



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

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

Submitted by First Nations Allies Wynnum

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on behalf of our Members

Wynnum, Brisbane, Queensland
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Key References at a Glance

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Anchor Sources

- **Australian Institute of Criminology (2025).** Deaths in Custody 2024-25, SR No. 57 — aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr57
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About First Nations Allies Wynnum

First Nations Allies Wynnum is an independent community group based in Wynnum, in Brisbane's Bayside suburbs. It formed after the 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum and includes Reading for Reconciliation, a monthly subgroup. Both groups meet at Wynnum Library.

Our group is co-chaired by an Aboriginal Elder and a long-time community organiser. Members include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, non-Indigenous allies, retired professionals, educators, health workers, parents and grandparents.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Peoples of this Land, and we pay our respects to Elders and Leaders past, present and emerging.

Our work is practical, local and ongoing. We host Elder-led truth-telling sessions and community yarning circles, organise visits to places of cultural significance, support First Nations advocacy on local issues including protection of Barrambin (Victoria Park), and educate ourselves and the wider community through reading, listening and shared learning.

This submission draws directly on what our members witness, experience and discuss. Some accounts are shared without names at the request of contributors. Others come from non-Indigenous members who stood beside First Nations friends and neighbours during the Yes campaign, at polling booths, at community events, and in everyday public places. The harm described here is not abstract. We see it. We feel it. We ask the Committee to act on it.

Summary

Racism directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a measurable and escalating feature of public life. It shortens lives, harms children, undermines democratic participation, and gives cover to organised political violence. The evidence in this submission documents a national emergency that has been visible, statistically tracked and persistently neglected.

Between 2014 and 2024, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reporting racism in a six-month period rose from 39 percent to 54 percent ([2024 Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#)). Among those aged 25 to 34, the figure is now 68 percent. In 2024 to 2025, a record 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people died in custody, the highest annual total since records began in 1979 ([Australian Institute of Criminology](#)).

On 26 January 2026, a homemade improvised explosive device was thrown into a crowd of approximately 2,500 peaceful Survival Day protesters in Perth ([SBS News](#)). Five months earlier, neo-Nazis stormed Camp Sovereignty in Melbourne, beat First Nations people, and chanted 'white power' on sacred ground ([SBS News](#)).

These facts are connected. They are the visible surface of a system described, documented and warned about for decades, yet still sustained by a failure of political will.

First Nations Allies Wynnum urges the Committee to treat this inquiry as the moment that failure ends.

This submission addresses all six Terms of Reference, draws on the lived experience of our members, and sets out twelve evidence-based recommendations for legislative, institutional and cultural reform.

1. The Nature, Prevalence and Impact of Racism

It is beyond clear that racism has been entrenched in the systems, structures and institutions in Australia since colonisation. It is pervasive and causes real harm to people every single day.

— Australian Human Rights Commission, National Anti-Racism Framework (2024)

1.1 What our members witness and live

Members of our group describe racism woven through everyday Australian life. None of the following incidents made the news. All are typical.

Because I am an Aboriginal woman, I am followed in the supermarket. I have heard a staff member training a new worker say, with me standing right there, 'It is a shame we can't look in their trolleys.'

This is one Aboriginal member's account of an ordinary shopping trip. It is a harm statistics rarely capture and complaints processes rarely reach. It happens repeatedly, in the same suburb, across a lifetime. It produces cumulative chronic stress. It is also a daily assault on dignity, and our member is right to name it as such.

During the 2023 referendum campaign, our members stood at Yes polling booths and witnessed verbal abuse, threats and intimidation directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaigners. Drivers slowed beside people holding Yes posters to shout obscenities and make rude gestures. One non-Indigenous member, a seasoned political volunteer with decades of experience, described the level of hatred at booths as new and frightening. An Aboriginal woman from our community was confronted face to face by someone determined to express contempt for her support of the campaign.

