

## Open letter: Apology needed for racist Bill Leak cartoon published in *The Australian*

August 10, 2016

The NSW Reconciliation Council has today written to the Editor-In-Chief of the *The Australian* newspaper requesting that he apologise for publishing a racist cartoon of an Aboriginal person in the national newspaper last week.

The full text of the letter is below.

*Paul Whittaker, Editor-in-Chief  
The Australian*

*Dear Sir*

*We write to voice our most serious concerns at the publication of a cartoon by Bill Leak in your newspaper on Thursday, 4 August 2016.*

*The cartoon in question is, in our view, a racial stereotype of Aboriginal Australians that demeans Aboriginal men in particular, and more broadly all Aboriginal people. The image perpetuates a racial prejudice that denigrates Aboriginal people, and contributes to the unfavorable media portrayal of Australia's First Peoples that was highlighted by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody more than 25 years ago.*

*To publish such a cartoon at all, and in particular on national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, was offensive and in extremely poor taste. The cartoon is not confronting – rather, it is an insulting and utterly unhelpful contribution to an important discussion about the appalling state of the detention system in the Northern Territory.*

*The work of the NSW Reconciliation Council, our counterpart organisations in other states and territories, and Reconciliation Australia, focuses on breaking down the barriers created by the precise kind of stereotyping of Aboriginal people that the Leak cartoon generates. We would request that your newspaper apologises publicly for the hurt caused by the publication of the cartoon.*

*Sincerely,*

*Gilly Dempsey  
Director, NSW Reconciliation Council*