



National Council of
Churches in Australia
NATSIEC



"Redfern Riots" - Call for Reflection, March 2004

We, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia, call for a period of reflection in the wake of the tragic death of 17-year-old Thomas 'TJ' Hickey and the subsequent riots in Redfern. Although the passage of time may not have lessened the pain of those affected by the situation, it gives the wider church community a chance to revisit attitudes and responses to Indigenous people; to seek insight and a way forward.

In addition to the immediate causes of the riots, these events have raised deeper issues that need to be identified, recognised and resolved. It is regrettable that the death of 'TJ' had to occur before issues of reconciliation were brought again to the wider community's conscience. Those of us who are part of the wider community must try not to pre-judge any inquiries into these events. Let our contributions be constructive ones.

In our sadness and concern, we must find space to remember and honour the work the residents of 'The Block' and their supporters who are striving to build a better community for their people, especially the children and youth in the area. Their efforts reveal a courage and strength we admire. Let us continue to pray for them in these endeavours.

Let us not forget the work, which is carried out in Redfern by our churches' pastors and lay associates – both indigenous and non-indigenous. Their ministry has highlighted the significance of God's presence among us, especially in the difficult times of our lives. We know that they will continue to work with the people of 'The Block' and Redfern during these difficult times and into the future.

We, the Commission, recommit ourselves to standing alongside all those in Redfern and around Australia working for justice and reconciliation; we call on the body of Christ in Australia to do the same.

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