

ANTAR Statement on 26 January 2026

2 February, 2026

ANTAR condemns the violent attack on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and allies gathered peacefully on 26 January in Boorloo (Perth), and is deeply concerned about the ongoing failure of governments in Australia to keep First Nations communities safe.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and allies continue to call for justice, the question must be asked: **what is the Australian Government doing to ensure the safety of First Nations peoples and to address the structural racism, inequity and institutional failures that continue to put communities at risk?**

Recent events in Australia have shown that when governments choose to act with urgency, they can move swiftly—including through legislative change and major national inquiries. Urgency, however, must not be selective. **Safety, justice and protection from racism and hatred must apply equally to all peoples.**

As the Australian Government moves forward with a Royal Commission in response to the Bondi terrorist attack, it is critical that the terms of reference are broad enough to meaningfully examine racism, hatred and systemic discrimination—including that experienced by First Nations communities. A Royal Commission that fails to confront these realities for every vulnerable community risks entrenching a double standard in how safety and justice are afforded to all individuals in Australia.

This failure to confront racism is not new. **The National Anti-Racism Framework**, released by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2024, sets out **63 recommendations** to address racism across law, justice, health, education, workplaces and media. The Framework is explicitly First Nations-centred,

recognising colonisation and systemic racism as ongoing drivers of harm for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Framework calls for important reforms, including stronger legal protections, raising the age of criminal responsibility, mandatory anti-racism and cultural safety standards across public institutions, and the establishment of a **National Anti-Racism Taskforce** to drive whole-of-government action. Despite being funded and commissioned by the Australian Government, **there has been no appropriate response or implementation of the Framework**. This represents a major missed opportunity to address racism as a systemic cause of harm and as a major safety concern for First Nations peoples.

Australia has just been called to account by the international community through the **United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, with over **120 countries issuing around 350 recommendations**. UN Member States raised concerns about the ongoing incarceration of children as young as 10 (disproportionately impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children), the absence of a national Human Rights Act, persistent racism and discrimination affecting First Nations peoples, and the need for stronger, enforceable human rights protections.

Taken together, these findings confirm what First Nations communities and advocates have long said: **Australia is failing to comply with its international human rights obligations, often with devastating consequences for First Nations peoples**.

Against this backdrop, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership continues to call for substantive reform and structural change, including a **national Truth-telling process to confront inequity, racism and the true history of this country**. Yet the federal response remains inadequate.

The UN review also highlighted Australia's failure to properly recognise First Nations peoples in the constitution and to address the systemic causes of inequality. While the Voice Referendum was a missed opportunity, its outcome **does not give the Australian Government a licence to abandon this critical work**.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart – with its pillars of Voice, Treaty and Truth – remains the clearest roadmap to justice and equity in Australia.

If Closing the Gap is truly a national priority, then:

- National Truth-telling must be progressed
- The National Anti-Racism Framework must be implemented
- An Australian Human Rights Act must be legislated
- The minimum age of criminal responsibility must be raised
- Structural racism must be confronted through law, policy and national leadership

ANTAR calls on the Australian Government to move beyond rhetoric and deliver **real, systemic change** that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are safe, respected and protected — not just in moments of crisis, but every day.

Justice cannot be selective. Safety cannot be conditional. And reconciliation cannot be achieved without truth, treaty and structural reform.

“Justice and personal safety cannot be conditional in this country. Australia has been given clear roadmaps to advance the wellbeing of First Nations communities—the Uluru Statement from the Heart to the National Anti-Racism Framework. Failing to follow these is a political choice, and it is First Nations peoples who will continue to pay the price.”

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About ANTAR

ANTAR is a national advocacy organisation working for justice, rights and respect for Australia’s First Nations Peoples. We do this primarily through campaigns, advocacy and public education.