

28 May 2007

JBD STATEMENT ON RECONCILIATION

The Australian Jewish community promotes reconciliation

The Australian Jewish community has been at the forefront of promoting reconciliation with indigenous Australians. That much was proudly recognised at Corroboree 2000 and in numerous other public events. And the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, on behalf of the Jewish community of NSW, has played and will continue to play an active role.

Reconciliation is an issue of the utmost importance

We believe that reconciliation between Australia's indigenous population and other Australians is an issue of the utmost importance for Australia and for humanity. In the context of Jewish moral and religious teachings, we commit ourselves to the principles of reconciliation in all aspects of our lives.

The need for goodwill

We acknowledge that for reconciliation to be truly effective, a partnership involving the goodwill of all parties is essential. We recognise that indigenous peoples knowledge and teachings must be respected in this process.

Entitlement to an apology

We believe that just as the Jewish people have demanded and received apologies from many of those who have persecuted us through the ages, Australia's indigenous population is also entitled to receive a similar apology both from governments who are the successors of those responsible for the past suffering and injustice and from the present generation in the collective name of our forebears.

We express our deep and profound sorrow at the past and present suffering and injustice experienced by indigenous Australians. We are conscious of the tragedies of the past as we strive to be part of the design of a way forward.

Confronting the evils of racism

We recognise the commonality of experience that brings Australia's indigenous peoples together and, given our own unique history of confronting the evils of racism, the special bond of understanding between our peoples.

Partnerships based on mutual respect and learning

In Australia is a multicultural society it is incumbent on us, and we willingly commit, to the creation, development and maintenance of partnerships with Australia's

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indigenous population based on mutual respect. Just as Australia contains a wide diversity of cultures, we recognise that within indigenous communities, there is a similar diversity, and we will design our approaches with sensitivity to this diversity. We believe that through this sharing of knowledge and the creation of partnerships, the Jewish community can also itself learn from the laws, beliefs, traditions and teachings of Australia's indigenous population.

Meaningful public education

We commit ourselves to the community education that must play a fundamental role. The Board will continue to disseminate actively the principles enunciated in this statement to Jewish Australians and to the wider community.

Reconciliation must recognise and implement indigenous Australians' entitlement to human rights

In committing ourselves to this path, we believe that Australia's indigenous community is entitled to expect and receive the fullest recognition of their human rights as expressed by internationally accepted human rights standards. Just as we as Jews abhor racism, xenophobia, discrimination and persecution and all other forms of intolerance, we will work within our community and with the community at large and in partnership with Australia's indigenous peoples to remove these evils especially as they affect them.

We will encourage the constituent members of the Board to pursue reconciliation in their activities, and we sincerely hope that through the partnerships created, the problems unfortunately experienced by many members of Australia's indigenous population will be alleviated and removed. In particular, we will work to securing for Australia's indigenous peoples adequate stands of health, education, employment and training in the hope that by so doing, they will be able to collectively and individually achieve their full potential as human beings and equal members of Australian society.