



Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

1 May 2026

Dear Secretary,

Submission to the inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations is pleased to make the below submission to the Committee's inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Founded in 2013, the Federation is an independent body led and governed by Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria, working statewide to realise Traditional Owners' rights and interests. We work with and for the 12 formally recognised Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations,¹ who generously shared their experiences and input to the below submission.

I congratulate the Committee on examining such a significant and pernicious topic affecting our community, and would welcome further opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. I can be contacted on kaley.nicholson@fvtoc.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

Kaley Nicholson
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Victoria has legally recognised Traditional Owner groups across nearly 80 per cent of the state. Traditional Owner Corporations hold these recognised collective rights; they are inclusive and representative membership structures with cultural authority to speak for their community and Country. When this submission uses the term 'Traditional Owner Corporation' it refers to these representative organisations of the groups that have been formally recognised as Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria under either the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic), or *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).

Submission overview

Introduction

Racial harm cannot be undone without tackling systemic and structural racism. The Federation witnesses directly and frequently the ways in which systemic racism prevents Traditional Owners from making decisions for and meeting their obligations to Country. Lesser-known than interpersonal and social instances of racism, this deep-rooted harm is the key subject of this submission; practical steps to invest in and better enable the work of Traditional Owner Corporations – as culturally safe and authoritative spaces – are recommended for ensuring the Committee’s inquiry meaningfully addresses racial harm to First Nations communities.

Structure of this submission

Together with Traditional Owners, the Federation has identified six key issues and recommended effective actions to address each. The majority of these issues speak directly to the inquiry’s first term of reference: the nature, prevalence and impact of racism, hate and violence towards First Nations people, including trends over time.

Summary of recommendations

- Implement comprehensive policy and legislative reform to stocktake and address where Traditional Owners face exclusion and hostility in government processes.
- Increase core funding to Traditional Owner Corporations to equip them for true and equal partnership.
- Initiate a national truth-telling process into Victoria’s colonial history, similar to Victoria’s Yoorrook Justice Commission, to incorporate truth-telling into education and public settings.

Describing systemic racism

When this submission refers to systemic and structural racism, it describes the environment that allows racism to permeate and become normalised in a society, distinct from individual experiences of racism. Systemic racism is an overarching system of power described by the Australian Human Rights Commission as “the way a society or institution’s cultural norms, laws, ideologies, policies, and practices result in inequitable treatment and outcomes”, which “involves entire systems, for example, legal, health, criminal justice, and the structures that support these”.² A form of systemic racism, structural racism describes the barriers that prevent equal access to opportunity; that these barriers are often difficult to see makes their removal all the more important.

The experiences of Traditional Owner Corporations demonstrate how systemic and structural racism play out within, not just alongside, the statutory frameworks that this inquiry can

² Australian Human Rights Commission, ‘Key racist terms’ website page, accessed 1 May 2026 at https://humanrights.gov.au/known-your-rights/rights-of-individuals/race-discrimination/guides,-tools-and-resources/key-racism-terms/_nocache

influence. Traditional Owner Corporations are consistently treated by those who hold power as mere stakeholders – when, in fact, Western legal frameworks have recognised Traditional Owners as legal decision-makers and rights-holders. Yet this legal recognition is a double-edged sword: it obliges Traditional Owners to be involved in the planning, heritage and approvals systems that were designed by others and constrain, or even reverse, the exercise of Traditional Owners’ rights. This inquiry must boldly recommend reform to laws, systems, and social attitudes, to meaningfully address the racism Traditional Owners experience.

Identified issue 1: First Nations’ knowledge is ignored and devalued.

A systemic lack of respect for the knowledge and expertise of First Nations³ exists across Australia. The Federation sees this in the systems designed for Western ways of thinking and doing: for example, land management regimes that section out different parcels of land by their type of legal tenure, rather than by cultural values and landscape type; or in attitudes that falsely believe people to live in opposition to the environment, rather than in intricate relationship as a member of that environment.

