

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Power of Identity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda will visit Tasmania this week to discuss how recognition and understanding of Indigenous Australian identity could be a powerful tool in achieving reconciliation.

Mr Gooda of the Australian Human Rights Commission is a descendent of the Gangulu people of central Queensland. He is a senior executive with 25 years experience and a record of leading multi-million dollar service programs and organisational reform. He will deliver the James Martineau Memorial Lectures in Hobart and Burnie on the topic - 'The Power of Identity: Naming Oneself, Reclaiming Community'.

Recently Mr Gooda has been pushing for the formal recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Australian Constitution.

"The Australian Constitution has been referred to as 'our nation's birth certificate' and as 'defining our legal universe'," Mr Gooda said.

"While this is the case for modern Australia, the Constitution fails to recognise that Australia is home to the oldest living cultures in the world and this is something that each and every Australian should be proud of. And be proud to assert as part of *the Australian* national identity."

Mr Gooda said greater self-determination and understanding of identity was extremely important for Indigenous Australians, who have the oldest continuing culture in human history.

"The ability to shape one's own identity is a powerful act - and a powerful factor in self-determination," Mr Gooda said.

"Quite simply, identity goes to the heart of being human. Its loss - when families are separated, when heritage is negated - is a denial of our human rights."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still have lower life expectancy and educational and health outcomes than other Australians.

The lectures are sponsored by the Inglis Clark Centre for Civil Society in the School of Philosophy. Director Dr Natasha Cica said she was delighted Commissioner Gooda would speak on this topic.

“These lectures aim to inspire debate on moral philosophy and the philosophy of religion. Academics and the general public alike still tend to overlook the distinctive contribution made by Indigenous Australians to these questions.”

The first lecture by Mr Gooda will be held at 6pm on Wednesday 2 November in the Stanley Burbury Theatre, University Centre, Churchill Avenue, Sandy Bay campus.

The second lecture is at 6pm on Thursday 3 November in Room D201-203, Cradle Coast campus, 16-20 Mooreville Road, Burnie.

To arrange an interview with Mr Gooda please contact the Media Office on 6226 7489.

Information Released by:

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