



Welcome to Country Speech

7th National Forum of the NCCA, 9-13 July 2010

**Aunty Agnes Shea, Ngunnawal Elder**

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Good Afternoon All.

Let me begin by reminding all present that this is NAIDOC Week and today is NAIDOC Day.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander week unlike Reconciliation week is a time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to come together with others to celebrate our life and culture and that we have survived. It is a time where we can highlight the important things that concern us and celebrate our unity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Many celebrations are happening around the country and this year's spotlight will be on Melbourne where the National Ball and awards will take place. Some may recall that Mrs. Elsie Heiss, a member of your Executive received the Elder of the year award at last year's celebration in Brisbane. Many will receive due recognition for the tremendous work they do.

But the theme for this year is "Unsung Hero's."

This is a very important theme as it shines a light on many who have been struggling hard to bring about a better life for all of us. Many of us do this quietly in the background with little recognition. They are the teachers, coaches, doctors, Aunts, Uncles, parents and Grand parents to name a few.

We like you want the best for our families and friends and work tirelessly in our communities to try and bring it about. If you know anything about our communities and the amount of outside influences that affect our lives, then you would know it is not always so easy. We do it because of love. Love of our brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and all that have gone before us. Our strength we draw from our past and one another.

This week then, it is important to stop and reflect upon those many unsung heroes who have gone before us and are around us now. It would be good if you yourselves take a short moment to think of some of those Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders who work tirelessly to make this community, this country a better place for all.

Many thanks for thinking of them and hopefully while you are here together pray for them for the strength and courage to continue.

I warmly welcome you back to Ngunnawal Country some 16 years after your first Forum here and pray that your time here will be fruitful and remember, whatever you do tread lightly across my Country as we have done for thousands of years.

Thank you.