt these suggestions in light of your discussions.

- Decide who will decide.
- Decide what processes are needed to ensure people are comfortable about or accepting of a decision (even if they don't necessarily agree with it). This may involve consultation.

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- Whenever feasible, get those affected by your decision involved to increase their commitment.
 - Gather information. Find out everything you can about the decision and its consequences. Look at the decision as part of the big picture.
 - Identify and assess alternatives. Before implementing what appears to be the best choice, assess the risk by asking 'What can I think of that might go wrong with this alternative?'
 - Make decisions as you go along. A backlog of many little decisions could be harder to deal with than one big, complex decision.
 - Some decisions get harder, not easier, if you delay them.
 - Once the decision has been made, don't look back but do be aware of how it is affecting you and learn from it.

Screen 5.4: Dealing with conflict

If you deal with other people, sooner or later you will have to deal with conflict. Conflict is not necessarily bad. Conflict essentially arises from differing viewpoints. No two people view the world exactly the same way so disagreement is normal.

In groups and organisations, people behave differently according to their roles and skills. A person's experience and/or cultural background will also influence their approach. Sometimes this creates conflict. Managing and using interpersonal conflict in a way that is constructive is important for individuals and the efficiency, energy and creativity of the group or organisation.

Conflict can also arise when you are negotiating with other groups, or with decision makers, with co-workers or with volunteers, particularly if one party feels they are being taken advantage of. There are some principles of effective negotiation you can use to reduce the likelihood of conflict and increase your chances of a successful outcome.




Screen 5.4.1: Interpersonal conflicts

Sometimes in interpersonal relationships, such as those between you and a colleague, office bearer or someone else in the group, there may be a conflict that you are not aware of. If someone who is normally positive and friendly toward you suddenly begins avoiding you or being rude, there is usually a reason. You may find the following steps useful in identifying and dealing with interpersonal conflict:

- Try to determine if there is a problem between you and the other person. Ask yourself whether you are being overly sensitive or whether there has been a noticeable change in behaviour.
- In a low-key, non-confrontational manner, ask the person if there is a problem. If his/her answer is 'No', tell them that you think there is a problem and explain what you think the problem is.
- As you talk, ask for feedback. Don't 'attack' the other person with accusations.
- Try to listen to the other person with an open mind and respect their opinions.
- Take a few minutes to reflect on the other person's opinions in your mind.
- Try to determine why the other person felt the way they did.
- Avoid blaming.
- Try to work out a compromise that is acceptable to both of you

Screen 5.4.2: Some principles of effective negotiation

- Avoid language likely to irritate the other party.
- Avoid putting the other party in a situation where there is no way of resolving the situation without them feeling they have to give in.
- Seek more information so you can understand the other party's perspective. Ask questions. The information you get may also be useful for bargaining.
- Let the other person know that you value him/her even though his/her opinion is different from yours. 'I understand (appreciate, respect, see how you feel that way, etc.)'. This says, 'I hear you and respect your opinion.'


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- Regularly check your own and the other parties' understanding and summarise this, so you know where you have got to.
 - Try to understand the other person's perspective.
 - If there is a difference of view about how to approach a problem, think about whether your specific proposal is crucial or agreement on the overall idea is more important.
 - Look for common ground and try to build towards agreement rather than trying to resolve areas of disagreement.
 - Don't ignore differences—deal with problems early and informally rather than letting them build up.
 - Find a way to help the other party to agree without feeling they are giving in.
 - The process is often as important as the outcome. People are more likely to be committed to an outcome if they accept it was arrived at fairly and by a process they had agreed to. Everyone should believe it will allow their interests to be expressed.

Screen 5.5: Working with others: strength in numbers

Bringing about change can seem daunting at times. There is so much to be done, so many challenges to address. How can one group make a real difference?

As the reconciliation walks in 2000 showed, there is real strength in numbers, even when individuals and groups are not formally organised. When you have many groups with different views, resources, and skills applying their intelligence and strength to address challenges together, the results can be like the work of superheroes.

