



MEDIA RELEASE

19 August 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Black Lives Matter movement represents a catalyst to overhaul relationships not only between First Nations Australians, the police and the criminal justice system, but between First Nations people and the Australian community as a whole, the *Anwernekenhe* National HIV Alliance (ANA) has declared.

The ANA is a First Nations representative body that works to improve the lives of First Nations people affected by HIV. The ANA and its membership experience first-hand the negative impact of racism broadly in Australia and specifically within the health and community service sector and welcome the momentum provided by Black Lives Matter toward highlighting the continued negative impact of racism and the space for us all to do more.

While considerable progress has been made toward reconciliation, First Nations Australians still live with the very real experience and impact of racism. This is overwhelmingly understood to be because of the continued failure of Australian society to achieve significant, structural reforms that respect the self-determination and legitimate rights of First Nations and that work in genuine partnership with our communities.

The ANA believes a paradigm shift is needed across police departments, courts and juvenile justice along with all other aspects of Australian society. The starting point for this must be ourselves, our communities and our organisations. This includes genuine truth-telling about our own roles in continuing racism and taking stock of what more can be done to achieve the structural reform so desperately required to realise better futures for our people.

The ANA understands that racism in Australia does not just happen to individuals. It is perpetrated at a systemic, institutional level. Experienced as such, racism affects all aspects of our lives. It affects our physical and mental wellbeing; it affects our families and communities; it takes our young before their time and haunts our old people when they should be free. Racism must end.

ANA believes community empowerment and control, not only in law enforcement but across the community service sector including in health, is a critical first step to reduce the negative impact of racism. First Nations community-controlled health, education, and legal centres, among others, should be funded to improve the quality of law enforcement and community service to protect our people from racist harassment, violence, and intimidation. This reform should be met with substantive law reform measures where the successive findings and recommendations of report after report are finally listened to and implemented. The time for reports has well and truly passed.

The ANA calls for policing and law enforcement, and other community services, to be restructured to protect and empower First Nations while actively preventing racism. This requires legislative change, but it also requires a degree of truth-telling across the Australian community. Employing extra First Nations police officers and other project officers within organisations is welcome, but it does not address the bare truth or structural nature of the problem of racism.

We demand action. We demand change.

For media comment, please contact: Nick Lucchinelli on 0422 229 032