

## **ACU celebrates Reconciliation Week**

ACU will mark National Reconciliation Week with an inaugural lunch and lecture, liturgies and student-led events.

This year's theme, 'Bridging Now to Next', reflects the ongoing connection between past, present and future.

The week is bookended by two significant milestones in Australia's reconciliation journey, the successful 1967 referendum (May 27) and the High Court Mabo decision (June 3).

ACU's first National Reconciliation lunch will feature guest speaker Dr Tracy Westerman AM, who will also deliver a public lecture on the Melbourne Campus. Dr Westerman is a proud Nyamal woman from the Pilbara region of Western Australia and a trailblazer in Aboriginal mental health and suicide prevention.

ACU Campus Ministry will host reconciliation liturgies on each campus for staff and students. Participants will be invited to place a stone, symbolising a commitment to building bridges of reconciliation, and write their own prayer of reconciliation.

On campus, student-focused activities include weaving workshops, yarnning circles, musical and dance performances by First Nations artists and opportunities to taste bush tucker.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) Kelly Humphrey said the week-long commemorations were designed to spark meaningful conversations and reconciliation action.

"At ACU, Reconciliation Week is a time to open our hearts and minds, as we listen, respect, and acknowledge each other's stories," Ms Humphrey said.

"Our staff and students' voices can drive meaningful change, and it's great to see them participating in a variety of events that bring our community together in a meaningful way."

Ms Humphrey, a proud Gomerioi woman, said the ACU First Peoples 10-Year Plan would be released later this year.

"The plan will include actionable initiatives to enhance the areas of leadership and governance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, workforce and research capacities, centred on a strong culture of inclusiveness, engagement and belonging."

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians was at the heart of the university's mission.

"We recognise that reconciliation is not just a week-long event, it's a journey we walk together every day," Professor Skrbis said.

"ACU became one of the first Australian universities to formally support reconciliation through a statement of commitment back in 1998.

"As a university – and especially as a Catholic university – we must put our energy towards engaging more deeply with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and improve outcomes for First Nations students and staff.

"We are committed to practical, meaningful action in support of reconciliation – building on strong foundations to better serve Indigenous students, staff and communities on the many lands on which ACU campuses are located."

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