But often you find that groups that are working on the same issue don't always work together very well. Sometimes political differences, the history of how an issue has developed, lack of understanding or differences in approach stand in the way of cooperation. If a group has lead the initial campaign on an issue, it may feel it knows more than those individuals and groups that have joined a movement more recently, or may resent others taking a public profile in 'their' territory. Sometimes ideological differences or egos can complicate cooperation between groups.



Yet by networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating, organisations working together can accomplish goals they can't reach by working alone.

There are lots of different ways that organisations can work together. Many organisations network with each other, often to share information about activities. Others will coordinate their efforts so as not to cut across or undermine each other's activities. Other groups cooperate to achieve common goals and some collaborate and pool resources to achieve shared goals. All involve different levels of commitment, effort and reward. You need to decide what kind of relationship is right for your group.

Screen 5.5.1: Networking

Organisations have a networking relationship when they exchange information to help each other do a better job. For example if a number of grassroots community organisations in a small town exchange their list of upcoming events, that will help them anticipate and avoid scheduling conflicts. Networking doesn't need to involve a lot of commitment and time but it can bring significant results. It can also lead on to other ways of working together such as joint projects.

Groups can network in all sorts of ways—meet together for lunch, share newsletters, participate in e-mail networks, or meet at seminars and conferences.

Screen 5.5.2: Coordination

Coordination involves groups changing or harmonising their activities so that, together, they can have a greater impact or cover more ground.

A coordinating relationship requires more organisational involvement, time, and trust than a networking relationship. But it can significantly influence the impact you can have. People can get very frustrated by lack of coordination among groups working on similar issues and it can affect the judgements they make about your group.



Screen 5.5.3: Cooperation

When groups cooperate, they not only share information and make adjustments in their activities—they share resources to help each other do a better job. This might include staff, volunteers, expertise, space, funds, and other resources. For example, the Local Reconciliation Groups in a state or territory might share volunteer and staff time to produce a regular calendar of major reconciliation events.

Cooperating requires more trust and a greater investment in time than either networking or coordination. A cooperative relationship also requires organisations to share the ownership and the responsibility of an issue or activity, to risk some hassles, and to reap the rewards of their efforts together.


Screen 5.5.4: Collaboration

In a collaborative relationship, organisations help each other expand or enhance their capacities to do their jobs. For example, a number of Local Reconciliation Groups in a region might co-sponsor a large public event with the aim of expanding the memberships of all the organisations involved.

When organisations collaborate, they work together in a way that strengthens all the groups involved. The parties begin to see each other as partners rather than competitors. They share risks, responsibilities and rewards. They also need to share the credit and recognition if the collaboration is to be sustained.

Collaboration is a bigger exercise than networking, coordinating, or cooperating; but the potential for change can also be greater. It implies a much higher level of trust, risk taking, sharing of 'turf', and commitment. Collaboration can also be empowering, particularly on an issue like reconciliation, because it demonstrates that people from different groups can overcome obstacles to accomplish larger goals together.

Problems that are complex and interconnected may require cooperation across a community to achieve real change. No one organisation or even one sector can make significant movement without the help and cooperation of the other sectors.



Often such collaboration happens after organisations or sectors have tried unsuccessfully to solve problems by themselves.

This kind of collaboration is significantly more complex and challenging than other organisational relationships. It requires all those involved to give priority to the broader common good over their specific organisational or sectoral interest. For such collaborations to work, everyone involved must have reached the view that only when the larger community solves its key problems will each organisation have a better chance at getting its needs met.

Screen 5.5.5: How do you decide what relationships are right for you?

Networking, coordinating, cooperating, collaboration, and multi-sector collaboration are very different relationships that accomplish different goals and require different levels of human resources, trust, skills, time, and financial resources.


What organisational arrangement will help your group achieve its objectives? What kind of arrangement is feasible? Often relationships between organisations will build over time. Groups start working together in casual, informal ways. If the results are positive there may be enough trust and enthusiasm to try a greater challenge.