First Nations’ knowledge is ignored, even when it’s the solution

First Nations’ knowledge is ignored and devalued at the very highest levels of planning and decision-making, right down to everyday interaction. By way of example, here in Victoria, cultural burn season is beginning, and Traditional Owner Corporations are facing questions from the media and public about the financial costs of their burns. These questions come from an incorrect, yet pervasive belief, in some communities that cultural burning is simply an inefficient, expensive alternative to fuel-reduction burns conducted by the Country Fire Authority – not an ancient cultural practice that restores soil health and biodiversity and supports ceremony. A bleak irony of the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20 is that their Royal Commission found⁴ cultural burning could boost Australia’s resilience to bushfire disaster, while during the same fires, Aboriginal community members reported “extreme trauma”⁵ from the racism they experienced in evacuation centres and were “routinely ignored”⁶ in disaster management planning. This misunderstanding is just one example of how the lack of understanding of First Nations’ knowledge directly and systemically causes racial harms to Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners have shared and are sharing their knowledge

³ When this submission refers to First Nations, it refers to the independent, sovereign groups that existed on this continent prior to colonisation, and who continue to exist and thrive today – it does not use the term as an adjective.

⁴ Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, Report, 28 October 2020. Accessed 1 May 2026 via <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/natural-disasters>

⁵ Williamson B, 2022, Aboriginal community governance on the frontlines and faultlines in the Black Summer bushfires (Discussion Paper No. 300/2022), Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy. Accessed 1 May 2026 via <https://cipr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/aboriginal-community-governance-frontlines-and-faultlines-black-summer>

⁶ Ibid.

The Federation has been privileged to support Traditional Owners to develop a range of frameworks and strategies that embed their expertise and worldview and translate their ancient knowledge into modern, Western systems. Changing attitudes and practices to re-centre and respect Traditional Owners' knowledge and worldview has been a core component of the Federation's work since our beginning. The strategies and frameworks whose development we have supported focus on the knowledge held by Traditional Owner Corporations on behalf of their communities, and – alongside this – the role played by Traditional Owner Corporations as holders of rights in and knowledge, not just Aboriginal-led services or groups of Aboriginal individuals.

Valuing First Nations' knowledge means respecting Traditional Owner Corporations

The First Nations cultures that thrive in Australia today are collective, not individual, and Traditional Owner Corporations the home for these collectively held rights. Greater respect for and valuing of Traditional Owners' representative corporations will go some way to ensuring the knowledge and expertise they hold on behalf of their communities is similarly centred and respected.

Recommended effective interventions

Resource and implement existing Traditional Owner-led strategies and approaches, in recognition of Traditional Owners' priorities and knowledge – Victorian Traditional Owners have developed a range of strategies that embed their expertise and worldview and translate their ancient knowledge into modern, Western systems. Fully resourcing and implementing these strategies would go some way to re-centring and respecting Indigenous knowledge. Victorian Traditional Owners have developed the following publications, which can be considered minimum-standard templates to be tailored in any Traditional Owner group's setting across Australia: [Cultural Landscapes Strategy](#), [Cultural Fire Strategy](#), [Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy](#), [Game Management Strategy](#), [Economic Development Roadmap](#).

Understand Traditional Owner Corporations as more than non-government organisations – Traditional Owner Corporations are not just service providers. They hold and exercise rights on behalf of their communities, have authority to speak for Country, can provide culturally safe employment that connects Traditional Owners with Country, and must be respected and resourced for the unique role they play in the landscape. Yet Traditional Owner Corporations are systemically dismissed as simply non-government organisations, with no recognition of their varied functions. Adequately resourcing Traditional Owner Corporations would contribute to re-centring Traditional Owner knowledge and strengthen Traditional Owners' connections with culture – helping to fortify against individual instances of racism.

Identified issue 2: Governments exclude Traditional Owners from governance processes and decision-making.

Legal obligations and social motivation lead all levels of government to want to work with Traditional Owners. While individual instances of successful collaboration do exist between

Traditional Owners and government, the systemic issues of mistrust and condescension persist, causing significant harm to Traditional Owners attempting to work in good-faith relationship.

