



**Aboriginal Health Council**  
of South Australia Inc.

**'Our health, our choice, our way'**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Howard's Backflip on Indigenous Recognition is NOT the Key to Reconciliation**

John Howard's decision to overturn more than a decade of resisting the recognition of Australia's Indigenous people is welcome news for many Indigenous Australians but it is not an apology says Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc., Mary Buckskin.

The symbolism of a nation saying 'Sorry' for past wrongs against its Indigenous people is vital to the process of reconciliation.

From the very outset of colonisation, Indigenous Australians have been subject to laws which have been specifically designed to dispossess them of their lands, prevent them from practising their culture and basically to wipe out a race of people.

Many Indigenous Australians continue to suffer from the policies of previous Australian governments and the current Howard government has the perfect opportunity to set the healing process in motion.

The recent judgement in favour of Bruce Trevorrow, a victim of the Stolen Generations, did not open a flood-gate of litigation. Similarly, the symbolic gesture of apologising to the nation's Indigenous people for the wrongdoings of past governments won't result in a flood of litigation.

The Prime Minister has two choices. One is to withhold an apology and wait until someone like Bruce Trevorrow is successful in bringing action against the Australian government. The other is to apologise and let the healing and reconciliation process begin.

Then the Prime Minister should genuinely engage with all Indigenous Australians. The Aboriginal Health Council of SA Inc. along with other National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation affiliates would be pleased to introduce John Howard and his government to the real Aboriginal Australia.

It's time for an apology!

ENDS

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