Asking some questions can help you decide what relationships are appropriate for your group:

- What does each organisation want to achieve by working together?
- Which kind of relationship is necessary to achieve those goals?
- Are there resources available for this (eg. time, skills, financial resources, community support, commitment, and people)? If not, can those resources be accessed?
- Is there sufficient trust and commitment to sustain this kind of relationship?

Screen 5.6: Getting your message across: tips for effective communication

Effective communication is central to genuine dialogue, to persuasion and to winning support for your ideas.




This section provides some general points to think about that might help you and your group communicate effectively: There are some additional issues to think about if you are giving a talk, need to present your ideas in writing, or want to write a letter to a newspaper or your local parliamentarian. You might also want to set up a telephone or email tree so you can get messages out quickly to your own group or to a wider group of contacts.

- Be clear about your purpose and your target audience. Do you want to inform, persuade, change attitudes or change behaviour?
- Think about your audience and its interests and make your message relevant to them.
- Be sensitive to cultural difference.
- How your audience responds will be influenced by the constraints they face including availability, knowledge of, or access to, information about the issues you are dealing with; their backgrounds; and the way they prefer to take in information.
- Reinforce your main points by repeating them.
- Vary the way you present information to maintain people's interest.
- Present material simply, clearly and logically, focusing on your key messages.
- Support your messages by providing concrete examples and real stories.
- Show people how they can put into practice what you have told them.
- If you are running a workshop, give them the opportunity to practice.
- If you are working face-to-face (for example, at a meeting or a training workshop), ask questions to check your message has been understood.
- Provide written handouts for talks summarising your key points.

Screen 5.6.1: Giving a talk

Giving a talk can be an effective way to motivate people. You can use pauses, the level and tone of your voice and body language to emphasise particular points, convey emotion and passion and generate energy and commitment. You can combine words, vision and sound to reinforce your message.




But people can drift off and stop listening. And most people's normal attention span is around 15-20 minutes. So you need to keep the presentation simple and easy to follow, and make it interesting and relevant to your audience.

Many people, including professional performers, get nervous speaking in public. The trick is to focus and use any nerves to improve your performance. Like any skill, public speaking can be practised and improved. How much effort you put into improving your skills will depend on how often you need to speak in public and the importance of these events.

Below are some tips. Some are simple; some will take time and may not be worth doing unless you have to give talks regularly. Some suggestions will be easier with small groups.

- Know your material well.
- Practise your presentation (eg. in front of a mirror, with friends or colleagues or, if you are very keen, videotape yourself).
- For a workshop or training session, learn and use participants' names
- Establish your credibility early—demonstrate why you are qualified to give the talk
- Use eye contact to connect with your audience, where this is culturally appropriate. You may want to check with local Indigenous organisations.
- Where appropriate, use techniques to involve your audience (eg. questions).
- Show you have properly prepared (via handouts, overheads etc).
- Anticipate potential problems and prepare possible responses. Practise responses to tough questions or situations.
- Check the facilities in advance in relation to any equipment you want to use, especially sound.
- Where feasible and appropriate, get some information about the group in advance (eg. through observation or questionnaires or talking to organisers).
- Use relaxation techniques (breathe deeply, meditate, give yourself a pep talk).

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- Prepare an outline of your presentation and follow it.
 - Dress comfortably and appropriately.
 - Get enough rest so you are physically and mentally alert.
 - Use your own style.
 - Where possible use your own words rather than reading a script.
 - Put yourself in your audience's shoes. Make your presentation relevant and interesting. Show them why what you are saying matters to them.
 - Assume they are on your side.
 - Provide an overview of your presentation including your main objectives.
 - Introduce yourself to the group in advance, if possible.
 - Identify your fears. Are they things you can control or not? Confront them and ask yourself what is the worst thing that can happen. Accept that some fears can help you focus and perform.
 - Give special attention to the first five minutes.
 - Visualise yourself as a good speaker.
 - Create an informal setting where possible (eg. don't stand behind a lectern some distance from the audience; sit where all can see and hear you).
 - If you're really serious, take a course in public speaking or join a regular public speaking group.

