

# ECCV Statement on Recognising the Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples

March 2017

The [Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria \(ECCV\)](#), is the peak policy advocacy body for ethnic and multicultural communities and its organisations in Victoria and the *Voice of Multicultural Victoria*. For over 40 years we have been the link between multicultural communities, government, and the wider community. ECCV's has 220 members comprising of ethnic and multicultural organisations, eight Ethnic Communities' Councils in regional areas of Victoria, affiliated member organisations and some individual members.

## **The purpose of this statement**

The purpose of this statement is to reaffirm the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples living in Victoria and to express ECCV's commitment towards fostering a harmonious and social cohesive society and to promote equitability in accessing public goods and services in Victoria.

## **We recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples as Australia's First Peoples**

ECCV recognises the pain, harm, and displacement experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples since the settlement of Australia by non-indigenous people.

ECCV recognises the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples as the first inhabitants of our country and their unique place over the course of history, the present age, and into the future in Australia.

ECCV recognises the cultural, linguistic, social, and spiritual diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples and their rights as the First Peoples of Australia.

## **ECCV acknowledges the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

ECCV express its support for the underlying principles of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)<sup>1</sup>.

The United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in [article 1](#), recognises both the collective and individual rights of indigenous peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia endorsed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in 2009

ECCV notes that the declaration states that indigenous peoples are distinct peoples and have the right to fully participate in society: “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State” (Article 5).

### **We uphold the rights of people in their diversity**

ECCV upholds people’s rights associated with their diversity and expressed in

- indigenous, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic diversity;
- religious, faith, and spiritual diversity;
- traditional knowledge and art;
- sexual orientation and gender diversity;
- political affiliation; and
- age-related diversity.

### **We invite people to work together**

ECCV invites culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse people and their representatives to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples, their elders, and representatives with a view to fostering respect and reconciliation and strengthening the social and cultural ties between culturally diverse people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples, and the wider community.

### **We are prepared to participate in the *journey* towards reconciliation**

ECCV is prepared to take part in collaborative initiatives towards a society that wholeheartedly values and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their heritage as a proud part of a shared local, Victorian and national identity.

ECCV notes that reconciliation efforts are to be part of wider community discussions including on

- consideration of legal conventions across Australia relating to Indigenous Rights;
- the accessibility of services provided in the local and wider community, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples;
- embracing reconciliation in the community;
- the cultural safety and inclusiveness in businesses and services in Victoria; and
- fostering intercultural exchange and inter-personal ties between Indigenous and non-indigenous persons that are *at home* in Victoria.



**Photo:** Senior ECCV representatives during the national reconciliation week in 2016.

#### **Annex – references**

- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2014, in Australian Mosaic, autumn 2014 edition, [\*Our Diverse Mob, first and new cultures - entwined stories.\*](#)
- Reconciliation Australia, 2016, *The State of Reconciliation in Australia, Our History, Our Story, Our Future - [summary report.](#)*
- United Nations, 1948, [\*Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\*](#)
- United Nations, 2008, [\*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.\*](#)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, 2016, [\*Indigenous Peoples.\*](#)