



MEDIA RELEASE

15 June 2026

Catholic Religious call out racism towards First Nations People

Catholic Religious Australia has documented experiences of racism towards First Nations peoples witnessed by Religious who accompany their communities in its recent submission to a Senate Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

CRA made clear that contemporary racism towards First Nations people is inseparable from the history of colonisation, that has been misguided by the view that First Australians, their cultures, civilisation and sovereignty, are deeply inferior to the ways of the white colonisers.

“Distorted opinions of First Nations People are embedded in our societal laws, institutions and structures, and today we are witnessing not only person-to-person negative prejudice, but systemic racism whereby racism has become normative within organisations and inequality is built into our systems,” said CRA President, Br. Gerard Brady CFC.

“We are also deeply aware of the ongoing impacts of mission life, in which the Australian Catholic Church played no small role. Families were torn apart and intergenerational impacts remain, with First Nations children continuing to be grossly overrepresented in out of home care and the justice system,” Br. Brady added.

In recent decades however, members of Religious congregations have lived amongst First Nations communities, seeking to walk alongside them.

“These are grassroots workers of the Australian Catholic Church, journeying with indigenous communities Through these ministries, our congregations are well versed in the entrenched disparities First Nations Peoples face,” said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

“A Religious Sister working in Catholic Schools on Bathurst Island spoke of challenges inherent in the education system, evident in the inaccessibility of national testing such as NAPLAN. We were told that students are expected to interact with texts in Standard Australian English, and often questions are not contextualised for Indigenous peoples in remote settings,” she added.

“To demonstrate initiatives that are effective in combating racism, we also highlighted the work of Bishop Tim Norton SVD and the Catholic Diocese of Broome, who are holding synodal consultations in language to ensure that the voices of First Nations Catholics are truly heard and help shape the future direction of the Diocese,” Anne concluded.

CRA called for genuine government consultation with First Nations communities and decisive action to dismantle systemic racism, and the creation of mechanisms for genuine dialogue and truth-telling, at all levels of society.

Read CRA's [submission](#).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Anne Walker | M: 0409 936 711 | E: nationalexec@catholicreligious.org.au