



Speech by

**MIKE REYNOLDS**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Hansard 26 August 1998

**AUSTRALIANS FOR RECONCILIATION**

**Mr REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (10.15 a.m.): I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the very solid work being done by Australians for Reconciliation. As a member of the State Reconciliation Committee for the past two years, I have often wondered why this work—aimed at improving relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people—gets only moderate media coverage. I assume it is because conflict, not reconciliation, is of primary news value.

I was thus gratified to see the Daily Mercury in Mackay give plenty of space to the first Queensland-based reconciliation conference held there last weekend. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the support provided by the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, who was successful in gaining a \$20,000 grant for this conference from the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development. It is only through public acknowledgment of the importance of such occasions that respect for cultural differences becomes the collective norm.

For the record, our concept of race as a category of knowledge originated in the early days of European imperialism when colonisers had to come up with a means of ordering humanity which provided moral justification for their actions. It is time we set aside this outdated, socially constructed system of categorisation and rediscovered our commonalities. Reconciliation is the very process by which this can be achieved. This is why the work of the Queensland Reconciliation Committee is historically significant and deserves the full support of this Parliament.

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