

2007

**Black and White together, we shall overcome,
some day**

PRESENTED BY DR LOWITJA O'DONOGHUE AC CBE DSG

Thank you very much.

Acknowledgement of Kurna lands ...

It is a very great honour to be here tonight, in Reconciliation week, to mark with you the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.

I feel humbled that the Don Dunstan Foundation has seen fit to name an annual oration in my name. I am proud to have my name linked with his in this ongoing way. I just hope that I can kick it off with the style and gutsiness Don would approve of.

I know one thing – I'll be much more relaxed during the 2008 Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration, when someone else will be giving it!

I miss Don Dunstan. In so many ways.

I regarded Don as a personal friend and as a great champion of Aboriginal causes. Many of my people knew him well and loved him, as I did.

At his Memorial celebration on 12 February 1999, I said:

Don was man whose life was marked by great achievements, accolades and the holding of high office. Yet he was a man of the people. He had the common touch. And he touched the lives of all South Australians regardless of their race or class.

In both his friendships and his public life Don was unwavering. His vision of a good and just society motivated everything he worked for and determined the way he dealt with people – with respect, gentleness and compassion.

In revisiting those words when preparing for this Oration, it struck me again just how unique he was. No one in the Labor party or in politics today can 'hold a candle' to Don.

His courage and determination, his wit, his dignity and the breadth of his vision, set him apart.

One of the things that distinguished him from other political leaders is that he was a man of honour and acted from principles not from cynicism.

Many of you know of Don's achievements in Aboriginal Affairs while he was Premier. But you may not be aware of his efforts before then.

In the 1950s and early 1960s he worked tirelessly within the Labor Party's federal executive, alongside Gough Whitlam, to remove references to White Australia from the Party's immigration policy.

And, of special relevance to tonight's occasion, he was an active member of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). Don was, in fact, elected as FCAATSI's last non-Aboriginal President in 1960.

FCAATSI was the national lobby group which successfully campaigned for a number of Aboriginal reforms, including the watershed 1967 Referendum which removed discriminatory sections from the Constitution, and which was passed by an overwhelming 90% of the population.

This change empowered the Commonwealth to legislate directly for Aboriginal Australians, with the potential to override state laws, many of which were discriminatory.

It didn't, as is widely thought, give Aboriginal people citizenship rights or the right to vote ... we already had those. But it was, nonetheless, seen by many as a recognition of Aboriginal people as full Australian citizens.

In the early 1960s Don was instrumental in the passing of South Australia's *Aboriginal Affairs Act*, which repealed a number of highly offensive regulations which curtailed the civic liberties of Aboriginal people – including the right to consort with non-Aboriginal people.

In 1965 he authored the *Prohibition of Discrimination Act* which was designed to prohibit all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or country of origin. It applied to things like employment and legal contracts. Its very existence markedly lessened overt discrimination.

In 1966 Don introduced Australia's first Aboriginal Lands Trust and secured title to a large amount of what had previously been Crown Land.

He also set in place separate legislation for a Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Bill, which was finally passed several years after his retirement by the Tonkin government. This legislation gave freehold title to over 100,000 square kilometres of land to the Pitjantjatjara and Yankuntjara peoples.

With his commitment to policies of integration rather than assimilation – and the respect for cultural identity which that entails – Don's legacy to Aboriginal people has been immense.

I remember with great fondness an occasion in 1997, almost exactly ten years ago to this day. It was the Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne where we marked the 30th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.

Even though quite ill, Don made the trip to Melbourne and celebrated joyously with us. His capacity for enjoyment was inspiring.

Don was unstinting in expressing his support for our people. He had fire in his belly ... he wanted to change the world to make it a better place ... and he succeeded.

That fire, that determination, that optimism, is sadly lacking today. But I will return to that theme shortly.

The title of tonight's oration is 'Black and White together, we shall overcome, some day'.

I want to tell you a little about why I have chosen that title and the history of those words.

At Easter 1967 the 10th Annual Conference on Aboriginal Affairs was held in Albert Hall, Canberra. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists – including Don Dunstan – gathered together. We joined hands and sang to the tune of *We Shall Overcome*, these lyrics:

Black and white together
Black and white together
Black and white together some day
Deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

They were sung in both English and a Thursday Island language.