Since 2024, members have observed a rise in public racism at organised events. The booing of Welcome to Country ceremonies at Anzac Day Dawn Services in 2026 was not spontaneous. It followed a coordinated online campaign promoted across multiple platforms. It was a deliberate public expression of racism at the most solemn national observance in the Australian calendar.

1.2 The national picture confirms what we see locally

The [2024 Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#) tracks reconciliation progress over time. Its 2024 findings record a near 40 percent rise in experienced racism over a decade: from 39 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in 2014 to 54 percent in 2024. The figures are starker for younger respondents. Among those aged 25 to 34, 68 percent reported racial prejudice in the previous six months; among 18 to 24 year olds, 63 percent did so.

The Barometer also identifies the forms this racism takes: verbal abuse reported by 36 percent of respondents, social media abuse by 32 percent, physical violence by 25 percent, refusal of entry to venues by 26 percent, refusal of service in shops by 24 percent, and refusal of rental or sale of property by 23 percent. Reports of physical violence have almost doubled since 2014, when the figure was 14 percent.

These numbers are not noise. They describe a generation of First Nations people being socialised into an Australia that treats them with open hostility. They confirm what our members observe every week in our own community.

1.3 The health consequences are devastating and documented

Racism is not only a social or emotional harm. It is physiological, measurable and life-shortening. A landmark [Australian National University study](#), drawing on data from more than 8,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in the Mayi Kuwayu Study, found discrimination linked to every negative health outcome examined: pain, poor life satisfaction, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. The lead researcher reported that these outcomes became more common as discrimination increased.

Almost six in ten Mayi Kuwayu participants reported discrimination in everyday life. Four in ten reported being treated with less respect. One in six reported unfair police treatment. These findings sit alongside more than three decades of public health research establishing a causal pathway from racism to ill-health through reduced access to resources, chronic stress, cortisol dysregulation and direct physical injury.

The [Australian Human Rights Commission](#) has confirmed that systemic racism infringes basic human rights, including health, education and justice. It has also confirmed that First Nations patients often face racism and prejudice from providers, leading to inadequate care, distrust of the system, poorer health outcomes, chronic disease and lower life expectancy. Australia's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) cannot be met while this health inequity persists.

1.4 Children carry the heaviest burden, and it is shaping their lives

The [Call It Out First Nations Racism Register's 2024 to 2025 Annual Report](#) records that more than one in four racism reports now involve children and young people aged 0 to 19, an increase of 10 percentage points in one year. Reports describe racism in schools, on social media, in public spaces and through institutions. The most commonly identified perpetrators are strangers, employees and workers, and institutions themselves.

The strongest Australian evidence on the impact of racism on First Nations children comes from two longitudinal studies using [Footprints in Time](#), the national longitudinal study of Indigenous children that began in 2008. The first, by [Shepherd and colleagues in the International Journal for Equity in Health \(2017\)](#), analysed data from 1,239 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 5 to 10. It found that 40 percent of primary carers, 45 percent of families and 14 percent of children had experienced racial discrimination. Child and carer experiences of racism were associated with poor child mental health, sleep difficulties, obesity and asthma. Persistent racism affecting primary carers was linked to 1.7 to 2.6 times higher odds of poor mental health, sleep difficulties and asthma in their children.

The second study, by [Cave and colleagues in SSM Population Health \(2019\)](#), examined 1,759 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4 to 12 and focused on the timing of first exposure to racism. Children first exposed at ages 4 to 5 later showed significantly higher odds of poor mental health. First exposure at age 7 was associated with sleep difficulties and behavioural issues at school.

Both studies argue that prolonged exposure to racism early in life can shape developmental pathways through biological embedding, where chronic stress becomes incorporated into developing physiological systems. The implication is stark: racism experienced in childhood does not stop being harmful when the incident passes. It can alter the trajectory of a life.

These studies also capture vicarious racism. A child is harmed not only when racism is directed at the child, but when it is directed at the adults around them. Remedies focused only on individual incidents will miss much of the harm. Reducing harm to First Nations children requires sustained attention to schools, health services, public institutions and other systems where children and families repeatedly encounter racism.

