

MEDIA RELEASE



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Dumping of changes to the Racial Discrimination Act a credit to people power

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights agency ANTaR today expressed relief that government has now abandoned proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

National Director Andrew Meehan said the governments proposed changes – what became known as the ‘Bolt laws’ – were never warranted.

“The RDA gives effect to our obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination and should never be changed to sanction racially discriminatory behaviour.” Mr Meehan said

“It’s simply not ok to offend, insult, intimidate and humiliate on the basis of race.”

Government should be leading the way, not seeking to undercut such a fundamental and basic protection.” Mr Meehan said.

Mr Meehan said that more than 70% of submissions to government were opposed to the proposed changes.

“This just shows that the government was way out of step with community expectations on this issue.” Mr Meehan said.

As a foundational member of the Close the Gap Campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality, ANTaR is well aware of the impact that racism has on the health and wellbeing of the First Australians.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience discrimination on a daily basis. It has a real effect on mental health and limits opportunities for work and access to services. “We must do all we can to tackle racism head on.” Mr Meehan said.

ANTaR congratulates the many community organisations that took the time to speak up and make a submission to the proposed changes.

“We should never have had to do it, but it is a great win for people power.” Mr Meehan said.

ANTaR is Australia’s pre-eminent non-Indigenous organisation working for justice rights and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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