

MEDIA RELEASE



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'Woeful' record on 10th Anniversary of Declaration

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights ANTaR, slammed the lack of progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in Australia as the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is marked today.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said that the adoption of the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the 13th September 2007 was a landmark advance for First Peoples' rights internationally, but in Australia progress has been imperceptible, and in some cases going backwards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Little credence has been given by government to ensuring that the rights articulated in the Declaration are respected, recognised and enjoyed by First Peoples in Australia," Mr Meehan said.

Mr Meehan supported the assessment of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People in her Australian report released on Monday, where she noted:

"It is woefully inadequate that, despite having enjoyed over two decades of economic growth, Australia has not been able to improve the social disadvantage of its indigenous population. The existing measures are clearly insufficient as evidenced by the lack of progress in achieving the "Close the Gap" targets."

"This is about as strong a criticism as you'll see from the UN, and should be a serious wake up call for the Federal Government," Mr Meehan said.

"It is well past time that the Federal Government introduced a clear and transparent process for ensuring that all legislation, policies and programs relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is consistent with its obligations under the Declaration."

"In the eight years since Australia signed onto the Declaration, there's been no serious attempt to implement it - it's little surprise that we've seen no progress, or worse, negative progress in some areas," he 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.