

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Reconciliation Barometer shows need to keep protections against racism**

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights ANTaR, today called on government to start looking at First Peoples' lived experience of racism, and leave the RDA protections untouched.

The call came as the National Reconciliation Barometer was released, showing an increase of racism experienced by First Peoples.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said that the report, which shows racism towards First Peoples has increased from 39% to 46% since 2014, confirmed what has been emerging anecdotally.

"The increase is disturbing but not surprising. Having worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for nearly 20 years, ANTaR knows all too well that racism is ever present and on the increase."

"It is past time that government stopped kowtowing to the extreme right of the party and fringe elements on the crossbench, and left the Racial Discrimination Act alone. They should be working with First Peoples and others to create a less racist Australia," he said.

Mr Meehan noted that 57% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and 39% of other Australians believe that Australia is a racist country.

"Clearly we have a big problem with racism in Australia, particularly towards First Peoples. We need leadership from government and all in parliament to ensure that protections remain, and inclusiveness and community cohesion are not further undermined," he said.

Mr Meehan also noted the positive finding in the Barometer that the overwhelming majority of Australians (97% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 89% of other Australians) believe the relationship between First Peoples and others is important.

"This provides a strong basis to build upon," Mr Meehan said.

*ANTaR is the only non-Indigenous organisation dedicated solely to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and working to educate the wider community, shape public opinion, and speak up for justice, rights and respect for Australia's First Peoples.*