Screen 5.6.2: Presenting ideas in writing

Government officials and decision makers often want material in writing, because

- they can control when to look at your material, fitting it around other priorities and commitments
- they may need to look at your information or proposals more than once, or refer them to someone else for comment and analysis




- they may want to discuss your ideas or proposals with other people, and need to know everyone is looking at the same material

Sometimes you may want to put things in writing, for example when you

- want to be certain about the messages you are conveying
- want your material to reach a large number of people
- want people to be able to review and reflect on your ideas or proposals
- are providing information to be used regularly or over an extended period
- want to put something 'on the record'.

In addition to the tips for effective communication, the following points might help you present your ideas appropriately and effectively:

- Check that the formats and headings you use, are appropriate to your document's purpose. Particularly for more formal documents like submissions to a local council or a parliamentary inquiry, you should look at other submissions to give you ideas.
- Prepare an outline of your presentation with its key points. Organise these to tell a story, leading the reader to your conclusion.
- Set out your key points in the first paragraph, so even if someone reads nothing else they will understand the main issues and your conclusions.
- Keep your sentences short, using the active voice.
- Edit and revise your draft to make sure it flows well and issues are presented clearly and in a logical order.
- Think about layout and format. Layout
 - helps you organise your material and thoughts
 - can help your reader understand and be persuaded by your writing.




Screen 5.6.3: Writing a letter to a newspaper

Writing a letter to a newspaper can be an effective way to tell people about an issue of concern. Below are some tips to increase your chances of getting published:

- Stick to one issue.
- Prepare a draft letter with your points logically in order.
- KISS—keep it short and simple. Aim for a maximum of 200 words.
- Use short sentences.
- Define the problem and offer a constructive solution or at least a way forward.
- Call for specific action from a specific individual or organisation.
- If you have time, put your draft aside for a couple of days to see if improvements are possible, particularly through deletions.
- Prepare a final copy that is typed, or at least written legibly. Put your street address, phone number and email address, if you have it, at the top of the letter.
- Leave wide margins and a space between lines. This will help the editor to make any changes.
- Sign the letter and type or print your name under the signature, together with the date.
- If your letter is on a current issue, submitting it quickly by email may increase your chances of getting published.

Screen 5.6.4: Writing a letter to your local parliamentarians

A letter to local parliamentarians lets them know of your group's views, and also indicates the level of the interest in an issue. If you want to subsequently invite them to any activity, at least they will have heard from you beforehand. It's also a good idea to talk to the electoral office staff. Many parliamentarians get loads of mail so it may help if the office staff know who are and what your group is trying to do.



Think about whether it is appropriate to write to one or more State or Federal representatives, (in all states but Queensland there will be four people to write to—lower and upper house representatives at both federal and state level). Don't forget your local Government representatives.

Parliamentarians get lots of letters. Some simple principles can increase the effect of yours. Use the tips for writing a letter to the newspaper, as will these additional points:

- Find the correct name and address of your local parliamentarians at a library or via the Internet (State and Federal parliaments all have websites. The federal government entry point links to state and territory sites: <http://fed.gov.au/>. State parliaments also have a list of state parliamentarians and Commonwealth Government Bookshops have lists of all Federal parliamentarians.
- Call for specific action from these parliamentarians and ask them to let you know what they intend to do about your issue.
- If appropriate, tell the parliamentarian what implications there will be if they don't take the action you are calling for. This might include an indication of the political ramifications (but only if you have some evidence as politics is their business after all).

Screen 5.6.5: Telephone and email trees

Sometimes you will need to get information out quickly to the members of your group or to a wider network or set of contacts. A telephone or email tree is a way to do this quickly, keep people in contact with one another and make sure no one person bears all the load of ringing or emailing to advise people of a change of meeting venue or time, or to let people know about an urgent problem.

Setting up a telephone or email tree is easy. Each person in the group is responsible for ringing two other people. Each of those people is responsible for ringing two other people, and so on until everyone in the group is covered. If your group is very large you can save time by increasing the number of people that each person rings (say to three or four). If the branches of your tree are organised along



STD lines, this approach will save you time and money.