As Sue Taffe writes in her history of FCAATSI – *Black and White together* – this gesture demonstrated:

An inclusiveness of spirit and a hope that they would indeed overcome legislative and social discriminate

The 1967 Canberra Conference was the culmination of a decade-long campaign which had begun in 1958 with the establishment of a Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (later to become FCAATSI) at a meeting in Adelaide's Willard Hall. This was attended by Aboriginal delegates such as Pastor Doug Nicholls and Jeff Barnes and a diverse group of peace activists, feminists, communists and Christians.

In May 1967 this campaign would deliver a massive 90.77% YES vote to amend the Constitution.

The campaign for constitutional reform was remarkable, really. Not only was it sustained over a decade, but it was energetic and creative.

Over 103,000 signatures were collected nationally on petitions at footy grounds and shopping centres and churches.

There was a huge amount of radio, television and newspaper coverage. Every kind of political, social, cultural and sporting organisation was approached to sign the petitions and donate money.

The campaign had the support of churches, Aboriginal organisations, service clubs, women's organisations, sporting clubs, elderly citizens' clubs, schools, unions ... you name it. The campaign succeeded in capturing the public's imagination.

Doug Nicholls used to grab people outside the Collingwood football ground on home matches and lead them to the table to sign the petition.

Can you imagine stopping a one-eyed Collingwood supporter from getting into the ground for his pie and beer?

Maybe it had something to do with the team's black and white colours!

Maybe it also had something to do with Doug Nicholls' enormous popularity and public profile as a former football star himself.

FCAATSI's role was not limited to amending the Constitution, although they did put an enormous effort into this.

But their sights were also on issues such as equal wages and employment opportunities and owning the remaining tribal lands – all things that were seen to be connected with Aboriginal people's inferior legal status compared with other citizens of the Commonwealth.

The constitutional amendments were seen as 'one step' along the road towards the ultimate goal of legal equality.

As Sue Taffe documents so thoroughly in her book, the petition campaign which led ultimately to the Referendum was a broader public education campaign about social justice. To quote Sue:

Perhaps the most important immediate effect of the petition campaign was the publicity it gave to both Aboriginal disadvantage and government failure to rectify it.

It is important tonight to recognise this anniversary of FCAATSI and the 1967 Referendum. It is important to celebrate that it was a wonderful example of black and white working together.

There were people like Gordon Bryant, the Victorian Labor MP and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Don Dunstan, working alongside Aboriginal people like Joe McGinness,

Winnie Branson and Kath Walker. It was a genuine example of reconciliation in action. And there was a groundswell of popular support for the reforms.

But we shouldn't get too carried away with the warm fuzzy feeling that celebrating anniversaries can bring.

I hate to be a party pooper. But I think we do need to ask the hard questions of:

- With the exception of the *Mabo* legislation how often has the Commonwealth ever used its constitutional powers to override state laws to benefit Aboriginal people?
- To what extent has Aboriginal disadvantage been redressed?
- To what extent has there been any kind of genuine reconciliation in Australia?
- Is the Australian public still concerned about Aboriginal issues?
- Do either of the major political parties see Aboriginal issues as worthy of a high profile in their election campaigns?

And a hard one for us all here tonight, both me and you:

- How can we change hearts and minds on these issues, and not just stay in the comfort zone of talking to the converted?
- This is a tough question I know, because it goes to the heart of what we do with our ideals. It goes to the heart of how we live our politics and our ethics in our daily lives.
- Please don't get me wrong on this. I'm not trying to promote guilt. I see guilt as a very destructive emotion. But so is its converse – complacency.

I was intrigued to read last week in *The Australian* that the History Teachers' Association of NSW has called for a rethink of how history is being taught in schools because 'High school students resent being made to feel guilty during their study of Australia's Indigenous past'.

Their executive officer was quoted as saying: 'They don't like the Indigenous part of history ... the feedback I get is that they're not prepared to wear the guilt.'

Well, I have a couple of thoughts about this. I have many, actually, but I'll confine myself to just a few.

Firstly, I think the history of Aboriginal/white relations in Australia can be taught accurately without promoting guilt.

By all means promote sorrow, empathy, sympathy, outrage ... but not guilt. Today's students should not feel guilt about what happened 200 years ago, and neither should you.

Our Prime Minister, Mr Howard, introduced the guilt trip when he talked of the 'black armband view' of history.

