

MEDIA RELEASE



Harmony Day: Australia can do better

ANTaR marks Harmony Day by highlighting the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the cultural and spiritual life of our nation and by calling for action to address continuing racial discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

21 March is celebrated as Harmony Day in Australia and links to international celebrations to mark the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Jacqueline Phillips, ANTaR National Director, said that concerns continue to be expressed by the international Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that the legislation enabling the continuing operation of the Northern Territory intervention remains racially discriminatory.

"ANTaR welcomes the Federal Government recent announcement to put a stronger effort into tackling racism in Australia as part of their new multiculturalism policy.

"Eliminating racial discrimination is essential to enabling Australia to reach its full potential as a nation.

"This can never be achieved while we have racial discrimination embedded in any of our laws, or indeed in our nation's Constitution.

"ANTaR has welcomed the cross-party commitment to holding a referendum aimed at properly recognising the unique status and identity of the First Peoples of our land.

"The public debates and consultations that will take place over the next year or more must include consideration of whether to remove racially discriminatory clauses in our Constitution, including section 25 which empowers state governments to prevent people from any specific race from being able to vote.

"While it seems unlikely that this provision will be used again, it is well past time for our nation to consider whether we still want a clause in our nation's founding document which is openly racially discriminatory."

For further comment, contact Jacqueline Phillips on 0423 773 395.

ANTaR is a national advocacy organisation dedicated specifically to the rights - and overcoming the disadvantage - of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.