

# Unravelling the past, present and future

WITH NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE NARRAGUNNAWALI RECONCILIATION IN EDUCATION AWARDS 2023 NOW OPEN, MOSMAN PARK ELDER IN RESIDENCE, AUNTY FREDA, REFLECTS ON THE SCHOOL'S NATIONALLY RECOGNISED RECONCILIATION JOURNEY.

The Nyoongar words 'nih, kaardijin, boodier' which translate to 'listen, learn, lead' are the three guiding principles that Mosman Park Primary School observed on its journey towards reconciliation. Elder Aunty Freda commenced work on the Mosman Park Primary School's Narragunnawali Reconciliation Action Plan in 2020 – a vision summary that would connect the school's students and staff with the history, language, and culture of Whadjuk Nyoongar Country.

After 37 years as a teacher, board member, and school principal, Aunty Freda now maintains an active role developing Reconciliation Action Plans, as well as facilitating Welcomes to Country at gatherings. "The Reconciliation Action Plan has evolved around the skills I learned as a teacher," she says. "My role is to liaise with the Aboriginal community and work with schools to introduce reconciliation into the curriculum."

## THE MOSMAN PARK STORY

Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program supports schools and early learning services across the country to take action towards reconciliation by providing practical ways for school leaders, teachers and educators to introduce meaningful reconciliation initiatives into the classroom and the larger community. The biennial Narragunnawali Awards recognise and celebrate outstanding reconciliation initiatives in education.

Narragunnawali (pronounced narra-gunna-wally) is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people, Traditional Owners of the land on which Reconciliation Australia's

Canberra office is located. Narragunnawali means 'alive, wellbeing, coming together and peace.'

Mosman Park Primary School was an awards finalist in 2021 for their exemplary efforts and commitment toward creating a meaningful dialogue and advancing reconciliation – much to the delight of the students and the community. Aunty Freda attributes the success of Mosman Park's Reconciliation Action Plan to the open communication between all parties that established a bond built on honesty, respect, and integrity from the outset.

After she had delivered a Welcome to Country for the school, Mosman Park's principal approached her about teaching the students about Nyoongar history, language, and culture, emphasising the importance that students learn from someone with lived experience.

"Reconciliation is telling the real, true, history of our country and I think this is an important aspect of Mosman Park's reconciliation journey," says Aunty Freda. "There is an Aboriginal saying: 'the child

shall lead them' and I think this helped define Mosman Park's journey. The children were taking their Nyoongar lessons home to their parents, where they would sit and discuss what it was like for the Nyoongar people, and this was part of the learning process for everyone."

Aunty Freda observed the students at Mosman Park as they started to understand these lessons more and found it interesting to listen to them talk. One little boy commented: "Although we cannot change the past, we can influence how we move forward into the future."

## TO EACH THEIR OWN JOURNEY

"Another important aspect of reconciliation is that everybody's journey will be different. No one is right, and no one is wrong, but if we were going to make a knitted blanket, it adds to its richness that it contains many colours," says Aunty Freda.

"For schools looking to begin their reconciliation journey, the first step is to set the intention as a community to move forward together. Education changes, language changes, but reconciliation begins with being open to changing together. This is how we identify where the seams of our knitted blanket are coming apart, and where we all need to repair. This is how we connect the threads between past, present, and future. This is how we move forward." **EM**

This year will mark the fourth Narragunnawali Awards, recognising outstanding commitment to reconciliation in education. For more information, visit:

[narragunnawali.org.au/awards](https://narragunnawali.org.au/awards)



Students and staff connected with the history, language, and culture of Whadjuk Nyoongar Country.