And of course, he did this quite deliberately to distract attention from the real issues – the failure of his government to take any meaningful measures to redress the appalling legacy of the white invasion of this country, and the need for a formal government apology.

Trudy Bray, a wonderful woman whose work convening an email list called 'Recoznet' typifies the spirit of Reconciliation, summed up the guilt diversionary tactics beautifully, when she wrote last week:

Guilt **discourages** understanding, empathy and wanting to change things. Guilt **encourages** justification, defensiveness and can lead to hatred. If the teaching of history induces guilt then the method is wrong.

So, no, I'm not here to promote guilt.

But, just a few days after the 10th Anniversary of Sorry Day, I do think it is appropriate to promote sorrow and empathy.

And if the Prime Minister were here tonight (heaven forbid!) I wouldn't mind promoting a bit of guilt in him about his failure to ever say 'Sorry'. But that's another story.

It is easy to look back on the heady days of FCAATSI and the Referendum and to focus on what was achieved.

It is easy to hear those lyrics – *Deep in my heart/ I do believe/we shall overcome some day* – and get all misty-eyed.

But I don't think I can any longer say that 'deep in my heart I *do* believe'. Yes, I'll sing along, but it will be with a heavy heart and a deep sense of doubt.

Because, despite all the euphoria of the constitutional change, it is sadly the case that these powers have *not* been used to benefit Aboriginal people.

In fact, in South Australia during the Hindmarsh Island struggle, it looked for a while as if the Commonwealth might use its powers to override state legislation – not for the benefit of Aboriginal people, but to *undermine* Aboriginal people's rights.

There have been other relevant examples.

In the year 2000 there was the famous case of Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner, in the Northern Territory, claiming that they were taken *illegally* from their families, and seeking damages.

The Federal Court sitting in Darwin accepted the truth of their evidence, and Justice O'Loughlin was clearly moved and distressed by their stories.

He accepted the abuse they had suffered at the hands of the white institutions in whose care they were placed.

He accepted the evidence that as the children were taken; the mothers howled and beat their heads with sticks, until blood was drawn.

He regarded it as certain that these children were removed without consent. And that the lives of everyone involved were devastated by these events. He acknowledged the existence of the stolen generation. Nevertheless, their case was lost.

The dismissal of both claims was a big disappointment for the 700 claimants who had filed similar cases and for the Aboriginal community in general.

It constituted yet another setback in the important process of Aboriginal reconciliation and healing.

Justice O'Loughlin's judgement overlooked the fact that these children (and thousands of others like them, including myself) were taken, not because we were in need of care and protection – but rather, to attempt to turn us into white people.

I'm telling you these stories to make the point that the Constitution may have been changed 40 years ago to enable the Commonwealth to legislate for greater Aboriginal rights, but this does not mean that the law, as it is practised, delivers justice.

In the Cubillo and Gunner case the Commonwealth government, in fact, spent millions on lawyers and private detectives to ensure that justice was not delivered.

I believe that the healing process for the people removed from their families will not begin until the Federal Government establishes a formal procedure for acknowledging the injustices of past assimilation practices.

This means implementing the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* Report – a report which was tabled in Parliament ten years ago.

Of the 54 recommendations of this 1997 report of the National Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, 35 have been ignored. That's 65%. That is not good enough.

The bulk of Federal funds have gone to 'Link Up' family reunion services and counselling (both excellent services, by the way.)

But the Government's response was directed essentially to 17 recommendations – mainly those dealing with rehabilitation, mental health and family reunion, with a few small gestures towards records, storytelling and languages.

And the funds that were allocated to these 17 recommendations were grossly inadequate to meet the need.

One of the hard questions I posed earlier was 'to what extent has Aboriginal disadvantage been redressed?'

To use an Australian vernacular expression I think the answer is: 'Bugger all!'

Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged group within Australia in terms of basic rights like adequate housing, good health, and employment opportunities. Let me give you some examples:

Aboriginal people are still dying seventeen years younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Far too many suffer illness and death from completely preventable diseases.

Just last week the AMA's annual Indigenous Health Report Card said that this 17-year discrepancy exists because of institutionalised racism, and that Indigenous Australians face both financial and cultural barriers to getting adequate health care. The AMA president said that \$460 million a year is needed to improve basic GP and health services to even the odds. The Report Card gave Indigenous health a grade of 'at the very best a D minus, but probably an E.'

