

## **Media Release: Disability Discrimination takes lead as highest ground for complaint**

Friday, 20 November 2015

Discrimination complaints relating to disability have emerged as the highest level of complaint received by the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission this year (2014-15).

NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Sally Sievers said that this was the first time ever that disability had out ranked other categories of discrimination such as race or gender, with a 31% increase in complaints compared to 2013 – 14.

“Almost half of these complaints related to mental health, with a majority of complaints in the area of work. Similar increases were seen in other disability related prohibited conduct with a 34% increase in complaints regarding failure to accommodate a special need, and a 36% increase in seeking unnecessary information complaints,” Ms Sievers said.

“Unfortunately this is common across Australia, with employers and managers often struggling with disability in the workplace and lacking the confidence to know how to manage an employee’s disability fairly.

“Instead of asking an employee what support they need, they either assume they know what accommodations will or should work or fail to ask anything at all and try to manage the issue indirectly.”

The Anti-Discrimination Commission brought about procedural amendments to the *Anti-Discrimination Act* this year to assist in the resolution of complaints by making the process more accessible and with a stronger focus on conciliation.

“Quicker and earlier resolutions mean better outcomes for all parties,” Ms Sievers said.

Both race and gender related complaints remained high in 2014-15. Race related complaints increased by five percent, this follows a significant decrease in 2013 – 14, while gender related discrimination has remained high on the grounds of sex, sexual harassment and sexuality with significant increases seen in complaints about parenthood (238%) and marital status (258%).

“While the current spotlight on family and domestic violence in the mainstream media may encourage people affected by gender related discrimination to come forward, we know there are many race discrimination issues which we don’t see through our complaints process,” said Ms Sievers.

“Anecdotally we know that many Indigenous Territorians’ daily lives are affected by discriminatory conduct, but these go unreported.

“We are exploring ways to encourage Indigenous Territorians, all Territorians in fact, to know their rights and how to exercise them.

“For example, earlier this week we launched three animated discrimination stories to assist people in understanding how to respond to actual or perceived discrimination because of race. The stories have been recorded in English and three Central Aboriginal languages: Arrernte, Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara.\*

“It is important that all people are treated fairly and not defined by their disability, race or gender. With education and improved processes for managing complaints under the *Act* we encourage people to report discriminatory behaviour and to know their rights and responsibilities.”

The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission’s Annual Report 2014 – 15 was tabled in Parliament on 19 November 2015.

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\* These stories have been produced in partnership with *italk library*, for more information go to [www.italklibrary.com](http://www.italklibrary.com) in the Anti-Discrimination Section, access the italk library app or go to the Anti-Discrimination Commissions website [www.adc.nt.gov.au](http://www.adc.nt.gov.au)

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