

National Reconciliation Week 27 May – 3 June 2018

Tuesday 29 May 2018

Reconciliation in action fosters innovation and relevance, says Equity Trustees

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities led Australia's leading specialist trustee company, Equity Trustees to adapt and change the way it delivers traditional trustee services not only in their trustee and philanthropic areas – but in an unexpected area of their business: Estate planning.

A pilot, developed in consultation with the Noongar community in Western Australia, is planned for later in 2018 to test and refine a program designed to support the writing of Wills that specifically target the estate planning needs of Aboriginal people.

"Around 60% of the Australian population have a valid Will* – which means one that will be effective and legal at the time it is needed. Indications are that the percentage is much lower for First Australians," said Stephen Hardy, National Manager of Estate Planning, Equity Trustees.

Equity Trustees works with a number of Aboriginal communities, acting as trustee for community and native title trusts. Separately, Equity Trustees as trustee for around 500 philanthropic trusts is responsible for channelling funds into a range of causes and programs that aim to address Indigenous disadvantage.

"Most Australians use an accessible professional service to prepare their Wills. For First Australians, particularly those in remote towns and communities, access to such specialised services is a barrier – and typical estate planning approaches don't necessarily meet traditional estate planning needs," explained Mr Hardy.

"Estate planning can help prevent burial disputes and protect customary law by ensuring clarity in how traditional objects are passed on, for example, as well as the usual things we associate Wills and estate plans with – the care of children and how property is distributed," he said.

Equity Trustees plans to use the pilot experience to develop core estate planning services appropriate to the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, beginning with communities it currently partners with.

Managing Director, Mick O'Brien, said Equity Trustees recognised its corporate responsibility to actively pursue reconciliation.

"We recognise that National Reconciliation Week is a great opportunity to highlight all that can be done and all that still needs to be done to improve social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities," Mr O'Brien said.

"We play a role at a corporate level with the adoption and implementation of our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#), the many ways we build connections with Indigenous communities and serve them now, and how we share and develop access to our unique expertise to protect their wealth into the future," he concluded.

*[Having the last word: will making and contestation in Australia](#) (March 2015)

Media Release



Equity Trustees was established in 1888 for the purpose of providing independent and impartial Trustee and Executor services to help families throughout Australia protect their wealth. As Australia's leading specialist trustee company, we offer a diverse range of services to individuals, families and corporate clients including asset management, estate planning, philanthropic services and Responsible Entity (RE) services for external Fund Managers.

Equity Trustees is the brand name of EQT Holdings Limited (ABN 22 607 797 615) and its subsidiary companies, publicly listed company on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX: EQT) with offices in Melbourne, Bendigo, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and London.

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