- We still have a situation where our children are dying as babies at the same rate as in developing countries.
- Most Aboriginal people live below the poverty line.
- Many are struggling with the symptoms of despair, such as substance misuse, violence, and high levels of self-harming behaviour – including suicide.

If we look at education, Indigenous Australians:

- are well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills
- leave school much younger. For instance only about 32% are remaining at school to Year 12. This figure is less than half that of non-Indigenous students.
- are likely to be absent from school two to three times as often as non-Indigenous students
- obtain fewer educational qualifications
- earn less income
- experience a much higher rate of unemployment than their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- there are fewer Aboriginal people at university now than there were five years ago.
- 60% of Australian youth in care or custody or other forms of detention are Aboriginal.
- 21% of adult male prisoners and 80% of female prisoners are Aboriginal. Over 6% of all Indigenous males aged 25-29 years were in prison at 30 June 2004.ⁱ This compares with less than 1% of **all** males in this age group in the general population.

This in a society where we make up only 2% of the population!

And, of course, these problems are all linked, and their effects are compounding.

You cannot be healthy without adequate housing. You cannot gain employment without education ... and so on.

You cannot take a meaningful part in society unless you are connected to its resources, decisions, services and structures.

The reasons for this systematic disadvantage are complex, and connected to a whole history of dispossession and subsequent life on the margins of society.

It seems obvious doesn't it, that if you:

- destroy a people's way of life
- take away their children
- dislocate communities
- take away lands
- fracture connections, values and traditions ...

and then treat people as less than human in terms of dignity and respect ... then of course, you will have mental, physical and social health problems and all the other things that flow from these. It is a perfect recipe to create an outcome of despair and dysfunction.

There are no quick fixes for these patterns of inequity.

But it is obvious that it is time for some genuine bipartisan commitment to job creation, education, and improved housing and health for Aboriginal people.

It is these fundamental systemic issues that need to be addressed. And of course it is not simple. But neither is it rocket science!

It requires a re-allocation of resources and a greater commitment of resources to Aboriginal disadvantage ... not tokenism or drip-feeding which is set up to fail.

Do you realise the Government has budgeted for \$123 million on its very silly and totally unnecessary citizenship test which is supposed to test Australian values (whatever they are)?

Compare that with \$135 million over four years on Aboriginal health.

What is more important I ask you?

I know the citizenship test is supposed to be a failsafe method of screening out potential terrorists and creating cohesion and integration in the community.

But when you look at examples of some of the questions that will apparently be included, it is a joke surely! Isn't it?

One question is:

Which is a popular sport in Australia?

- a. Ice hockey
- b. Water polo
- c. Cricket
- d. Table tennis

And the answer is, of course? I don't need to tell you ... it is John Howard's favourite sport.

If I were 60 years younger, I think I'd say 'Well ... duh!'

Another one is:

Which of the following are Australian values?

- a. Men and women are equal
- b. A fair go

- c. Mateship
- d. All of the above

Well, as an Aboriginal woman who was sent into domestic service at the age of 16, I think I might be tempted to answer, that from my own experience the answer is:

- e) None of the above!

With a government wasting its time and resources in setting up such ridiculous hoops to jump through, it seems to me that we're going backwards to the days of the White Australia policy.

Just imagine if Aboriginal people had had a test like this 200 years ago! None of those crims from England would have been allowed in! We could have said 'No boat people allowed! We are protecting our borders from terrorists!'

I reckon Australia should clean up its own act, and sort out some of its own values about equality and basic human rights and a fair go for all, before asking others to prove that they're worthy to come here and become citizens.

Have you also noticed that while John Howard is very happy to claim the heroes of the past as his own, he is totally unwilling to accept that any of the wrongs of the past are anything to do with him?

One challenge that we are presented with as a community of existing and concerned citizens, is how to change popular attitudes about the circumstances of Aboriginal people.

This matters for two clear reasons. One is that governments are not leading the people on issues of ethics, rights or justice – and so this work has to be taken up by others.

The second is that governments respond to (and *only* to) what they think will win votes. Therefore, the voices of people who care about Australia's record in the human rights arena must be heard more broadly and more forcefully.