On any fair reading of this evidence, anti-racism measures are not only matters of dignity and justice. They are child health interventions.

1.5 The justice system embeds systemic racism

Nowhere is systemic racism more visible, deadly or enduring than in the criminal justice system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up approximately 3.8 percent of Australia's population, yet account for more than one-third of all prisoners. In 2024, the number of incarcerated First Nations people

[increased 15 percent to 15,871](#), representing 36 percent of the national prison population. The imprisonment rate for First Nations people is 2,481 per 100,000, 15 times the non-Indigenous rate.

In 2024 to 2025, [33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people died in custody](#), the highest number since records began in 1979 to 1980. This brings the total to 617 deaths since the [1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#). Relative to population, First Nations people died in prison custody at more than 13 times the rate of non-Indigenous people, and in police custody at more than 10 times the rate.

The [1991 Royal Commission](#) made 339 recommendations. Most remain unimplemented more than thirty-five years later. That failure is itself institutional racism. It is a repeated choice, across governments, to preserve the status quo over First Nations lives. We invite the Committee to name it as such.

In Queensland, recent 'adult crime, adult time' legislation has driven a sharp rise in First Nations children held in police watch houses and detention. Members of our community see the consequences for local families directly: extended detention of children, separation from country and culture, and removal from the community supports that make rehabilitation possible. The over-policing and over-incarceration of First Nations children is not an accidental by-product of crime policy. It is a measurable outcome of political choices made in full awareness of the demographic consequences.

1.6 An analytical framework that helps explain what is happening

Members of our group have found two concepts from psychology useful for understanding why racism persists, why it intensifies during political contest, and why it resists good-faith appeals to evidence: the 'Racial Empathy Gap' and the 'Other-Race Effect.' Both are described by First Nations psychologist Dr Tracy Westerman in her [2025 book Jilya](#).

The Racial Empathy Gap describes the measurable phenomenon by which the pain of Black people is appraised differently, and felt less viscerally, than the pain of white people. Laboratory research has documented significantly lower physiological arousal in white participants viewing Black people in pain than in those viewing white people in pain. The Other-Race Effect describes the related phenomenon by which skin-colour difference is processed as personally threatening, producing a disproportionate stress response in racial interactions.

Dr Westerman argues that these effects are unconscious, formed early in life, and retained as stress reactions in the adult brain. She has documented their role in deaths in custody, including the cases of Cameron Doomadgee, Ms Dhu, Mr Ward, Joyce Clarke and Kumanjayi Walker. In her analysis, disproportionate police reactivity to Aboriginal people was a causal factor that official responses have systematically ignored. She argues that standard training in conflict-resolution and communication skills is inadequate because stress reactions dismantle the capacity to apply those skills. What is required is direct work on the unconscious

physiological response to racial difference, through carefully designed psycho-educational programs delivered by appropriately qualified clinicians.

We raise these concepts because they help explain what we observe locally and what the national data show. They help explain the hostility directed at the Yes campaign in 2023, the failure of deaths in custody to produce convictions, and the disproportionate response to youth crime in Queensland. They also point to a more honest and demanding form of anti-racism work than symbolic gestures can provide.

One of our members has spoken at length about her own reckoning with the Racial Empathy Gap and the Other-Race Effect after reading Dr Westerman's work. She has looked back at childhood drawings from a Queensland country school in 1967, the year of the Referendum, and recognised old ideas of racial hierarchy. She has noticed her present-day reflexes on Brisbane suburban trains. She is ashamed of those reflexes, and honest about them. We share this because it shows what serious anti-racism work requires: not a poster on a wall, but sustained internal labour, supported by evidence and skilled facilitation, that produces measurable behavioural change. Australia needs that work, urgently, at scale.

