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## Spotlight on Racism

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### Politicians and Public Figures

#### Dr Evelyn Scott

#### What do you do?

I am the Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

#### How old are you?

I am 65 years old.

#### Where were you born?

I was born in a little cane-farming town called Ingham in Far North Queensland.

#### Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Ingham.

#### Describe your cultural/religious/ethnic family background

I am of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander descent. My grandfather on my father's side was brought out on the blackbirding ships as a Kanaka slave to clear the land in Queensland for the sugar industry. He was a slave labourer brought over in chains from New Hebrides now known as Vanuatu.

#### Do you know any other languages? If so what are they?

No I don't speak any other languages.

#### What is your favourite place in the world and why?

My favourite place in the world is Ingham because when I am feeling stressed and a bit down I like to return home to go fishing, relax, just sit and listen to the waterfalls, but more importantly to catch up with my family and the old people. Just reconnecting with my own country is incredible.

#### Have you ever experienced or witnessed racism? How did it make you feel?

In 1963 I went into a bridal shop to buy my wedding dress. I selected two gowns and asked to try them on. I was told that they would sell me a dress but that I could not try it on...I was black...it was against their policy. Thirty-six years went by and in 1999 I found myself abused in



*Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation*

public and refused a taxi ride to the airport in a busy Sydney street, because I was black. I felt incredibly angry and disappointed that these sorts of attitudes existed in this day and age and that people were judged purely on the colour of their skin.

### **What did you do about it?**

The first time I had no choice but to buy my dress from another shop. The second time I took the driver to the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Human Rights Commission. As a result the taxi driver didn't last 24 hours in his job. He was sacked. I received an apology from both the company and the driver.

### **What advice would you give kids experiencing racism?**

I always encourage young children of all ages to speak out on racism and not to be silent, because that only helps to encourage it. We need to speak out on these issues so that we can expose it for all to see.

### **What kind of Australia would you like to see for our children?**

I would like to see a mature nation that is tolerant of all cultures, races and religions. A nation that embraces the ideals of a peaceful and equitable society. One where we can sit down and truly look at one another and see each person as a human being and nothing more.

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