

THE RECONCILIATION FORUM

A forum for Sri Lankans living in Sydney, Australia

WHAT IS THE RECONCILIATION FORUM?

We are a growing group of Sri Lankans working to develop a model of reconciliation, as we stand together at the ending of the war in Sri Lanka. This initiative has brought people together to share stories and experiences in a frank and open manner to an audience consisting of both Sinhalese and Tamils resident in Sydney.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE IN?

- Coming to terms with the past is a high priority for the future.
- There must be an acknowledgement of all atrocities and injustices committed on Sinhalese, Tamil, Moslem and other communities.
- To heal emotional wounds through reconciliation, all communities concerned must be willing to forgive and to apologise unconditionally.
- Restoration of dignity through mutual respect.
- Universal respect for the rule of law and good governance, which has been deteriorating over several decades, needs to be restored in order to become a modern nation.
- Acknowledge there is an ethnic problem which needs to be addressed.
- Genuine reconciliation is a prerequisite to stability and durable peace. Prosperity will follow only if there is stability and durable peace.
- We can reconcile at the individual level until government chooses to become a party to the reconciliation process.
- Together as Sri Lankan people we can persuade the Government to participate in the reconciliation process.

WHO ARE WE?

The following group began facilitating the Reconciliation Forum.

Cicil Fonseka	Mohan Sekeram
Helen Luther	Noel Luther
Indira Gonsalkorale	Pradheep Pasupati
Luther Uthayakumaran	Prasanna Athukorala
Manjula Silva	Surjani Uthayakumaran

We aim to

- **Identify** and understand the sources of mistrust, suspicion, prejudice and fear between the communities.
- **Rebuild** trust, confidence and respect, initially, between Sinhalese and Tamil people living in Sydney that can be sustained and passed down the generations.
- **Encourage** open and candid dialog, initially, between Sinhalese and Tamils to bring greater awareness of reasons for prejudice and injustice.
- **Harness** confidence building measures that can withstand the potential challenges in the future.
- **Foster** greater understanding amongst the youth than has been seen in our generations.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR? The group was formed soon after the end of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009. It began with fortnightly meetings, where shared experiences and support for grievances were fostered. The Reconciliation Forum was born. These continued fortnightly meetings led to a 30-strong group whose activities culminated in a gathering of around 150 people gathering in Martin Place to commemorate all those who lost their lives in the conflict on both sides of the divide. This larger, moderated meeting facilitated listening to the other, the essential first step towards reconciliation. To continue offering a space where Sinhalese Tamil Muslim and others may speak and be heard is an intended major challenge for the Reconciliation Forum whose purpose is to open avenues of discussion among all Sri Lankans.

DO YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE? We welcome and encourage greater participation by all moderate minded Sri Lankans who are broadly in agreement with our core beliefs. Please contact reconciliationforum@gmail.com.

MAKE SUGGESTIONS? We welcome all constructive suggestions that would assist us with the task of reconciliation. Please contact us at reconciliationforum@gmail.com

GUEST ARTICLES: We welcome articles which are in line with our core beliefs and promote reconciliation. Kindly note we reserve the right not to publish all articles we receive.

CONTACT: reconciliationforum@gmail.com

STAYING IN TOUCH: We propose to distribute this quarterly newsletter updating our activities.