

## Media Release

Thursday 1 May 2014

### **No compelling reason to amend the Racial Discrimination Act**

ANTaR has recommended that the Australian Government does not proceed with introducing the proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

In a submission to the Attorney General on the proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act, ANTaR concludes that on balance there is no compelling reason to amend the Act.

ANTaR National President Dr Peter Lewis said “The laws and their interpretations over the past two decades have struck an appropriate balance between the right to freedom of speech and the right to freedom from racial discrimination and vilification.”

Dr Lewis said that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience a high level of racism and race hate speech in their daily lives that negatively impacts on individuals, families and communities.”

“The proposed changes permitting offensive, insulting and humiliating behaviour based on race alter the standard of appropriate and acceptable behaviour and have the potential to lead to a less tolerant and less cohesive society.”

The submission notes that the proposed definition of the term ‘vilify’ and the broad category of exemptions will, in effect, nullify the protection of individuals and groups from disparaging racist behaviour.

“This has the potential to have a significant negative impact on health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and will negatively impact on employment and education opportunities.”

“To exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual and communal experiences and knowledge of racism in the determination of a case would be an example of inaccessible and unfair justice.” Said Dr Peter Lewis

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