



November 2008

Reconciliation at Melbourne Girls Grammar – Merton Hall

A summary of the Reconciliation highlights in 2008:

Reconciliation Week

Reconciliation Week 2008 gave both the students and staff of MGGS the opportunity to recognise and celebrate not only the rich cultures of Indigenous Australia but also the development of positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals and communities alike.

Some of the highlights included:

- The Middle and Senior School Chapel Services, in which our three Indigenous Scholars shared with their peers their thoughts on the importance of home, country and family. Additionally, the students who were selected to participate in the 2008 MGGS Indigenous Cultural Exchange Program (Garma Trip) invited the student body to consider the variety of ways in which the notion of *Reconciliation* can be interpreted and represented in the visual form.
- The lunchtime art address by Alison Kelly from the *Alison Kelly Contemporary Indigenous Art Gallery*.
- The Reconciliation Forum, which offered students and staff the opportunity to engage with seven inspiring Indigenous women from a variety of backgrounds. The women's honesty, passion and integrity ensured that those who attended this Forum will remember the event for years to come.
- The Year 10 English Forum, in which students were fortunate to have a panel session with these seven women in which they shared their personal ancestral road memories and talked on the theme of identity.

The week closed with a message that Reconciliation is not something on which we should only focus for one week but rather, it is a process which must be in our hearts and minds every day, This an ideology that the MGGS Reconciliation Committee is committed to encouraging our staff and students to embrace.

All students are welcome to join this committee and help in the preparation of Reconciliation Week in 2009 and other Reconciliation events that will take place throughout the year.

The Melbourne Girls Grammar Indigenous Student Scholarship Program

Melbourne Girls Grammar continues to demonstrate its commitment to improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students by offering places to Indigenous students from both remote areas of Australia and the greater Melbourne area. *For more information on the Indigenous Scholarship Program, please contact the Indigenous Student Scholarship Co-ordinator, Kellie Lyneham on 9862 9200 or via email: kellie.lyneham@mggs.vic.edu.au*

Indigenous Cultural Exchange

On Monday 4 August 2008, eight students departed for a ten day trip to the Northern Territory. Their destination was a remote Indigenous School in Yirrkala and the Garma Festival of Indigenous Culture. In the months leading up to the exchange, MGGS students created photographic, written and personal reflection projects for Yirrkala School and Reconciliation Australia.

Some of the highlights of the visit to Yirrkala School included:

- The reading and writing projects which involved MGGS students engaging with the Yolgnu Matha language and assisting local students with their reading and writing in English.
- The preparations for Yirrkala School's Open Day - collecting branches, stripping the bark and attaching feathers to make objects for the ceremonial dancing (bungul).
- Collaborative Art Projects – MGGS and Yirrkala students created two artworks. The imagery on the artworks includes school logos, poetry, Yolgnu words, and traditional cross-hatch patterning as seen in the artworks in North-East Arnhem Land.

A preview of Reconciliation events planned for 2009:

Term 1 2009

Launch of Melbourne Girls Grammar Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

*A RAP is a simple plan of activities based on building good relationships; respecting the special contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australia; and, working together to ensure Indigenous children have the same life opportunities as other children in this prosperous country. (Date: tbc)

Dare to Lead Professional Development Day – 12 March 2009 (9.30am -4.00pm)

Key presenters from Dare to Lead, Reconciliation Australia and Melbourne Girls Grammar, and a Cultural and historical lunchtime event in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

* Melbourne Girls Grammar is a member school of Dare to Lead which is an initiative of the Principals Association in Australia, focussing on accelerating the improvement of educational outcomes for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students, and supporting the goals of reconciliation for all Australian students.

Logo design competition

Students will be invited to create a logo to represent Melbourne Girls Grammar's ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

Term 2 2009

Community Education Evening

A screening of the film, *Kanyini* and the launch of Melbourne Girls Grammar's involvement with the project, *Yarnup* (Date tbc).

Reconciliation Week

Monday 25 May – Friday 29 May - Indigenous *welcome to country*, Women's Forum (the presenters will be drawn from a range of professional backgrounds), key presenters at school assembly, student presentations, Indigenous performers, and art activities.

Indigenous Artist in Residence

A visiting indigenous artist will work with students on the creation of visual art forms (Date: tbc).

Term 3 2009

Indigenous Cultural Exchange

Monday 3 – Wednesday 12 August - a group of students from the Merton Hall Middle School will participate in a school in Yirrkala and attend the Garma festival of traditional culture in North-East Arnhem Land.