2. The Effect of Online Platforms

2.1 Online platforms have changed the scale and reach of racism

Our members observe a consistent pattern on social media. Posts by local Members of Parliament, news outlets or council platforms that mention First Nations people, events, policy or protest attract derogatory comments. The pattern recurs across local member pages, Brisbane and Redlands council platforms, and local news outlets. The same accounts often reappear. The same phrases recur. Young people and adults in our community spend substantial parts of daily life inside these platforms. What they see shapes what they understand as normal.

National data confirms this local pattern. The [Call It Out Annual Report 2024 to 2025](#) found that almost a third of racism incidents reported to the register occurred on social media, online or in other media. This almost certainly understates the true scale, because reporting is voluntary and under-resourced. The [Jumbunna Institute at the University of Technology Sydney](#) has documented reports involving Ku Klux Klan symbols, lynching references and threats against First Nations people, and has stated that the available figures significantly undercount the true prevalence of racism.

The eSafety Commissioner's 2025 report [Fighting the Tide](#) confirms that people experiencing online hate often do not report because they believe nothing will change. Research cited in [Victoria's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024 to 2029](#) indicates that First Nations people face online hate speech at more than twice the national average. Some studies find that 78 percent of First Nations peoples encounter online hate speech weekly.

2.2 The Voice referendum was a turning point

The 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum is a documented turning point in the contemporary history of racism against First Nations Australians. A [March 2025 report by the Jumbunna Institute and the National Justice Project](#) found that one in five racism complaints to the Call It Out register referenced the failed referendum. Research co-author Professor Lindon Coombes concluded that the result emboldened racist views: people felt vindicated, held views they had previously kept quiet, and now believed it was acceptable to say those things aloud.

[Guardian Australia](#) has documented racist messages sent to prominent Indigenous Australians since the referendum, including death threats, threats of sexual violence and sustained campaigns of abuse. When a democratic process triggers an intensification of racism rather than an end to it, something has gone profoundly wrong in the country's cultural fabric.

Members of our group who stood at Yes booths concluded then, and remain convinced now, that racism was one of the drivers of the No vote. This is not a comfortable conclusion. It is a considered one, formed across many weeks of direct contact with voters and reinforced by the documented post-referendum surge in racist incidents.

2.3 Platform accountability must be central to reform

The [Online Safety Act 2021](#) provides a framework for addressing online harm, but its application to racial hatred targeting First Nations peoples has been insufficient. The [National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People](#) has recommended implementing the Statutory Review of the [Online Safety Act 2021](#). We endorse that recommendation and go further. Platforms that host and algorithmically amplify racist content targeting First Nations peoples must be subject to binding, proactively enforced standards. Reactive complaint systems that require individual victims to identify, document and pursue every incident are inadequate to the scale of the problem.

Recommendation 1

Mandate that online platforms operating in Australia implement proactive, real-time monitoring systems for content targeting First Nations peoples with hate speech, threats or vilification, with enforceable removal timelines and substantial financial penalties for non-compliance.

Recommendation 2

Amend the Online Safety Act 2021 to include specific provisions addressing the cultural, historical and human rights dimensions of racism directed at First Nations peoples, and appropriately resource the eSafety Commissioner to enforce these provisions.

3. Initiatives That Are Effective in Combating Racism

3.1 Community-led approaches produce better outcomes

The evidence is clear: initiatives designed and led by First Nations communities achieve better results than those imposed by government. Priority Reform Two of the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), Building the Community-Controlled Sector, recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services usually achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and may be preferred over mainstream services. Governments continue to under-fund and underuse this sector.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's [National Anti-Racism Framework](#), released in November 2024, contains 63 recommendations across law, justice, health, education, media and workplaces. It is the most comprehensive plan yet developed to eliminate racism in Australia, but implementation remains incomplete. The Framework specifically calls for a National Anti-Racism Taskforce and a dedicated strategy to eliminate racism experienced by First Nations peoples.

3.2 Truth-telling is an anti-racism initiative

Sustained, accurate education about Australia's colonial history is an essential anti-racism initiative. That history includes the documented violence of dispossession, the Stolen Generations, forced child removal and frontier massacres. Ignorance of this history is not neutral. It allows racism to be misrepresented as merely interpersonal, rather than understood as structural and ongoing.