				Name	Phone	
			Name	Phone	Name	Phone
Name	Phone	Name	Phone	Name	Phone	
				Name	Phone	
				Name	Phone	
Name	Phone	Name	Phone	Name	Phone	
				Name	Phone	
				Name	Phone	

A similar principle applies to email addresses, but with emails, you can obviously send a single message to many more people at the same time.

As computer usage and connection to the Internet has grown, establishing an email network has become a cost-effective way to share information with many people quickly and efficiently. It's something that your Local Reconciliation Group might consider.

Establishing an email network is not hard. It's also a task that provides an opportunity to involve young people in the work of your group since many of them



have very good IT skills. The best place to start may be to contact your Internet Service Provider for further information. Here are a few key points to consider, some of which you may want to discuss with your Internet Service Provider.

Cost There may be no cost other than the time of the person maintaining the network and normal internet access costs, depending on what you can negotiate with your Internet Service Provider.

Network maintenance Initially it's probably a good idea to have one person to oversee the network. You may also want to establish some general protocols or rules about the sort of information that can be distributed through the network.

Involving new people/groups You may want to think about whether the network will be open to anyone or whether you want some kind of 'gatekeeping' function so that the network manages its membership and decides who can be involved.

Risks Viruses (as with any computer-based activity), receiving inappropriate or offensive materials or having to sift through information of variable quality.

If you want to see an example, have a look at the email network established by Indigenous groups in the Australian Capital Territory.



Screen 5.6.6: The ACT Indigenous email network

In the Australian Capital Territory, a powerful email network containing hundreds of addresses has been developed by and for Indigenous people, their organisations and others with a close interest in Indigenous issues. It includes people involved in reconciliation and Indigenous people in Commonwealth and ACT Government departments.

The network is used to inform people of events and meetings, forums, news items, job vacancies, policies and issues etc. It provides links to interstate and international groups including Indigenous peoples organisations in Canada. The email network has resulted in a high level of awareness of developments and events and who is doing what. The address is actindnetwork@eGroups.com.

Screen 5.7: Dealing with the media


The media has an important role in promoting awareness of reconciliation and associated activities. Publicising your group's views and activities is an opportunity to promote community involvement in reconciliation. You might find these points useful in thinking about how to get your message into the media.

Decide which media you are aiming at—local radio, newspapers, television or the state or national press? Be practical and realistic. Your story may be of interest to local media, who are always looking for stories on their community. Considerably more thought is required to achieve state or national media exposure but it is achievable.

Different media have different requirements. For example, a story for television must include something for people to see and to hear. Most television deals in headlines and 15-second grabs, whereas newspapers offer an opportunity for more in-depth treatment.

If targeting state or national media, make contact first, and then follow up with a printed media release. You might make a second phone call or wait for the media to contact you for more information.

Be well organised—Check newspaper deadlines and any style requirements. With local media, face-to-face contact and site visits, supported by suitable printed materials, are useful. Interesting photographs, of good quality, with captions and contact details, are also



useful. Be sure you have obtained any necessary permission and get title and other source details correct.

Choose a spokesperson or persons to deal with requests for media interviews. It would be an advantage if this person has experience in media interviews, but it is not critical. Your spokesperson should be well prepared on the project, about reconciliation and its benefits to the community. When speaking, make the key messages simple and precise, and present them in ways that the whole community can embrace and support. Don't waffle!

Screen 5.7.1: Tips for preparing a media release

You may find these suggestions helpful in preparing a media release:

- **Presentation**

Presentation is important. Use A4 paper. Keep it short, no more than one page, one side only. Include full name and contact number of media person at the end of the release. Use a short, simple heading to summarise the content.


- **Style**

Decide what you want to get across (it must be newsworthy). Have short sentences, short paragraphs, and plain words, with one or two sentences per paragraph; and target your audience by writing with the intended reader in mind.

Begin with a strong lead paragraph. Decide what is the most important point you want to make and write it concisely. This could be a summary of who, what, when, where, how, and why, but don't exceed four lines.

Write the rest of the story giving specific details. Check all spelling; Use the active voice. Consider using direct quotes—journalists like them.