True partnership contains trust and respect

The Federation believes true partnership is candid and can be challenging. It has a high degree of respect, and a willingness by each party to change their mind or meet in the middle. Yet we consistently see the governments that purport to partner with Traditional Owners in fact excessively scrutinising their Traditional Owner Corporations – requiring disproportionate levels of reporting and compliance – and seeking to rush or altogether avoid the complex, patient work of proper engagement, because state-selected timeframes take precedence over cultural governance processes. Traditional Owner Corporations are on one hand being asked to participate in processes as if they were equal partners, but on the other hand, are neither resourced to do so nor valued when they take on this work without remuneration. This system of ‘partnership’ is in fact acting against Traditional Owners, because their knowledge and practice is not respected by the governments calling them ‘partners’. This hypocrisy disrespects culture, patronises Traditional Owner Corporations, and serves only the interests of a government – not its purported partners’.

A failure to partner properly traps Traditional Owners

Any government’s commitment to its own interests effectively traps Traditional Owners into processes they may not have chosen otherwise. Governments want to progress their work on Traditional Owners’ Country, and often commence planning before involving Traditional Owner Corporations, or make final decisions in confidential cabinet settings from which Traditional Owners are excluded. Traditional Owners are then forced into an impossible position: request to slow or halt work they didn’t agree to and risk being perceived as ‘getting in the way’, or endorse work they didn’t choose or necessarily want, which could cause significant harm to Country and culture. True partnership would mitigate this harm.

One example that illustrates the difficult position facing Traditional Owners is the conduct of the Victorian Government in sharing the benefits of mining on Traditional Owners’ Country. In 2024, the Yoorrook Justice Commission heard evidence the state of Victoria has collected the equivalent of \$287.4 billion in gold royalties since 1851, with nothing distributed to the Traditional Owners whose ancestral Country was plundered for that wealth; in testimony, resources minister Lily D’Ambrosio vowed to do better in the modern-day renewable energy transition. Disappointingly, a December 2024 public commitment by the Government to create a community ‘benefit-sharing’ scheme in renewable energy transmission projects has stalled, and the Government has backflipped on legislative plans to require critical minerals mining proponents to make agreements with Traditional Owners prior to commencing mining activities – to date, provisionally approving six mines on four Traditional Owner groups’ Country. This inconsistency illustrates a fundamental issue in the behaviour of all levels of government across Australia towards Traditional Owners: the language of ‘partnership’, without any willingness to relinquish power or authority – and the impossible position Traditional Owners

now face in attempting to keep Country healthy through significant industrial activity, with limited resourcing and legislative settings to help.

Recommended effective interventions

Greater volumes of funding, delivered more flexibly and in friendlier policy environments, would go some way to increasing trust and partnership between governments and Traditional Owner Corporations.

Provide sustainable core funding to Traditional Owner Corporations – the Federation has commissioned research from Korda Mentha that estimates Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations perform \$76 million annually in unpaid consultation work for governments, representing a significant burden on already-stretched organisations. The vast majority of the funding that is provided to Traditional Owner Corporations by governments comes in the form of short-term grants, which bring high administrative requirements, uncertainty around stability and future funding, and consequently, gut organisations' ability to strategically plan.

Ease compliance and reporting burdens – Victoria's Nation Building Resource Pool grant program is a leading example of a multi-million dollar grant program that delivered strong outcomes with – perhaps because of – low reporting burdens. The unique co-designed program allowed Traditional Owners to 'get on with' the business of delivering their self-determined work instead of spending time reporting it, and the Federation was engaged as an independent grant administrator to hold risk and ensure transparency in expenditure on the Government's behalf.

Implement policy reform to identify and address where Traditional Owners face exclusion and hostility in working with governments – identifying the policy and legislative settings that prevent Traditional Owner Corporations from exercising their internationally recognised right to self-determination would be the first step in an ambitious, wholesale project of policy reform. A second, more straightforward step would be to expand and strengthen legislation relating to consultation and engagement with Traditional Owner Corporations, including increasing resourcing for Traditional Owners' participation in governments' processes.

Identified issue 3: Governments still dispossess Traditional Owners by giving away rights in Traditional Owners' land and resources.

The incorrect idea that colonisation was a grave harm that occurred statically and in the past gives cover to contemporary activities that continue dispossession. The Federation continues to see decisions by governments that result in Traditional Owners having ever less of a say over their Country, eroding even further their economic bases and earning potential, and effectively guaranteeing nothing will change in the future by curtailing the resource means that could change fortunes. This systemic harm is unquantifiable: it creates the real risk that Traditional

Owners will be forcibly and permanently disconnected from culture, Country, language and spirituality, which could lead to profound distress, trauma and pain.