First Nations Allies Wynnum hosts Elder-led truth-telling sessions at Wynnum Library, and other venues across Brisbane. We have repeatedly observed what happens when non-Indigenous people sit in a room and listen to an Aboriginal Elder describe their family's history in this country. Listeners do not leave as they arrived. Truth-telling does not solve racism on its own, but it shifts the ground beneath it. It changes the questions people ask, the assumptions they make, and the words they use. It is one of the most reliable anti-racism interventions we have observed.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's [2024 consultations](#) identified truth-telling, education about historical impacts and commitment to self-determination as critical to dismantling racism against Indigenous Australians. The [Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' 2023 inquiry into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) similarly recommended better education on Australian history, civics and human rights, and an independent process of truth-telling and agreement-making.

3.3 Cultural literacy in schools and workplaces

Cultural literacy programs in schools, when designed and delivered with First Nations communities, produce measurable shifts in student attitudes. One

member has direct experience of a respectful learning and engagement program at Lourdes Hill College in Brisbane, where First Nations community members and students engage in sustained dialogue, shared learning and collaborative projects. Programs of this kind are scalable, evaluable and more effective than tokenistic or one-off events.

Cultural awareness and respectful collaboration training should also be embedded in routine workplace operations, rather than treated as an optional add-on. The work of Dr Tracy Westerman and others shows that genuine behavioural change in adults requires sustained, evidence-based, clinically informed programs, not the half-day sessions that currently pass for cultural competency training in many Australian workplaces.

Anti-racism education must also reach further than schools and individual workplaces. Politicians, public servants, and new arrivals to Australia all benefit from sustained education on the foundational values of respect, fairness and reciprocity that a functional and decent Australian society requires. The current public discourse on immigration and on First Nations matters too often models the opposite — division, scapegoating and contempt — at exactly the levels of public life where modelling matters most. Civic and values education should be designed, resourced and delivered with that gap squarely in view.

Recommendation 3

Establish a national, independent Truth and Justice Commission with a mandate to document the full history of colonial violence and its ongoing impacts, and incorporate its findings into a mandatory national curriculum on First Nations history for all Australian schools.

Recommendation 4

Implement all 63 recommendations of the National Anti-Racism Framework, including establishment of a National Anti-Racism Taskforce with dedicated resourcing, public accountability mechanisms, and specific binding targets for reducing racism experienced by First Nations peoples.

4. The Threat Posed by Ideologically Motivated Extremism

4.1 White-supremacist violence is no longer hypothetical

Hate speech and violence directed at First Nations peoples is not a new or isolated phenomenon. It is the surface expression of attitudes embedded in Australian society through colonisation and entrenched through the White Australia policy that operated from federation until the 1970s. Recognising the historical roots of contemporary racism is not academic. It is a precondition for taking the threat

seriously. The 'lone wolf' framing of recent attacks obscures the well-documented continuity between historical racial ideologies and contemporary extremist movements, and it lets institutions decline to confront what their own records describe.

On 26 January 2026, [a 31-year-old man threw a homemade improvised explosive device into a crowd of approximately 2,500 peaceful Survival Day protesters in Forrest Place, Perth](#). The device contained ball bearings, screws and explosive chemical compounds, but failed to detonate. Terrorism experts have described what was averted as a potential mass casualty event. The alleged perpetrator has been charged with engaging in a terrorist act. This is the first time in Western Australian history that such a charge has been laid, and the first time in Australia that terrorism charges have followed an attack on Indigenous people.

On 31 August 2025, [approximately 40 to 50 men, identified as including members of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network, violently stormed Camp Sovereignty](#), a culturally significant First Nations gathering and burial site in Melbourne's Botanic Gardens, after an anti-immigration March for Australia rally. Four people were injured. Two were hospitalised with severe head wounds. The attackers chanted 'white power' and 'white man's land', stomped on the Aboriginal flag, and deliberately targeted women. The Minister for Indigenous Australians condemned the incident as an attack on our oldest Australians and on the social cohesion of the nation.