The Prime Minister either doesn't 'get it' or he doesn't care, and I am not sure which is worse.

What I *do* know is that:

- There has been a failure of moral authority and ethical leadership in Australia over the last ten years.
- This country is in a position to be a world leader in human rights and social justice. Instead, it is, as Aboriginal people would say, 'a shame job'.

- When initiatives are taken, they are too small and mean-spirited to bring about significant and long-term change.
- And, most importantly, the colonial attitudes of two hundred years ago are still alive and well in the corridors of power today.

We know that popular opinion can be formed by the information that is presented in the media, regardless of the facts of an issue.

And this is certainly evident in Aboriginal affairs.

Since 1990, News polls have been canvassing public opinion about spending on Aboriginal welfare.

They have consistently revealed a steady majority of respondents who say that the Government has gone 'too far' or 'much too far'.

Fewer than one in five people have answered 'not far enough' or 'not nearly far enough'.ⁱⁱ

Yet, on a per head of population basis, spending on Aboriginal people in Australia is far less than on other citizens.

The whole issue of how public opinion is formed, and the various media and public relations tactics that are employed, is too complicated for the time we have tonight.

But, it is interesting to note that many of the ultra-conservative and simplistic sound bites of Pauline Hanson have been adopted by the current Federal Government.

And (in so far as people are interested at all) these are ideas that carry popular support.

You may remember that one of Pauline's views, that attracted early support for her Party, was that Aboriginal people were getting it too easy. In her maiden speech she said:

We now have a situation where a type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded 'industries' that flourish in our society, servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups.

I can't quite believe I'm quoting Pauline Hanson! But I have an ulterior motive! And that is, that John Howard has taken Pauline's theme and elaborated on it.

He has rejected the idea of a human rights-based approach to social justice. In fact, he has been named in various United Nations Committees for his failure to meet human rights obligations to which Australia is a signatory. Instead, he has adopted the rhetoric of 'practical reconciliation'. And he has abandoned the idea of Aboriginal services, in favour of 'mainstreaming'.

And I'd like to talk now about some of the implications of both of these positions.

Mainstreaming is a position that says that all government departments should take into account and address the needs of Aboriginal people, rather than having designated services for Aboriginal needs.

Now, I would never claim that ATSIC was without problems – or without some problem people. But disbanding it in favour of mainstreaming has meant that many experienced staff of the former organisation have become lost within public service bureaucracies.

The new workplace environments they are located in, are not likely to be attuned to the debates and issues that built up over the years within ATSIC. And ex-ATSIC staff may well find the 'rules of engagement' required in government departments, to be incomprehensible.

In this way, the stock of knowledge built up over the years in ATSIC has become diluted, if not flushed down the drain entirely.

Aboriginal people are less likely to use mainstream services because of the way that they are often made to feel within them.

Like many disenfranchised groups, Aboriginal people often say that dealing with people's attitudes towards them, is more difficult than dealing with the problems that they would like to have fixed.

It is for this reason that they may not attend medical and welfare appointments – even though they have great need for assistance.

And, perhaps of even greater significance on the world stage, Aboriginal Australians no longer have an official base from which they can contribute and participate internationally about Indigenous issues.

Spending within the mainstreaming arrangements is also problematic. Aboriginal funding is often subject to shared responsibility arrangements.

Now, I am all for shared responsibility and mutual negotiation. But for this to be effective, it must involve dialogue and adequate resources – human and financial – on the ground, to work with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people need to have the major say in defining the problems that they face and the solutions that are required to address them:

- It will *not* work to simply have the occasional consultation with government hand-picked representatives.
- It will *not* work to introduce specific programs that are one-off and not sustainable.

- It will *not* bring fundamental change to offer bribes, such as a swimming pool for school attendance or a petrol bowser in return for children's faces being washed.

What is required is an approach that is prepared to tackle the problems at a systemic level. An approach that will deal with setting up workable infrastructures, so that Aboriginal people can have equitable access to housing, employment, education and services.

All of the things that are necessary for survival. All of the things that non-Aboriginal people take for granted.

Shared responsibility sounds good in that 'sound bite' way – but it is not as easy as that.

Firstly, the power is not shared. And secondly, there is not an equal responsibility imposed upon non-Aboriginal people to undertake questionable promises before they receive certain services.

