

ATTACHMENT B

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LORD MAYOR'S SPEECH

Hello, everyone. On this very significant day I offer the customary recognition of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of this land.

Today, we have reached a turning point in the Australian story.

For the first time as a nation, we have formally acknowledged the wrongs that were done – to the Gadigal people and to the other indigenous nations, the wrongs that were done to their children and children's children.

For the first time as a nation, we have had the courage to acknowledge our past. We have acknowledged the privilege that we have in living in this remarkable country.

And in the words of Lowitja O'Donoghue, we have begun to ask ourselves: "What was the cost of this privilege? And who paid the price?"

Father Ted Kennedy knew the answer to those questions. The nuns who carry on his work in Redfern know it, too. Naomi Mayers and the staff at the Aboriginal Medical Service see the answer every day as they care for the sick, the wounded, and those who die too young from alcohol or drugs.

In our hearts, we know the cost, whether it's in child-abuse and petrol sniffing in remote communities, or drugs and alcoholism and fractured families here on the streets of Redfern.

Parliament House in Canberra is a long way from the streets of Redfern. But the apology that has been made there this morning must resonate here, and not just in our hearts and minds.

It must result in practical actions to ensure that past wrongs are righted, and that indigenous Australians can take their rightful place in Australia in the 21st century. That indigenous Australians are no longer the "fringe-dwellers" but are central to our national life, whether as teachers or doctors or lawyers, as artists or writers, and that every indigenous Australian has the opportunity to fulfill his or her potential.

For in denying these opportunities for too long, white Australia, too, has been the poorer. We have deprived ourselves for generations of the deep knowledge of country, of the wit, the courage, the generosity and resilience of indigenous Australians.

We need to learn from these qualities, and we need more indigenous leaders who can point us to them. So I am pleased that funds from my Lord Mayor's Salary Trust have gone to the Robert Riley Scholarship Program to help indigenous students study law, human rights, child protection, criminology and juvenile justice.

Some years ago, the City of Sydney recognised the importance of Redfern in the story of indigenous Australia, and recognised our own significant indigenous population when I and our CEO Monica Barone signed a Principles of Co-operation agreement with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. These principles recognise the community and its spiritual and cultural ties to the land.

They also commit us to working together to foster reconciliation and to promote Aboriginal history and heritage. It is my hope that within the next few years, Sydney will have a major Aboriginal Cultural Centre to exhibit and teach the story of the world's oldest living culture. A place for black and white Australians, and overseas visitors, to learn more of our shared story.

I'd like to conclude with some lines from a poem by Michael Thwaites, written at the grave of Teresa Clements, who was buried at Cummeragunja [kummer-ah-gun-jeer] in 1959.

You, last of all that knew your tribal tongue,
Sleep now with them in this ancestral ground.
Above your grave the towering, ancient wrong
Speaks in a silence pregnant and profound.

Beside your grave I stand, among your folk
Who loved this land before the white man came,
Burned by the burning words you never spoke,
I ask for forgiveness for my people's shame.

For named and nameless ills your people bore
From us, who killed by bullet, axe and pride.
For our stone blindness; for the day we tore
In kindness' name your children from your side.

What could we answer if your ghost should rise
To curse our children's children from the grave?
You rise – but with redemption in your eyes
Before we knew to ask it, you forgave.

Thank you. I hope we can all celebrate together this first national Reconciliation Day.