The booing of Welcome to Country ceremonies at 2026 Anzac Day Dawn Services was, on the available evidence, coordinated rather than spontaneous. It was organised in advance, promoted across online platforms, and timed for maximum visibility at Australia's most solemn national observance. The public response of disgust did not erase what the moment revealed: organised hostility to First Nations recognition is now operating in coordinated, public and deliberately provocative form.

As one member of our group asked at the time: what was the real purpose of the booing? The answer matters. If the goal was simply to express disagreement, that could have been done in a thousand quieter ways. The choice to do it at dawn, at Anzac Day, in coordinated fashion, after weeks of online promotion, indicates a more deliberate aim: to test what the country will tolerate, and to normalise the spectacle of public contempt for First Nations recognition. The Committee should treat that test as the warning it is.

4.2 The police and intelligence response has been inadequate

Community testimony from these incidents reveals inadequate police response. At Camp Sovereignty, Indigenous leaders accused police of failing to monitor the neo-Nazi group in the days and hours before the attack, despite its predictable association with a far-right rally at which known extremist leaders had spoken. At the Perth Survival Day rally, police waited nine days before declaring the incident

terrorism, despite explosive device analysis and public evidence of ideological motivation.

First Nations communities are entitled to proactive intelligence monitoring of extremist groups that explicitly target them, at a level commensurate with equivalent threats against any other community. The current response is reactive, slow and structurally inattentive to the specific threat organised white-supremacist groups pose to First Nations Australians.

Recommendation 5

Establish a dedicated First Nations Community Safety unit within the Australian Federal Police and within each state and territory law enforcement agency, with responsibility for intelligence-sharing about extremist threats, proactive community liaison with First Nations organisations, and regular public reporting on extremist activity targeting First Nations peoples.

Recommendation 6

Direct the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to include in its annual threat assessment a specific and disaggregated section on ideologically motivated extremism targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with public findings tabled in Parliament annually.

5. The Effectiveness of Avenues for Reporting and Responding

5.1 The current framework fails the people it is meant to protect

The current framework for reporting and responding to racism against First Nations peoples is fragmented, inconsistent, under-resourced and inadequate. The [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#) provides the primary legislative protection. Section 18C makes it unlawful to do an act that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate a person or group on the basis of race. This protection remains important and should be strengthened, not weakened. Yet it depends on individual complainants to identify, document and pursue complaints through a process that is time-consuming and retraumatising.

The [Call It Out Register](#) confirms that reporting rates remain very low even among people who have directly experienced racism. Barriers include fear of not being believed, prior negative experiences with institutions, and the absence of culturally safe reporting mechanisms. For First Nations peoples who have been harmed, historically and contemporarily, by the very institutions they are expected to report to, this is a fundamental breakdown of access to justice.

5.2 Jurisdictional patchwork is itself a form of structural discrimination

A First Nations person who experiences racism in Queensland, Western Australia or the Northern Territory faces very different legal protections and complaint processes from someone in Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory. There is no nationally consistent standard for timeliness, transparency or cultural appropriateness in responses to racial hatred complaints. This jurisdictional patchwork is itself structural discrimination and should be remedied through national standards.

5.3 Strengthening, not weakening, the Racial Discrimination Act

Any attempt to weaken the [Racial Discrimination Act](#), including proposals to remove 'offend' and 'insult' from section 18C, must be rejected. Reconciliation Australia has warned that such changes would make Australia less reconciled, just and equitable, and would make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples more vulnerable to racism. More than twenty-five years of jurisprudence confirms that section 18C applies only to profound and serious effects, not mere slights. The Act is not a threat to free speech. It is a floor of basic human dignity.

Recommendation 7

Strengthen section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to impose proactive obligations on media organisations, social media platforms and large employers to actively prevent racial vilification targeting First Nations peoples, rather than merely prohibiting it after the fact.

