

# On the road again: Journey to Recognition



The Journey to Recognition kicked off in Fremantle on March 10 led by Whadjuk Noongar elders. (Image by Roel Loopers courtesy of Recognise)

**The latest leg of the Journey to Recognition took in South West Western Australia, stopping in small towns and regional centres and building support along the way.**

**“It is our generation that has both the responsibility—and also the great privilege—to bring about an historic change that will forge a more unified future together”.**

These were the words that recognition campaigners, Jane Powles, Sonia Waters and Libby Collins left echoing over the hills and beaches of Esperance as the Journey to Recognition ended its Western leg.

In Albany, a 300-strong crowd gathered to walk up York Street Hill, united in their quest

to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recognised in the Constitution, and see racial discrimination removed from our founding document.

Local Noongar man Lester Coyne welcomed campaigners to his country, encouraging locals to keep the conversation going

and reinforcing that this would require all Australians to work together.

It was indicative of the goodwill and unity that has been seen throughout communities in the South West.

With a throng of locals, the federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Senator Nigel

Scullion braved the wind and early morning to walk with the Journey in Esperance.

After a seven kilometre walk from Salmon Beach, he said: "It was great to once again be a part of the Journey to Recognition and to see so many members of the community in Esperance supporting this important movement."

**"Our bloodlines are connected to the oldest continuing cultures on the planet. This remarkable and impressive story should be recognised in our founding document."**

"A successful referendum would be a unifying moment for the nation. We all have a responsibility to get involved and support the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in our Constitution."

The journey through South West WA began a month earlier in Fremantle, when Elders from the Whadjuk Noongar community led locals in the first steps.

Whadjuk Noongar Elder, Cedric Jacobs had these powerful words to share: "I invite you on behalf of our Elders to walk with us, at our pace, in peace and unity, as it will align us with the soul and spirit of our land."

"For after all, this land's resources have been managed in a sustainable way by my ancestors for 50,000 years."

Young Noongar woman, Tiana Cullbong, asked Fremantle to stand with her in supporting the movement: "It is now 2014. A time for change; a time to move forward as a nation united; a time to remove a constitutional silence; a time to recognise Aboriginal people and our history in this country."

And there had been further reinforcement of the cross-party support for recognition, with Labor MP Melissa Parke and Greens

Senators Christine Milne, Rachel Siewert and Scott Ludlam all there to restate their commitment.

Over another 20 days in the nation's south-west, the Journey made its way through tiny towns and regional centres, stopping in Roelands, Bunbury, Margaret River and Denmark.

In Yallingup, Traditional Owner Bill Webb took walkers through his country, sharing the remarkable history, culture and stories of the Wardandi people.

"Preserving our history and knowledge. That's what Aboriginal people are doing," he said.

In Busselton, Josh Whiteland honoured his connection to the Wardandi Bibbulman people, who have walked the South West Cape region and surrounding areas for over 50,000 years. "Our bloodlines are connected to the oldest continuing cultures on the planet. This remarkable and impressive story should be recognised in our founding document. It's about acknowledging the truth. Someone was and still is here," he said.

And in Nannup, Wardandi woman Mitchella Hutchins passed down knowledge about the history of the town and the strong relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. "Thank you fellas for all coming and walking together for a brighter future for all Australians," she said.

These remarkable Australians and so many others have stood with us and pledged their support over the past year. These are the stories that we carry with us across the country; they belong to people who will bring us closer to a successful referendum.

Elders and young people, parents and mayors, community leaders and everyday Australians of every background are helping build the wide public support needed for a strong Yes vote.

And they have told recognition campaigners just why constitutional recognition and the removal of race discrimination matters to them.

The Recognise relay is now preparing to make its way to Cape York and the Torres Strait. Locals will be invited to join the relay at a series of events—and to walk, drive and even ride with it.

In Cape York, Harold Ludwick, a Traditional Owner from the Bulgen Warra group west of Cooktown, said the arrival of the recognition campaigners would be a wonderful opportunity to share information with local communities.

"In the most important document of Australia, the First Australians were denied recognition—but now in the 21st century we are rallying support for the inclusion of Indigenous people in the Constitution," he said.

"This upcoming referendum is crucial to the Indigenous people of Australia and we look forward to welcoming the Recognise mob onto our country."

Torres Strait Regional Authority member and Reconciliation Australia Board director, Kenny Bedford is planning a warm Torres Strait Islander welcome: "The Torres Strait Islands have produced some of our greatest leaders in the quest for equality and recognition. We look very forward to welcoming the Journey to Recognition to our homelands and this chance for our people to be recognised in our nation's Constitution."

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As the journey continues, the movement grows.

Since launching in May last year, small relay teams of Recognise campaigners have visited 130 communities and involved more than 10,500 Australians.

Each meeting brings us closer to the day of referendum. Every Australian has a role to play. This is our chance and our choice to write the next chapter of our story together.

Sign up today at [www.recognise.org](http://www.recognise.org)