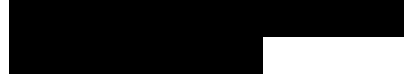




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Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

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Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence Directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Submitted by:

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1. Introduction

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs regarding racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

AMAN is a community-driven national organisation that works to strengthen inclusion, dignity, and opportunity for multicultural communities across Australia. Our work focuses on empowering culturally and linguistically diverse communities while building meaningful bridges with First Nations peoples. We believe that reconciliation, social cohesion, and multiculturalism must advance together.

As President of AMAN, I have had the privilege of engaging closely with diverse communities, government agencies, and community leaders across Australia. I also serve through a Ministerial appointment on the **ACT Reconciliation Council**, where I contribute to policy dialogue, reconciliation initiatives, and cross-sector collaboration. Through this role, I actively engage with the **Australian Reconciliation Network (ARN)** by connecting with leading reconciliation organisations across the country. My work includes participation in **RAP Learning Circles**, collaborative policy discussions, and community engagement initiatives designed to strengthen understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and multicultural communities.

These experiences provide a unique perspective. Coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background myself, I have witnessed how racism, exclusion, and structural inequality affect communities. However, I have also seen the powerful transformations that occur when communities come together with honesty, empathy, and respect.

Racism and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not isolated incidents; they are symptoms of deeper structural issues that require coordinated national

action. Australia has made progress in reconciliation, yet persistent racism continues to undermine trust, wellbeing, and opportunity for First Nations peoples.

This submission therefore seeks to:

- Provide insight into the **nature and impact of racism experienced by First Nations peoples**
- Examine the role of **online platforms and contemporary forms of hate**
- Highlight **effective initiatives and promising practices**
- Address the **growing threat of ideologically motivated extremism**
- Strengthen **reporting, accountability and justice mechanisms**
- Propose **innovative, forward-thinking strategies** that Australia can adopt to build a safer, more respectful society.

AMAN believes this inquiry presents an important opportunity to move beyond reactive responses and towards **a proactive national framework that prevents racism, strengthens reconciliation, and promotes collective responsibility.**

2. Nature, Prevalence and Impact of Racism, Hate and Violence

Racism directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occurs in multiple forms:

- Interpersonal racism
- Structural and institutional racism
- Cultural disrespect and erasure
- Online harassment and abuse
- Ideologically driven hate and violence

For many First Nations peoples, racism is not an occasional experience but a persistent reality encountered in everyday environments such as schools, workplaces, healthcare systems, housing markets, and public spaces.

2.1 Systemic and Institutional Dimensions

Structural racism manifests in various ways:

- Disparities in health outcomes
- Unequal access to services
- Overrepresentation in justice systems
- Barriers to education and employment
- Cultural invisibility in national narratives

Such systemic inequities reinforce cycles of disadvantage and undermine social trust.

2.2 Psychological and Social Impacts

Racism causes deep harm beyond individual incidents. Its impacts include:

- Psychological trauma and stress
- Reduced trust in institutions
- Intergenerational impacts on wellbeing
- Social isolation and marginalisation
- Reduced economic and educational participation

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, racism also undermines cultural pride and identity.

2.3 Trends and Emerging Challenges

Recent trends show:

- Increased online hate speech
- Coordinated harassment targeting Indigenous leaders
- Misrepresentation of Indigenous issues
- Growing polarisation in public discourse

These trends highlight the urgent need for proactive national strategies.

3. The Role of Online Platforms

Digital platforms have dramatically expanded the reach of racism and hate.

While online spaces offer opportunities for Indigenous voices and storytelling, they also enable:

- Anonymous harassment
- Coordinated hate campaigns
- Algorithm amplification of extremist content
- Rapid spread of misinformation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, journalists, and activists are frequently targeted by online abuse.

3.1 Algorithmic Amplification

Many social media algorithms prioritise engagement, which can unintentionally amplify divisive or harmful content.

This can result in:

- Increased visibility of racist narratives
- Echo chambers that reinforce prejudice
- Normalisation of harmful discourse

3.2 Lack of Accountability

Current moderation frameworks often fail to adequately address racism against Indigenous peoples due to:

- Inconsistent policies
 - Lack of cultural understanding
 - Limited reporting mechanisms
 - Delayed responses to harmful content
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4. Effective Initiatives to Combat Racism

There are numerous promising initiatives across Australia that demonstrate how racism can be challenged effectively.

4.1 Community-Led Reconciliation Initiatives

Local reconciliation initiatives have proven highly effective in building understanding.

Examples include:

- Community storytelling circles
- Cultural exchange programs
- Indigenous-led education workshops
- Youth engagement programs

Such initiatives create safe spaces for dialogue and mutual learning.

4.2 Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP)

Reconciliation Action Plans have significantly improved institutional engagement with Indigenous issues.

Through my involvement in the RAP Learning Circle and the Australian Reconciliation Network, I have seen how organisations across Australia are implementing meaningful change through RAP commitments.