Recommendation 8

Establish a free, culturally safe, First Nations-led national racism reporting platform, resourced and independent, integrated with both the Australian Human Rights Commission complaints system and relevant law enforcement, that allows communities to report racism without fear and with a guarantee of timely, transparent and culturally appropriate response.

Recommendation 9

Legislate minimum national standards for responding to racial hatred complaints, including mandatory response timeframes, independent oversight of institutional responses, and public annual reporting disaggregated by jurisdiction and type.

6. Other Matters: The Unfinished Business of Justice

6.1 UNDRIP must be incorporated into domestic law

Australia endorsed the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) in 2009. Sixteen years later, it has not implemented UNDRIP into domestic law, negotiated a National Action Plan with Indigenous peoples, or audited existing laws, policies and practices for compliance. The [Human Rights \(Parliamentary Scrutiny\) Act 2011](#) requires every new federal bill and disallowable legislative instrument to be accompanied by a Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights, but the seven core international human rights treaties listed in the Act's definition of 'human rights' do not include UNDRIP. UNDRIP is therefore outside the scope of Australia's principal parliamentary human-rights scrutiny mechanism. The JSCATSIA 2023 UNDRIP inquiry recommended amending the Act to include UNDRIP in that definition (Recommendation 6); this recommendation remains unimplemented.

The [Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' 2023 inquiry into UNDRIP](#) recommended that Commonwealth policies and legislation be consistent with UNDRIP articles, that parliamentary human rights scrutiny include UNDRIP, and that a National Action Plan be developed in consultation with First Peoples. Article 2 asserts the right of Indigenous peoples to be free from any kind of discrimination. Article 7 protects the right to life, physical and mental integrity, and liberty. Articles 21 and 22 guarantee the right to improved social and economic conditions and special attention to the rights of children. None of these rights is currently enforceable in Australian domestic law.

6.2 Media reform is essential

Mainstream media plays a structural role in generating, amplifying and normalising racism against First Nations peoples. Research shows that mainstream media often represents First Nations peoples through deficit-based framing, emphasising pathology, crime and failure rather than agency, culture and rights. Indigenous voices remain systematically under-represented as sources and contributors on matters directly affecting their communities. The [Jumbunna Institute and National Justice Project](#) identified misinformation and disinformation about Indigenous Australia by prominent media personalities as a key force behind the surge in racism associated with the Voice referendum.

6.3 Closing the Gap will not close while racism is not named

The [2025 Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report](#) found that only 4 of the 19 national socioeconomic targets are on track. Adult incarceration, children in out-of-home care, suicide, and childhood development outcomes are expected to worsen. The Productivity Commission has been explicit that failure on most targets is not a set of unrelated policy difficulties but a systemic problem, including governments' failure to share decision-making with First Nations peoples and confront institutional racism in mainstream agencies.

Priority Reform Three of the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) commits governments to systemic transformation of mainstream government organisations, including confronting institutionalised racism. This commitment remains insufficiently implemented. Naming and confronting institutional racism, rather than managing its symptoms, is a precondition for meaningful progress on Closing the Gap.

6.4 Defunding community-controlled services

The withdrawal of state funding from Aboriginal community-controlled services is a current and concrete example of institutional racism in operation. [Murri Watch](#) — which for more than thirty years has provided culturally-safe support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people held in watch houses across Brisbane, Townsville, Caboolture, Mackay and Palm Island — will lose its youth cultural support program funding on 30 June 2026. This loss is occurring at exactly the moment Queensland has dramatically increased the number of First Nations children held in watch houses through 'tough on crime' legislation. The withdrawal of culturally-safe support from children in custody is not a budgetary footnote. It is a measurable institutional choice with predictable, racialised consequences. Priority Reform Two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits governments to building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector; defunding it does the opposite.

