



The Boatshed Racism Roundtable Declaration

University of Western Australia Boatshed,
Nedlands, Perth. 1st and 2nd June 2009

Background

On the 1st and 2nd June 2009, over 40 leading researchers and academics from across Australia met at the University of Western Australia Boatshed in Perth, to discuss research concerning racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

This Roundtable brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and fellow Australian leaders and racism researchers, with the recognition that *high quality research and evidence must be at the heart of our endeavours to inform public policy and everyday practice* in order to understand and combat racism in all its forms. The two-day meeting significantly advanced the themes of social justice and reconciliation in Australian society and has culminated in the production of a detailed statement against racism. The statement is presented as a declaration on racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians that is intended to have a significant impact on the social change agenda within our society.

Declaration

We, the undersigned, make this declaration to reassert the rights of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- to be acknowledged as the First Nations peoples of Australia; and,
- to be recognised as the legitimate people to take real responsibility for their education, health and wellbeing, with the respectful support of Australian governments.

We believe that for Australia to fulfil its considerable potential for future generations, it must acknowledge the terrible injustice done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – an injustice that continues to disadvantage all our futures.

We believe that this recognition will be the basis for re-strengthening the Australian national identity to the benefit of all and future Australians.

We believe that a strong and confident national identity is one that begins with its First Nations peoples, their knowledge, heritage, and spiritual connection to the land and seas.

We propose four areas for action:

Constitutional – That there be a preamble to the Constitution that recognises the rights of First Nations peoples, followed immediately by the establishment of a treaty that details a formal agreement between the Australian Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and a framework for national action.

Policy – That policies that affect and impact on Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be based on their full involvement and engagement to ensure appropriate agendas and appropriate levels of resourcing are applied.

Practice – That effective and genuine partnerships with governments and capacity building agendas be recognised as essential pathways to improving the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' education, health and wellbeing.

Standards – That all actions must be based on, and be an expression of, the articles in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – particularly Article 3 (the Right to Self Determination) and Article 42 (calling on the states and agencies of the United Nations to implement the Declaration).

The Roundtable, in reviewing research data and evidence, identified some key factors and issues that act as barriers to the progress of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards improved futures:

- Racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples exists in various forms and in all systems in Australia today.
- Racism has a destructive impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' education, health and wellbeing, well beyond its immediate impact.
- Racism works strongly against all agendas which aim to close the gaps in health and other outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

We call upon the Prime Minister and the First Ministers of Australia to initiate a new national plan of action beginning with:

1. Constitutional protection against racial discrimination;
2. The reconsideration of the methods of the Northern Territory intervention to better reflect the aspirations for and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while maintaining any gains that have been made; and,
3. The formal recognition of the capacity and the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determine their futures.

Our key principle for a plan of action is simple: We believe that the future happiness and wellbeing of *all Australians* and their future generations will be enhanced by valuing and taking pride in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—the oldest living cultures of humanity.

A print version of the Boatshed Declaration, including the names of participants who were signatories to the Declaration, is available from: <http://www.aida.org.au/pdf/statements/NationalRoundtableDeclaration.pdf>.