



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement by SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams

SNAICC commends Australian Government for common sense on Racial Discrimination Act

SNAICC, the peak national body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, welcomes the Australian Government's decision to not proceed with changes to the federal Racial Discrimination Act.

SNAICC has stood alongside the many Indigenous, multicultural and human rights groups — as well as MPs from all parties — that have expressed serious concerns about the proposed changes to the Act.

SNAICC argued that the Government had not delivered a compelling case for change; and that the proposed changes had the potential to tear at the fabric of our multicultural and tolerant society.

We strongly disagreed with the Attorney-General's claim that the amendments would work to enhance both freedom of speech and protection from vilification.

SNAICC was among the many voices that expressed considerable concern and even alarm that the reforms would weaken protection against racist and other forms of vilification in Australia.

SNAICC doesn't believe there is a freedom of speech problem in Australia — talkback radio and social media content provides ample proof that free speech is alive and well — but there is a pervasive racism problem.

Racism in all its forms is harmful to the mental and physical health of those who are the targets, who often come from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the community.

Governments, through the laws they enact, should be sending a clear message that there are certain standards we want to see upheld in our society — standards that reaffirm the ideals of tolerance, respect and diversity.

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children and family services**
www.snaicc.org.au

The Government's announcement is a victory for common sense and for all those who believe an absolute priority must be to promote and protect the right of all Australians — particularly our most vulnerable citizens — to be free from racial abuse and vilification.

Media inquiries: **Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO, on (0432) 345 652;**
 John Burton, SNAICC Policy Manager, (0401) 878 063
 Giuseppe Stramandinoli, SNAICC Media Officer,
 (0419) 508 125