



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Reconciliation demands action now

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National Reconciliation Week has highlighted a devastating truth. Australia continues to fail and cause suffering to First Nations people. Reconciliation as a promise of unity and healing is being overshadowed by injustices, decisions and systems that continue to profoundly harm First Nations people, families and Country. Reconciliation cannot be symbolic. It must be real. It must be just. And it must begin now.

On May 18, 2025, 24-year-old Warlpiri man Kumanjayi White died after being restrained by police in Alice Springs. He lived with a disability. Witnesses reported he was thrown to the ground. He lost consciousness and was pronounced dead shortly after. His family is calling for transparency and accountability. They are seeking justice and fairness.

This tragic death is the second death in custody suffered by the community of Yuendumu, who are awaiting next week's coronial inquiry findings into the death of Kumanjayi Walker.

There have been more than 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody since the Royal Commission in 1991. In those 34 years not one person has been held criminally accountable. Any respect or value for Aboriginal lives appears absent. Communities continue to carry unbearable loss.

At the same time, the federal government approved the extension of Woodside's North West Shelf gas project until 2070. This decision grants commercial rights that risk the desecration of Murujuga, one of the most significant sites of ancient cultural heritage on earth. It disregards the authority of Traditional Owners. It risks irreparable harm to Country, to culture, and to our future. This is happening now. It is happening during National Reconciliation Week.

The assault on First Peoples, on their Country, on their identity, on their voice, and on their safety is relentless. Every day First Nations communities live through realities few Australians ever witness. Families are grieving, attending funeral after funeral. They live in rundown

homes with no water and no sewage. They care for children through illness, in poverty, in fear, while facing racism in every system they must turn to for help.

What does reconciliation mean when this is allowed to continue?

Pat Dodson's recent warning could not be clearer when he said we are witnessing an ongoing process of erasure of First Peoples. The incarceration of young people, the relentless removal of children, the destruction of culture.

For over 200 years, First Nations people have led resistance, held knowledge, offered solutions. They have buried their children. They have stood before governments, in courtrooms, at the United Nations. They have extended their hands in generosity, in welcome. Still, they wait.

This is a national test. For all who are not First Nations, this is your moment.

Demand national truth-telling. Support the families of Kumanjayi White and call for an independent inquiry. Stand with the Traditional Custodians of Murujuga. Demand heritage protection laws that place First Nations people at the centre. Ask governments why children are being removed in record numbers. Ask why incarceration rates are rising. Ask why proven, community-led solutions continue to be ignored.

Write to your MPs. Speak out when you see racism. Challenge the systems. Take action.

Reconciliation is not something that First Nations people owe to Australia. It is something Australia owes to First Nations people.

We must act. Not next year. Not in another decade. Now.

END

[Read the full statement here](#)
