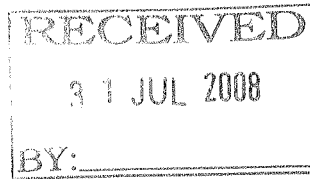


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Reconciliation Australia

28 July 2008

Ms Julie Owens, MP  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Procedure  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission 3

Dear Ms Owens

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a brief submission to the review of the arrangements for the opening day of parliament. Along with a great many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, we were delighted with the inaugural Welcome to Country that opened the 42nd sitting of the Federal Parliament earlier this year. We were proud to have been able to play a role in facilitating the Welcome and assisting in the arrangements for the historic occasion.

A traditional Welcome to Country has long been standard practice in many areas of Australian life and signifies respect for and recognition of traditional owners and their long held connections to the land we share. The significance of our leading public institution adopting this practice sends a clear message to all Australians that Indigenous cultural protocols are valued and respected by our elected representatives. The importance of this message is critical as a step forward for reconciliation, a process based on mutual respect and recognition.

To maximise the community reach and education potential of the Welcome to Country for future Parliamentary openings we recommend that the following actions be considered:

- that the Welcome to Country be broadcast live on national television
- that a section be created on the Parliament House website to explain the Welcome with podcasts of the inaugural Welcome and links to further information about Indigenous culture and history
- that consultations be conducted with relevant stakeholders on who might be invited to participate in and attend future parliamentary Welcome ceremonies.

We would be pleased to assist with the last recommendation and would be happy to meet with you to discuss our ideas further. We strongly support the Prime Minister's leadership in initiating the first Welcome to Country and we're also very pleased that there is bi-partisan support for making the Welcome to Country a standard feature of all future openings of Parliament.

Kind Regards

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