Identify someone in the group to act as a media contact and include their contact details in the release. Make sure the group's spokespersons are readily available for interviews and the media representatives can get on to them at all times.




Fax or email is the most time-efficient means of distributing your release. It is helpful to precede it with a phone call to say it is coming and follow up with a call to check it was received.

Screen 5.8: Fundraising

At some point your group may need to raise funds for a project. Some people find the idea of fundraising intimidating, particularly when there are so many organisations in the community also seeking financial support. However, funds can often be raised more easily than expected, and lead to other spin-offs including new members or a higher profile for your group.

There is no one way to be a successful fundraiser. In general it requires:

- Preparation, thought and planning. What is the purpose of the fund raising? You know why you want support but the prospective target groups may not. Develop some material that explains what the project is about, why it is worthwhile and how it will make a difference.
- Does this aim provide any immediate clues as to who might be the potential target/s and, in turn, potential ways to reach these targets?
- How much money do you want to raise? What is your budget? Can you cover some of it by seeking in-kind contributions (eg from local businesses or your Local Government Council). This might include postage, use of an office or hire of a venue free of charge.
- A plan that is within your capacity. There is no point aiming for results that are grander than available resources allow. This should not stop you thinking 'big' in terms of what you might achieve. But you need to be realistic about who is available and willing to assist your fundraising efforts.
- Persistence in following through your strategies. Often the hard task of fundraising is to be willing to ask for money, to go back to people and organisations and keep asking or following leads until one achieves a positive response.

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- Professionalism. It is very important to keep a good record of your activities and the results. Moreover, it is important that this information is available for review by the rest of the Group and that any legal requirements are met.

There is an enormous range of activities that a fundraiser might organise. Some general ideas that have been tried before with success include:

- Raffles
- Dinners
- Market or street stalls
- Shows where goods and services are sold
- Performances such as theatre, cinema, music, etc
- Garage sales
- Quiz nights
- Sports days
- Direct mailing and canvassing, particularly using membership lists of interest groups, businesses or professional associations.

Be inventive and share ideas. What approaches do you know of that others have tried successfully? Why did they work? Is there a special connection to be made to the project for which you are raising money? You might also look at steps in planning your fundraising strategy.

An alternative to fundraising from the general public or targeted sectors of the community is to make a submission for funding to government, private business or the philanthropic sector.

As a general principle it is important not to be too reliant on any one source of funds. You can reduce your risk by having a fundraising strategy that covers a range of sources of funds—government, business, foundations and public donations.



Screen 5.8.1: Steps in planning your fundraising strategy

Step 1: Be clear about your objective

Why are you seeking funds? How does this link with the goals of the group? How much money are you seeking? Have a look at the section on setting your objective for some ideas about setting a clear, appropriate objective.

Step 2: Strategy development

Brainstorm how you might achieve your objective. Have a look at the section on strategies for some suggestions that might help you. Remember—something is only a good idea if it helps you achieve your objective and the group can agree on it. You may have a number different strategies—fundraising doesn't have to be one big effort.

Think about the context in which your activities will take place. Will there be competing activities at the time your effort is planned? What effect are they likely to have?

What is the break-even point for your fundraising activity? How sure are you of reaching it? What are the risks?

Step 3: Prepare an implementation plan

Prepare an action plan that outlines how you will implement your strategies. Think about what resources you will need and where these can be accessed. Do you need a brochure or a letter that explains the purpose of your fundraising? Who will help and when? What are their tasks? Do they need training, identification (so the public knows the organisation they are working for and that the money will go where it is supposed to)? Are there any legal angles to take care of? What publicity is needed?

Step 4: Get going

Implement your plan. Be positive. Consider nominating someone as project manager so one person has an overview of what is happening.



Step 5: Monitor the results

Regularly monitor how your plan is progressing so you can deal with any problems quickly or make any changes that are needed. If things are not going well, don't be afraid to call a halt. It is better to apologise for getting out early than to lose money on the exercise.

Step 6: Prepare a report

No matter what the outcome, prepare a report—even if it is a short summary—so that the group can learn from the experience.