Dispossession perpetuates disadvantage

The visible inequalities that many First Nations communities experience – including housing stress, inadequate community infrastructure, unemployment, and poor health – are downstream effects of the racist systems that dispossessed Traditional Owners at colonisation and continue to harm communities today.

The land rights context in Victoria provides an example for much of south-eastern Australia, which faced the earliest waves of colonial settlement. Grants of freehold land – privately owned property – extinguish native title. This immediately limits the access Traditional Owners have to large areas of their Country, to meet obligations for its care, to practice culture, and to ensure individual wellbeing. Where Traditional Owners do have access to Country, through, for example, the co-management of national parks, or in receiving licenses to fish and hunt for only cultural purposes, extreme limitations still exist. Traditional Owners are prevented from engaging in trade and commerce using their Countries' resources unless they themselves privately own that property, or have the permission of the private landholder to access Country. This has serious and harmful consequences. Traditional Owners' ability to generate wealth, build economic bases independent from governments, start and sustain enterprises, provide for community, and end intergenerational poverty and inequity is severely constrained. This not only harms individual members of a community, but the Traditional Owner community at large, which cannot realise its collectively held and inherent right to self-determination.

While perhaps well-intentioned, contemporary government policy-making continues to undermine and dispossess Traditional Owners, constraining their ability to build and sustain independent economic bases, set and fulfil a self-determined direction, and provide for their communities.

Truth-telling and Treaty could re-set the record

Truth-telling and Treaty in Victoria provide an unprecedented opportunity to redress the dispossession of the past, if the holders of power wield it appropriately. The Federation welcomed and contributed to the historic Yoorrook Justice Commission – on the subjects of land injustice and economic inequity – and to the 2024 proposal for a national Truth and Justice Commission, whose consultation this inquiry led. We are similarly supportive of Statewide Treaty and of the potential presented by Traditional Owner Treaties. We are concerned, however, that the Victorian Government is using Treaty as an excuse to delay or defer other meaningful reforms that would benefit Traditional Owners; for example, its reluctance to fully implement the abovementioned Traditional Owner knowledge strategies, or to provide adequate and sustainable funding to Traditional Owner Corporations.

We see racism not only as a historic activity – the truth of which must be told – but an ongoing, contemporary process, where Traditional Owners' rights are diminished, ignored, or

dealt away, while the rights words are said publicly. Honouring partnership and recognising rights today are steps just as important to addressing racial harm as truth-telling about our nation's history.

Recommended effective interventions

Implement policy reform to identify and immediately halt the projects and activities that impede and regress Traditional Owners' rights – identifying the policy and legislative settings that prevent Traditional Owner Corporations from exercising their recognised rights and immediately reverse the policy settings that get in the way of the exercise of these rights.

Immediately cease creating new rights in resources and implement policies offering priority access in resources for Traditional Owners – Treaty-making across Australia is one avenue towards ensuring Traditional Owners receive back the rights in resources and land that were taken at colonisation. Treaty, however, cannot be simply lain over an existing system of systemic racism; wholesale reform is required. Another, more straightforward step would be to create a priority system for Traditional Owners to have first right of refusal to newly created licenses and other rights in, for example, fisheries and forestry.

Commit to national-level truth-telling – the wrongs of the past cannot be addressed or their repetition avoided without wholesale truth-telling about Australia's colonial history.

Identified issue 4: Racist attitudes prevail in the regional communities where Traditional Owner Corporations operate.

The majority of Traditional Owner Corporations operate in regional areas, on the Country with which their member communities are intimately connected. The 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum results indicate what regional voters think about Aboriginal voice and self-determination: in Victoria, more than three-quarters of voters in the state's west voted No, and the north-east electorates fared only fractionally better.⁷ Analysis of the vote by the Australian National University found very few people switched their vote;⁸ these attitudes existed long before the referendum was called. At the time of writing, in Victoria, the statewide conservative regional newspaper, the *Weekly Times* – with 360,000 weekly readers – carries a front-page article incorrectly blaming Traditional Owners for delays to project developments. Traditional Owner Corporations and their members exist every day in communities that normalise and share these views.

