

# The 1997 Blackburn Oration

Lois O'Donoghue recently delivered the tenth Blackburn Oration to a record audience. Her message: Australia's reconciliation with its Aborigines is in turmoil due to the federal government's unwillingness to accommodate the past with a plan of action for the future.

Ms O'Donoghue's speech, which drew on the words of Australians from all sides of the political and social spectrum, echoes the many voices that have spoken out over the disadvantaged position of Aborigines in Australian society. She says that the debate is at a powerful crossroads, with the Wik Decision, the Native Title Act and the Indigenous Land Fund currently being debated.

While there is some hope for these policies to bring about reconciliation, Ms O'Donoghue believes that federalism, minority groups and the misinterpretation of many potentially helpful policies might bring all good intentions to a halt.

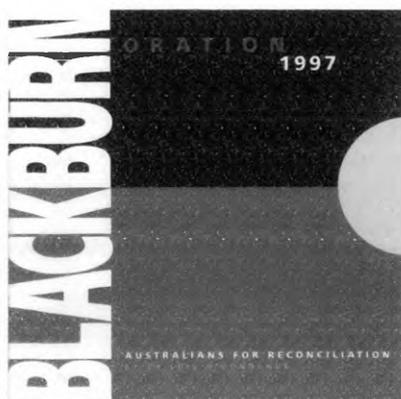
Federalism, she states, shifts direct responsibility for essential services onto Aboriginal communities — even those services most non-Aboriginal Australians take for granted as government-controlled and guaranteed. Decisions such as Wik have 'caused uncertainty in pastoral areas, but this uncer-

tainty seems not to be based on any rational assessment of what the judgement actually [says]'. Ms O'Donoghue also says that amongst all this confusion, the One Nationers '[i]n their most paranoid scenarios ... paint a picture of total subjugation of Australia by aliens, of white citizens being reduced to fringe-dwellers in their own country.'

Ms O'Donoghue argues against these political and social forces while still finding chances for reconciliation in all debates, discussions and decisions. She says, 'there are essentially five steps to reconciliation. They are: understanding and ac-

cepting the history of our shared experience between indigenous peoples and the wider community; respecting indigenous cultures and identity; recognising that past injustice continues to give rise to present injustices for indigenous Australians; identifying what more needs to be done and making changes within Australian society; and revaluing our citizenship to live together in unity and harmony.'

In conclusion Ms O'Donoghue upholds the hope of the Reconciliation Council's vision of: 'a united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.'



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Adelaide (off Grenfell Street). 7:45 for 8am, \$15 (pay on the day). Buffet style continental breakfast plus bacon and eggs. Contact: Ros Emms, ph 08 8205 0172, rosemms@ozemail.com.au or Claire Aitken, ph 08 8303 8859, clarea@cobweb.com.au. RSVP 19/11.

## TAS

• **7/11 Tas Northern Areas Regional group.** *Libraries for the future.* Launceston Library, Phil Leonard Room, 10:30–2:30pm. \$10 ALIA/ACLIS members, \$15 non-members. Contact: Mr Andrew Parsons, ph 03 6335 4738, fx 03 6335 4821, a.parsons@corp.amc.edu.au. *Please quote membership number.*

• **12/11–9/12 Tas Branch meetings dates.** State Library, Morris Miller Room, 91 Murray Street, Hobart, 4:30pm. (12/11; 9/12). Contact: Patsy Jones, ph 03 6233 7049, fx 03 6233 7845, Patsy.Jones@central.tased.edu.au.

• **25/11 Tas Special Libraries section.** *Final meeting and AGM.* Report on conference, National committee AGM and election of office bearers Hobart Town Hall, Lady Osborne Room, 11.30–2pm (lunch provided). Contact: Jill McBride, ph 03 6233 6418, fx 03 6224 0884.

## VIC

• **10/11–8/12 Vic Special Libraries section committee meetings.** Venue to be advised, 5:30pm. (10/11; 8/12). For further information contact: Anne Sedgley, ph 03 9616 8011

• **12/11 Ballarat Province Regional group.** *AGM and dinner.* Guest speaker: *Professor Philip Candy on Information literacy needs in the workplace.* Red Lion Hotel, 221 Main Road, Ballarat. 6:30pm, \$20 ALIA members, \$25 non-members. Contact: Rose Counsel, ph 03 5327 9761, fx 03 5327 9595, r.counsel@ballarat.edu.au.

**12/11 Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars** Introductory DIALOG (12/11). Melbourne contact: 02 9212 2867, kinfo.aus@uts.edu.au.

• **12/11–10/12 Vic Branch Council meetings dates** State Library of Victoria, 4th floor seminar room, La Trobe Wing, (en-

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