6.5 Self-determination is the foundation

Every recommendation in this submission rests on a foundational principle: racism against First Nations peoples cannot be eliminated by non-Indigenous institutions acting alone, however well intentioned they may be. Self-determination - the right of First Nations peoples to make decisions about their own lives, communities, cultures and futures - is both a human right and a precondition for effective anti-racism work.

Recommendation 10

Incorporate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Australian domestic law, with an accompanying National Action Plan developed in genuine partnership with First Nations peoples, and amend parliamentary human rights scrutiny processes to include formal consideration of UNDRIP compliance for all proposed legislation.

Recommendation 11

Expand the powers and mandate of the Australian Communications and Media Authority to investigate and sanction media content that promotes, normalises or incites racism against First Nations peoples, and require all major media organisations to produce annual reports on the representation of First Nations peoples, developed in consultation with First Nations media bodies.

Recommendation 12

Legislate a statutory obligation on all Commonwealth departments and agencies to co-design, co-implement and co-evaluate all policies and programs that directly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with binding accountability mechanisms and independent oversight reporting to Parliament.

Conclusion

The evidence in this submission documents a crisis that has been visible, measurable and persistently neglected. The proportion of First Nations people experiencing racism has risen by 40 percent in a decade. Children are being targeted online and in schools at record rates. Neo-Nazi groups have attacked sacred sites and peaceful rallies. An improvised explosive device was thrown into a crowd of 2,500 Indigenous people and allies on this nation's most contested national day. In custody, First Nations people continue to die at record rates, thirty-five years after a Royal Commission that was supposed to end this.

Australia has the legal framework, civil society infrastructure, international human rights commitments and parliamentary capacity to act. We believe the Committee now has the political will to treat racism against First Nations peoples as a national emergency, a public health crisis, a documented threat to life, and a fundamental breach of human rights obligations Australia has freely accepted.

First Nations Allies Wynnum will continue our local work regardless of the outcome of this inquiry. We will continue to host truth-telling sessions, stand at polling booths, support First Nations advocacy in our community, and educate ourselves and our neighbours.

Ally work is not a substitute for government action. It is what we can do while we wait for governments to act. We ask the Committee not to make us wait any longer.

This is a historic opportunity. The Committee can recommend bold, systemic, properly resourced reforms that treat First Nations peoples not as problems to be managed but as sovereign peoples with rights that must be upheld. The twelve recommendations in this submission could be a starting point. They are evidence-based and achievable within the term of this Parliament. This Parliament has the power to deliver them. The country is watching.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Mandate proactive monitoring by online platforms for content targeting First Nations peoples, with enforceable removal timelines and substantial financial penalties.

2. Amend the Online Safety Act 2021 to include specific provisions addressing racism directed at First Nations peoples, with appropriate eSafety Commissioner resourcing.
3. Establish a national, independent Truth and Justice Commission and incorporate its findings into a mandatory First Nations history curriculum for all Australian schools.
4. Implement all 63 recommendations of the National Anti-Racism Framework, with a National Anti-Racism Taskforce, dedicated resourcing, and binding targets.
5. Establish a dedicated First Nations Community Safety unit within the Australian Federal Police and state and territory law enforcement agencies, with proactive intelligence functions and community liaison.
6. Direct the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to include disaggregated annual public reporting on extremist threats targeting First Nations peoples, tabled in Parliament.
7. Strengthen the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to impose proactive obligations on media organisations and platforms to prevent racial vilification.
8. Establish a free, culturally safe, First Nations-led national racism reporting platform integrated with the Australian Human Rights Commission and law enforcement.
9. Legislate minimum national standards for responding to racial hatred complaints, including mandatory response timeframes and public annual reporting.
10. Incorporate UNDRIP into Australian domestic law with a co-designed National Action Plan and expanded parliamentary human rights scrutiny.
11. Expand the Australian Communications and Media Authority's mandate to investigate and sanction media content that normalises or incites racism against First Nations peoples.
12. Legislate a statutory co-design obligation for all Commonwealth departments and agencies on policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with independent parliamentary oversight.

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