

On National Sorry Day (26 May) and during National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June), the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is encouraging the community to come together to build a future based on mutual trust and respect, and an equal and full participation in society.

AASW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Director, Professor Sue Green said National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week are two key moments in our year that, while they remind us of the wrongs of the past, are crucial in helping us move forward together.

“Sorry Day is an opportunity for all of us to engage with the continuing story of the First Nations peoples of this country and their interactions with non-Indigenous people. It is not about making people feel guilty about events that are the legacies left to us all. Instead, it is an invitation to ensure that the historical wrongs do not continue to happen.”

“Social workers experienced in working with people who are recovering from trauma know that full acceptance is a necessary ingredient of recovery. So, understanding the destructive impact of past policies and practices, and accepting that wrongs were committed, is the necessary first step towards a national healing.”

“On Sorry Day, during National Reconciliation Week and into the future we all need to acknowledge that an awareness of the issues is not the endpoint of the reconciliation process. Reconciliation is ‘More than a word, Reconciliation takes action’.”

Professor Green said that for the AASW, reconciliation is a positive, reciprocal relationship between First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous people based on trust and respect.

“Reconciliation means that First Nations peoples are able to participate equally and fully in all areas of Australian social, political, community and economic life, and that they enjoy the same health, wellbeing and life outcomes of non-Indigenous people.”

“Awareness is an important starting point but the ambition should be to move away from the safe behaviours we might have undertaken in the past. Instead, it is time to embrace ‘braver and more impactful action’ that will enhance the quality of life of everyone, and to create a society where everyone has the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential.”

“Brave action means challenging people’s ingrained preconceptions and assumptions, and supporting people, communities and organisations as they embrace change in their behaviours, their policies and procedures.”

Professor Green said the AASW joins with Reconciliation Australia in its call to make sure actions have impact.

“Social workers’ commitment to human rights and social justice means that they are constantly addressing the systemic and structural issues that lead to inequality and injustice.”

“During National Reconciliation Week we call on the whole of community to join us, as we direct our action to ending the discrimination and racism that First Nations Australians still experience,” she said.

To interview Professor Green, please contact Noel McMahon on 0413 532 954

Contacts

Noel McMahon

0413 532 954

mailto: noel.mcmahon@asw.asn.au