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Racism Makes Me Sick

Apr 28th, 2008 by reconciliation

Many Australians felt a new level of optimism as the Prime Minister committed his government to closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation. But 'closing the gap' is not just a task for governments, it needs all of us.

Better health care may not eliminate health inequalities unless basic changes also occur in how non-Indigenous people behave towards Indigenous Australians. Misconceptions, stereotypes and myths about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders abound in Australian conversations, media and psyche.

Personal experiences of racism have a dramatic and negative impact, contributing to heart disease, premature births, hypertension and mental illness for those affected. Stereotyping and labelling, for example about willingness to work and levels of morality, have negative effects through both direct stress and trauma, and through effects on the life opportunities available to Indigenous people – like employment, wage levels, housing, and school retention, which are recognised 'social determinants' of health for everyone. Tackling these stereotypes is a job for all Australians. We all have a role to play in changing the perceptions and behaviour of our fellow Australians to ensure that racism has no place in our communities, homes and institutions.

Your efforts will be a driving force for success of the new ANTaR 'Racism Makes Me Sick' campaign, launched nationally on 21 April 2008. To ensure that 'Racism Makes Me Sick' reaches as many people as possible, ANTaR is proud to collaborate with The Body Shop stores, who will promote the campaign in their stores for 21 days (from 21 April 2008) as part of their Values Strategy.

Individual anti-racism action is the aim of the campaign. If you have ever felt powerless, or at a loss for ideas on how to end Indigenous disadvantage, this campaign will help you make a real difference.

You can sign a Personal Pledge to show your commitment, at www.ANTaR.org.au, where you can also find fact sheets and hints on how to effectively speak up when you encounter racist or misinformed comments. If you care about Indigenous health crisis, please visit the website, sign on, talk to your friends, colleagues and networks about this campaign, and contact us with your ideas on how to take it into communities and workplaces.

On behalf of ANTaR

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