These initiatives strengthen:

- Cultural awareness
- Indigenous employment pathways
- Procurement from Indigenous businesses
- Community partnerships

However, further support is needed to ensure that RAPs move beyond symbolic commitments and deliver measurable outcomes.

4.3 Cross-Cultural Partnerships

One of the most powerful opportunities lies in building stronger partnerships between multicultural communities and First Nations peoples.

Multicultural communities can play a critical role in advancing reconciliation by:

- Amplifying Indigenous voices
- Challenging racism within their own communities
- Supporting cultural exchange initiatives

AMAN strongly advocates for structured partnerships between reconciliation organisations and multicultural networks.

5. Ideologically Motivated Extremism

A concerning emerging threat is the rise of ideologically motivated extremism targeting Indigenous communities.

Extremist narratives often include:

- Historical denialism
- Anti-Indigenous conspiracy theories
- Racist propaganda
- Calls for violence

These narratives circulate online and can influence individuals and groups.

5.1 Risks to Indigenous Leaders

Indigenous activists, academics, and community leaders are increasingly targeted by extremist groups.

This creates:

- Personal safety concerns
- Intimidation and harassment
- Reduced participation in public discourse

5.2 Role of Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies

Government agencies play a critical role in monitoring and responding to extremist threats.

However, greater collaboration is required between:

- Law enforcement agencies
- Indigenous community organisations
- social media platforms
- civil society organisations

This collaboration can improve early identification and prevention of threats.

6. Reporting and Response Mechanisms

Many victims of racism do not report incidents due to:

- Lack of awareness of reporting mechanisms
- Limited trust in institutions
- Concerns about retaliation
- Complex complaint processes

Reporting systems across Australia are fragmented and inconsistent.

6.1 Barriers to Reporting

Common barriers include:

- Language barriers
- Legal complexity
- Lengthy complaint processes
- Lack of culturally appropriate support

6.2 Inconsistent Outcomes

Different jurisdictions and institutions often handle complaints differently, resulting in inconsistent outcomes.

This undermines confidence in the system.

7. Forward-Thinking Recommendations

AMAN proposes a number of innovative strategies to strengthen Australia's response.

Recommendation 1

National Anti-Racism Strategy Focused on First Nations Peoples

Develop a coordinated national framework addressing racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, aligned with reconciliation priorities.

Recommendation 2

National Indigenous Digital Safety Taskforce

Establish a dedicated taskforce bringing together:

- Government agencies
- technology platforms
- Indigenous organisations
- civil society experts

The taskforce should focus on combating online racism targeting First Nations peoples.

Recommendation 3

Reconciliation and Multicultural Partnership Program

Create a national initiative that brings together:

- Indigenous organisations
- multicultural networks
- youth organisations
- community leaders

Such programs would strengthen mutual understanding and reduce prejudice.

Recommendation 4

National Racism Reporting Portal

Develop a unified national portal for reporting racism and hate incidents.

The portal should be:

- accessible
- culturally safe
- multilingual
- supported by community organisations.

Recommendation 5

Strengthened Education and Cultural Literacy

Embed Indigenous history and cultural understanding across education systems, workplaces, and public institutions.

Recommendation 6

Community-Led Prevention Programs

Support Indigenous-led initiatives that promote cultural pride, resilience, and community leadership.

8. The Role of Multicultural Communities in Reconciliation

Multicultural communities represent nearly half of Australia's population.

Harnessing their support for reconciliation can significantly strengthen national unity.

AMAN has actively promoted dialogue between multicultural communities and First Nations peoples through:

- community engagement programs
- cross-cultural storytelling initiatives
- leadership discussions
- reconciliation-focused partnerships

Many migrants arrive in Australia without a full understanding of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Providing structured opportunities for learning can transform attitudes and build lasting solidarity.

9. Vision for the Future

Australia stands at a critical moment.

The path forward requires more than policy reform. It requires a **collective national commitment to dignity, respect and truth**.

If we genuinely listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, support community leadership, and strengthen reconciliation across all sectors of society, Australia can become a global leader in social inclusion and justice.

This vision requires courage, empathy and collaboration.

Through organisations like AMAN, through networks like the Australian Reconciliation Network, and through community partnerships across Australia, we can build a future where racism and hate no longer define the experiences of First Nations peoples.

10. Conclusion

Racism and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are deeply concerning issues that demand urgent national attention.

However, Australia also has extraordinary strengths:

- resilient Indigenous communities
- strong civil society organisations
- growing reconciliation movements
- diverse multicultural communities committed to fairness and respect.

By working together with honesty and purpose, we can transform these challenges into opportunities for national renewal.

AMAN stands ready to work alongside governments, Indigenous organisations, reconciliation bodies and community leaders to advance this vision.

Respectfully submitted,

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President

Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)

Canberra, Australia