Screen 5.8.2: Preparing a submission for funding

Submissions for funding may be in response to a request or call for submissions from a person or organisation. You can also make seek funding from an organisation or individual that you think may be able to provide financial support and that you believe will be interested in what your group is proposing.


Regardless of whether or not your submission is in response to a call for submissions, you will maximise your chance of success if your proposed project closely matches the current priorities of the organisation or individual you are approaching. Check these out and tailor your submission accordingly. You might also look at the section on getting your message across for some suggestions to help you communicate your ideas effectively.

The individual or organisation you are approach for funds may have a set format for you to use. If not, you may find these general principles helpful in organising your submission.

- If you are applying to an established grants program, get all the written material available about the program. Ask for examples of previously funded projects (some funding bodies will have websites with this information). Where possible, try to obtain copies of previously successful submissions from other community groups.
- Develop personal contacts in the prospective funding agency and ask for their advice—perhaps send them a draft proposal for comment.



- Be very clear and concise about the purpose for which you are seeking funds. Establish the need for and the appropriateness of your proposal. How you do this will depend on circumstances—it might involve statistics, stories, quotes or testimonies from respected individuals or organisations, photographs, drawings, charts, research etc.
- State clearly the positive and lasting outcomes of the project.
- Prepare a clear, current, accurate budget that anticipates and identifies all the likely activities and costs. It is easy to underestimate cost but difficult to cut the project back or seek extra funding.
- Indicate how you will account for the funds and report on the outcomes. Will your accounts be audited independently? Have you received and acquitted previous grants? Depending on your group's circumstances, you might think linking the financial management of your proposal to a credible and fairly large community organisation (eg. your Local Government Council or a local Indigenous organisation).
- Link your submission to the funding body's other policies, proposals and priorities. Show how your proposal is consistent with their objectives. Tell them what they will get out of the proposal (eg. community support or profile, reduced problems or costs in other areas for which they are responsible).
- Break your project into stages. This enables you to seek funding for some or all of the stages, to get funding from several different bodies, to get funding provided in stages and to provide regular progress reports to the funder.
- Show that you have been resourceful in trying to seek funding from a number of agencies. Indicate if your group or other organisations will provide in-kind support.
- If there is a required template, use it and keep attachments and other documentation to a minimum. Ensure you provide the information asked for.
- If appropriate, indicate that the project uses processes that have been effective and successful in similar projects.

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- Advise your local member of parliament of your submission and seek their support (any other demonstrated support you have will also be useful).
 - Keep the submission as simple as possible.

Screen 5.9: Incorporation

Local Reconciliation Groups are usually unincorporated bodies, even if they are quite large and well organised. They may handle money and undertake transactions, but this is usually through individuals trusted by the group.

For a variety of reasons, some Local Reconciliation Groups may consider forming a non-profit incorporated Association. This can be done using 'model' rules of Association, but it is still a reasonably involved process.


In essence, an incorporated Association is a non-profit body. Any profits made through its activities are to further the association rather than for the personal gain of individuals involved with the association. Within such an organisation, individuals can still be paid for any work they do.

Incorporation is a relatively inexpensive way to establish an organisation that is recognised by law, equivalent to a natural person but separate from its individual members. A major benefit of being an incorporated body is to limit any debt if the Association is wound up to unpaid membership dues.

Establishing an incorporated Association is the way you probably need to go if your group is considering setting up a community management structure.

Screen 5.9.1: Model Rules

To assist groups to form a non-profit incorporated Association, State and Territory governments have developed 'model' rules that groups can use. . You can get a copy of the relevant model rules from the appropriate authorities (often via the Internet) and tailor them for your structure and operation.



These 'model' rules meet legal requirements for an incorporated Association and cover such matters as:

- *Membership*

The association's committee

Powers of the committee

Election and removal of committee members

Committee meetings and quorum

Voting and decisions

- *General meetings*

Annual general meetings

General meetings

Making decisions

Voting

- *Miscellaneous*

Funds-source, and management

Alteration of objects and rules

Surplus property