Can you imagine the response in the wider Australian community if it were announced that in a shared responsibility agreement, citizens would no longer receive health services if they were overweight, or consumed too much alcohol, or that they could not receive dental services unless they had abstained from eating anything sweet?

One response to these questions of Aboriginal health and wellbeing is to say that the problems are so bad that anything that helps is a good thing. And I suppose that is difficult to argue against.

But my call is that we take a courageous step to *seriously* address the future of Aboriginal Australians – rather than tinkering around the edges. This is the challenge for Australia in the 21st century.

If the Federal Government is serious about practical reconciliation, it has to invest enough to achieve comparable outcomes for Aboriginal people as for their non-Indigenous counterparts.

And so far, this is nowhere near the case:

- We need to stop vulnerable people falling through the great divide between State and Commonwealth responsibility.
- We need to stop using the excuse of self-determination to allow people to self-destruct.
- And we need to explode the myth that achievement and success is the choice of individuals to make.

No-one can succeed if they are not given the basic building blocks to work with.

And this brings me to the question of what people of good heart – people like yourselves as you have made the effort to come out on this chilly night – can actually *do* to make a difference.

I do not pretend to have magic answers, but I have thought hard and observed closely the sorts of things that seem to have a positive effect.

So I have developed my own 10-point plan. And I would like to offer it to you for your consideration and further thinking.

Ten is an arbitrary number. It could have been 7 or 20. But there are some good precedents for the number 10, I'm sure you'll agree!

Number 1.

Accept personal responsibility for change – no matter how small. Don't assume that someone else will do it. Don't be complacent. Even small things like refusing to laugh at a racist joke can make a difference. And don't be daunted by the size of the problem. As Margaret Mead once said: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

Number 2.

Reflect on your own behaviour. Reflect on the cultural practices or beliefs that you find confronting or difficult. It is healthy to talk about these issues, rather than blaming people for behaviour you don't like – or blaming yourself for not being more tolerant.

Number 3.

Identify what you have got to give. When I think of different groups of people whom I have worked with in Australia, they encompass police officers, health workers of all kinds, educators, lawyers, retired people, students, and many community groups too numerous to mention. You all have something different to offer.

Number 4.

Act in your own context. For example, ask whether your school or workplace or community group has a code of values and ethics. If not, perhaps you could get together a team of people to devise one. Once people have discussed desirable ways to treat one another in their context, it is a short step to raising human rights more broadly.

Number 5.

Collaborate. There is strength in partnerships and strategic alliances. Don't allow 'divide and rule' strategies to undermine you. By the way, collaboration may mean having some strange bedfellows at times! You'll sometimes be surprised at who may be on side.

Number 6.

Join. Network – Lobby – Advocate

Refuse to slip into apathy or cynicism. Enjoy life of course, but also act in ways that are motivated by that idea of the common good. And importantly – notice when you haven't.

Number 7.

Treat everyone with respect. It might sound like a cliché, I know. But respect is so important. More so than compassion or sympathy, because respect is based on familiarity and understanding. If we only take the time to get to know people, we can avoid the limitations of stereotyping and labelling. And respect ensures that people retain their dignity.

Number 8.

Be inclusive. Notice and then analyse the various contacts and communications in your daily life. For example, at work or in your community, are there some people who only feature on the sidelines? Do they feel included? Do their views matter? Once you have a good relationship with people, it becomes easier to talk to them about issues that are important.

Number 9.

Maintain your passion. Also maintain your hope, your optimism and, wherever possible, your sense of humour, because you'll need it at times.

Number 10.

And finally, **celebrate your successes.** Not only does this make you feel good but it also energises you for more work.

Finally, I would like to say that no country is better positioned than Australia to take a leading role on the human rights agenda. As citizens and voters I would urge all of you to insist that our political leaders take on this commitment.

It is time for us as a nation to face up to the history of this country. As we sang 40 years ago: 'The truth will make us free!'

It is time, it is right and it is necessary, if we are to be genuinely proud Australians in a global context.

Thank you

i Australian Bureau Statistics, 2004, *Prisoners in Australia*, catalogue no. 4517.0

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/8d5807d8074a7a5bca256a6800811054?OpenDocument>

ii Tim Rowse, *The Politics of being practical: Howard and his quiet revolution in Indigenous affairs*, The Brisbane Institute 2005.