

A Shared Journey to Reconciliation

Mark Waters, then State Manager Reconciliation SA, gave the following presentation to the Friends' Council in December 2018.

“**W**hen reading Terry Lavender's book on the making of the Heysen Trail, I was struck by the context of that time. Around 1982, the sensitive negotiations with landholders helped to forge the trail to what it is today. At that time, negotiations with native titleholders and Traditional Owners would not have been even thought of as appropriate and necessary. So we have come a long way in our thinking over 26 years.

- looking to inform, understand, acknowledge and respect culture;
- seeking opportunities to practically demonstrate what has been learned.

Reconciliation SA on its website describes the process of reconciliation as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
Continued next page ...

Indigenous Language Groups along the Heysen Trail



In the middle of 2017, I presented at a Regional Forum in Port Pirie. Afterwards I was chatting to a local farmer who said that the Heysen Trail was on her land – around where you head south and drop off the scarp into Georgetown. She said that she had often thought about what could be done to put in relevant information markers to signify the language group whose land the trail was crossing. She is an Aboriginal woman from Queensland and, therefore, keen to pay appropriate respect.

As End-to-End 8 progressed through SA, some walkers asked about whose land we were on. Anne Kirk was particularly passionate about researching this and followed up by buying a

South Australian Aboriginal languages map that shows the 39 identified Aboriginal groups in SA.

This got to the point where Acknowledgements to Country were performed before we headed into Wilpena Pound (Anne Kirk, June 2018) and along Aroona Valley (Geoff Kay, August 2018). The June date also coincided with my article about the Kokoda Track Reconciliation Trek (*Trailwalker Winter 2018*) that highlighted the importance of understanding walking on country.

Reconciliation can be seen to have three main foci:

- building relationships with local people;

Friends of the Heysen Trail and Reconciliation

Since Mark's presentation in December, Council has introduced plans to bring recognition and respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Heysen Trail passes. These initiatives are still being discussed with Aboriginal Elders, Reconciliation SA and the Department of Environment & Water (DEW).

In her President's Report of the last issue of *Trailwalker* (Autumn 2019), Melanie Sjoberg introduced draft wording for an Acknowledgement to Country which End-to-End groups can use as they traverse Aboriginal country on the trail. That Acknowledgement, while still under discussion with Traditional Owners/Native Title Holders, is reproduced on the next page.

The Friends also have formed a Reconciliation Committee whose members will meet with Aboriginal stakeholders, Reconciliation SA and DEW to discuss opportunities for sharing stories along the Heysen Trail.

The theme for this year's National Reconciliation Week (31May-3June) was *Grounded in Truth – Walk Together in Courage*. This theme has resonance for the Friends and all users of the Heysen Trail.

For information on the work of Reconciliation SA visit their website www.reconciliationsa.org.au or contact Ms Shona Reid, Executive Director, on 0497 162 447 or email sreid@reconciliationsa.org.au

Aboriginal Australia Wall Map, courtesy D R Horton, Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS 1996 (Reproduced from Simon Cameron's *Heysen Highlights* p.9)
NB. The Friends of the Heysen Trail are embarking on a series of consultations with Traditional Owners along the trail to confirm the veracity of this map.



Reconciliation (Cont.)

people walking, talking and working together to make a fairer Australia. The healing process starts with understanding.

In writing to Council in September 2018 some suggestions were given as possible further action:

- Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country at agreed points on the Heysen Trail. For example, options could include at the beginning of each year or as each End-to-End group transitions from one country to another.
- Information signage that signifies transitions from one country to another.
- Other significant sites explained, for example, the significance of Wilpena Pound or the massacre sites in the Aroona Valley.
- Elders as part of paid cultural tourism to hold information sessions when weekends or week-long hikes are involved.
- Stories told in the *Trailwalker* about Aboriginal Culture.

So the challenge is for the Friends to open up conversations with the Ramindjeri within the Ngarrindjeri nation, Kurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, Nukunu, Barngarla and Adnyamathanha. I can put you in touch with key Elders from a number of those communities so that you can start discussing how the cultural significance of the land that the Heysen Trail traverses can be recognised.

And it is important to recognise that as well as being positive

So the challenge is for the Friends to open up conversations with the Ramindjeri within the Ngarrindjeri nation, Kurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, Nukunu, Barngarla and Adnyamathanha.

and celebratory conversations, there might need to be hard conversations too; that is, if the trail went somewhere that it shouldn't have been routed, or if there were particular aspects where an area might be only relevant for men's business or women's business.

We are all learners in this space. My advice to you is to hasten slowly. Let's go together on a journey of discovery. We may not know where we will end up, but it will be worth it in the long run.”

The following wording has been suggested by the Reconciliation Committee to be used by Friends of the Heysen Trail walk leaders:

“We acknowledge the Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the beautiful land that we are walking on today. We appreciate their continuous spiritual connection to this country over thousands of years & we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.”

Friends' Reconciliation Committee

The Friends' Council endorsed the establishment of a committee to work on Indigenous Reconciliation matters that relate to the Heysen Trail on its 1200km journey through South Australia. There has been a preliminary meeting of some interested Friends to begin discussions, including:

- wording of an Acknowledgement of Country for walking groups;
- begin dialogue with appropriate Aboriginal people, Elders, Reconciliation SA, the Department of Environment & Water (DEW) and other stakeholders, including landowners and councils;
- explore the definitions of Aboriginal countries and language groups, which are traversed on the Heysen Trail;
- identifying historical places of indigenous significance along the trail.

These and other issues will be a continuing and ongoing focus for this committee.

Present committee members are Melanie Sjoberg (FoHT President), Anne Kirk, Simon Cameron and Philip Bell. If you have an interest in reconciliation and would like to join the committee contact the Friends' office on 8212 6299.



Hanson Bay
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

7797 South Coast Road KARATTA
P: 08 8559 7344
E: stay@hansonbay.com.au
www.hansonbay.com.au

 

CHECK OUT OUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



HANSON BAY CABINS

Hanson Bay Cabins overlook the pristine beach and sparkling waters of Hanson Bay and are located on the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail.

WE CATER TO TRAIL WALKERS OFFERING ACCOMMODATION, CATERING, TRANSFERS, NOCTURNAL TOURS

OR TAKE OUR FULLY GUIDED 4 DAY WALKING AND WILDLIFE TOUR

VISITOR CENTRE AND CAFE

Located on South Coast Road and 20 minutes from Remarkable Rocks and close to all the wilderness attractions

Opening Hours

Spring / Summer 8am to 6pm
Autumn / Winter 9am to 5pm