Racism affects workforce and harms culture

⁷ 78 per cent of voters in the electorates of Mallee and Nicholls, 73 per cent in Wannon, and 72 per cent in Gippsland voted No, according to the Australian Electoral Commission's data.

⁸ Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods, 2023, Detailed analysis of the 2023 Voice to Parliament Referendum and related social and political attitudes. Accessed 1 May 2026 at https://polis.cass.anu.edu.au/files/docs/2025/6/Detailed_analysis_of_the_2023_Voice_to_Parliament_Referendum_and_related_social_and_political_attitudes.pdf

Racist community attitudes and high compliance burdens make it difficult for Traditional Owner Corporations to attract and retain Aboriginal staff. This is a subtle but concerning form of racial harm that directly impacts on Traditional Owner Corporations' ability to transmit culture, care for Country, and ensure continuity in governance. As employers, these organisations face avoidable burnout, turnover, loss of institutional knowledge and under-resourcing; additionally, as cultural institutions, they face a dangerous and existential threat. Traditional Owner Corporations hold serious responsibilities to sustain culture and protect Country, which is threatened by the racist attitudes that make staffing and operating a Traditional Owner Corporation so challenging.

Local governments can be a site of racial harm

The local governments that represent communities across Australia are themselves distinct sites of racial harm. Their influence over local planning, infrastructure and service delivery, and high levels of discretion can have immense influence on the local environments in which Traditional Owner Corporations operate. Traditional Owner Corporations often do not have the choice to refuse to work with local governments, and have few avenues available when those relationships are not supportive, respectful, and grounded in genuine partnership.

Responsibility for ending racism is incorrectly located

Traditional Owner Corporations *experience* direct and indirect racism, and suffer for it, yet are also positioned as the organisations with responsibility to *end* the racism they endure – perhaps because of their standing in communities. Addressing racism isn't the role of Traditional Owner Corporations – it's the role of community, government, media, and allies. Traditional Owner Corporations are generous with their time and expertise in contributing to reconciliation action plans, anti-racism strategies, and inquiries like this one – but reiterate consistently that fundamentally, the responsibility to end the generational racism they endure does not sit with Traditional Owners. It is important to note that Traditional Owner Corporations are made up of people – they are not faceless corporations, but vibrant community organisations, made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their allies. It is not the responsibility of these people or their representative corporations to end racial harm.

Recommended effective interventions

Involve Traditional Owner Corporations as early and extensively in planning processes as possible – Traditional Owner Corporations must be adequately resourced to participate in planning and engagement as early as possible, to help mitigate the racist misunderstandings and assumptions that flourish unchecked without Traditional Owners in the room.

Change community attitudes – resource and implement a widespread anti-racism community awareness campaign across regional Australia, reflecting the active role allies and bystanders play in addressing racism towards First Nations communities.

Change media attitudes – scrutinise more tightly and resource adequately regional media to ensure integrity in reporting, higher standards, and a greater degree of imperviousness to racist and sensationalistic views.

Identified issue 5: Rampant racism is unchecked throughout traditional and social media.

Social media staffers at every Traditional Owner Corporation across Australia would have experienced something similar to the back end of the Federation’s Facebook account on Anzac Day. Following the booing of Elders giving Welcomes to Country at dawn services across Australia, the Federation posted a statement of support, condemning the booing, and reflecting on the generous gift of a Welcome to Country. The post was subsequently shared to thousands of members of racist online communities, who attacked the original post with cruel and harmful language, disparaging Traditional Owners and their culture. This is a daily occurrence for Traditional Owner Corporations and their communities. Unchecked racism proliferates online, and is encouraged by the algorithms of behemoth technology platforms because this ‘engagement’ keeps some – harmful – users on their platforms. The online safety of Traditional Owners, their enjoyable use of social media, their work and lives online, and, most significantly, their ability to share and enjoy their culture are all sacrificed to the maintenance of racist social media users – whose views are fuelled by inaccurate reporting in the mainstream media (a Sky News host labelled Welcomes to Country “divisive race politics”⁹ in the Anzac Day aftermath).

