

## MEDIA RELEASE



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### **Australia Day an opportunity to start rethinking the nation**

This Australia Day, ANTaR urges all Australians to seize the opportunity in 2011 to participate in community debate about how best to recognise the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution and our nation.

"Australia is about to begin a debate about how best to finally and properly recognise the unique and special role of the land's First Peoples. We should all play a role in ensuring that this is a wide-ranging, honest and fully informed debate," said Dr Peter Lewis, ANTaR National President.

Late last year, the Government announced the appointment of an Expert Panel to consult broadly on options to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution. The Expert Panel is due to commence its work soon.

"This provides a very valuable opportunity for all Australians - one we must not squander. The outcomes of this debate offer an historic opportunity to take a step forward on the path to real reconciliation and national maturity.

"In 2011, let's put our heads together to better understand the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage enrich our nation and our hands up for meaningful Constitutional change in recognition of this contribution.

"Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have mixed feelings about celebrating the anniversary of the arrival of British colonisers, which led directly to such enormous pain, hurt and suffering. Their ongoing exclusion from our nation's founding document only compounds that hurt.

"The ceremonies and history of Australia Day provides us with an extra reminder of how important it is to get this right. As we seek a recognition of the First Peoples in our constitution, we shouldn't lose the opportunity to have a 're-cognition' and begin to re-think the nation beyond the racist origins of our constitution," Dr Lewis concluded.

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**Peter Lewis and Aboriginal singer/songwriter Richard Frankland will be attending the Survival Day celebrations in Belgrave (Melbourne).**

**Time & Location:** 26 January, 12-4pm Borthwick Park, Benson St, Belgrave.

*ANTaR is the pre-eminent non-Indigenous national advocacy organisation dedicated specifically to the rights - and overcoming the disadvantage - of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

ANTaR relies on the support of generous donations to continue its work supporting the rights and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.