Just one example of such a comment is provided – *“Didn't know victimhood organisations have gone all corporate on us. I guess it needs a corporate structure to manage all the wealth that has been conned from the hard working tax paying public of Australia. That [t]his gift and corruption has gone on to become so large that it needs to be legitimised in a corporate structure is totally insane and is clearly a sign that this country has been taken over by corruption of epic proportions. I hope one day that all this wealth that was generated by the hard working tax payers of Australia is returned to them and the corrupt gifters that organised this theft from the Australian people are held to account. Just a complete disgrace for any of those involved or who enabled this travesty [sic].”*

Worryingly, Traditional Owner Corporations see some community members choosing not to participate in cultural practices, including ceremony, due to the real fear of racist backlash online. This shows the extent online harm has to culture: there is a direct link between the unchecked racism allowed online by social and traditional media platforms and the cessation of cultural practice by some Traditional Owners. This link is deeply concerning and will likely lead to ongoing psychological, cultural and community harm.

⁹ Karacsony L, ‘Sky News host Peta Credlin questions ‘divisive’ Welcome to Country ceremonies on Anzac Day after booing controversy’. Accessed 1 May 2026 at <https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/sky-news-host-peta-credlin-questions-divisive-welcome-to-country-ceremonies-on-anzac-day-after-booing-controversy/news-story/689dc024dd5b0c331937d2e304ade945>

Recommended effective interventions

Reform legislative and regulative settings to enforce better reporting – Traditional Owner Corporations repeatedly experience reporting racists posts or comments and having nothing happen. The law does not extend far enough to compel platforms to address the racists actors who post harmful remarks using their sites, nor regulate their online communities enough to keep Traditional Owners safe from harm.

Provide sustainable core funding to Traditional Owner Corporations in recognition of their important role as culturally safe places, where culture thrives and can be tended safely.

Identified issue 6: Few opportunities exist for cultural decision-making and authority.

When Traditional Owners are forced to make decisions through governments' processes and timeframes, culture suffers, and self-determination is gone. How can Traditional Owners self-determine within someone else's system? Too often, the Federation witnesses Traditional Owners being forced to make difficult decisions of prioritisation – choosing between different issues of equal importance to them, because their input is solicited by an outsider's agenda – and that feedback then fizzling out before reaching decision-makers, because systems of power don't provide for its reception.

Poor processes also cause lateral violence, where gaps in governance or decision-making fail to provide certainty and pit groups against one another. On Country where Traditional Owner Corporations are formally recognised as rights-holders for their community, there exists strong and sophisticated cultural governance processes, which provide for voice, joint decision-making, representation and dispute resolution. Unfortunately, Traditional Owner Corporations are under-resourced and over-obligated by governments. This risks the redirection of effort from this Nation-level governance towards government consultations – which are limited in scope, inadequate in resourcing, and often lacking in impact.

One example that illustrates the exclusion of Traditional Owners from decision-making for Country is the state of the Victorian cultural heritage management system. The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) was written by heritage advisors, and clearly privileges that profession over the expertise, knowledge and insights of Traditional Owners, whose cultural heritage is the Act's subject. Reforming this Act and similar pieces of legislation nationally could reorient government processes that currently exclude Traditional Owners' authority and decision-making.

Recommended effective interventions

Reform legislation to embed Traditional Owners as public land managers – Traditional Owners want to be recognised and play a role as land managers, with a greater say in how Country is managed. Legislative reform to allow for Traditional Owner-led management of

Country, including pathways to sole management, would go some way to addressing the systemic racism caused by excluding Traditional Owners from decision-making for Country.

Provide sustainable core funding to Traditional Owner Corporations in recognition of their cultural authority, important role as culturally safe places, and the extent of the consultation obligations they carry for governments.

Conclusion

Racial harm is not only individual acts of racism, but systemic settings that consistently under-resource, over-scrutinise and constrain Traditional Owner Corporations while expecting them to carry the burden of self-determination. Racial harm cannot be undone without tackling this shadowed form of racism. For the Committee's inquiry to meaningfully help address racial harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, greater investment in and support for the cultural institutions of Traditional Owner Corporations must be central.