

Submission – Development of a Multicultural Strategy for the Northern Territory

Introduction

The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission (NT ADC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Northern Territory Multicultural Strategy and Multicultural Action Plan (MAP).

Our statutory mandate under the *NT Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* is to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and build safe and inclusive environments. With the 2022 reforms introducing a **Positive Duty** on organisations to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation, the NT now has one of the most progressive anti-discrimination laws in the country.

This submission integrates the **National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF)** as a guiding reference point for embedding systemic, intersectional, and enforceable anti-racism measures into the NT's multicultural policy settings. In doing so, it shifts the Strategy from being primarily about cultural celebration to being a **structural equity blueprint** that actively dismantles racism and discrimination, consistent with national and international human rights standards.

Consultation Questions and Responses

3.1 Who We Are

Q1. How does the NT's diverse population make our community stronger?

Diversity strengthens the NT economically, socially, and culturally. It is enriching innovation, trade links, community resilience, and cultural expression. NARF highlights that diversity alone is not enough; without systemic anti-racism action, structural barriers persist. A diverse population must also be free from discrimination, supported by law, and empowered to participate equally in civic and economic life.

Q2. Do you identify with the terminologies in section 2?

Yes, with the important caveat that 'culturally diverse Territorians' is not a homogenous group. NARF recommends applying an **intersectional lens** to capture the layered experiences of discrimination faced by people who may also be women, LGBTQIASB+, people with disability, or religious minorities.

3.2 Current Policy

Q3. Positive aspects of the current policy

- Recognition of multiculturalism as a community strength.
- Inclusion of service access in health, education, and housing.
- Support for community events celebrating diversity.
- Cross-agency collaboration on settlement services.

Q4. Areas for improvement

- Shift from social cohesion focus to **explicit anti-racism** and structural equity, as per NARF findings on limitations of cohesion-only approaches.

- Embed **Positive Duty compliance** into all funded programs and services.
- Strengthen measures to prevent racial vilification and systemic discrimination, with measurable accountability.
- Collect and publish **disaggregated race and ethnicity data** (aligned to NARF Recommendation 59) to inform targeted service delivery.

3.3 Suggested Content for the Strategy and Action Plan

Q5. Does this vision align with your idea of a successful multicultural Territory?

Broadly yes, but a successful multicultural NT must also be **anti-racist**. The vision should explicitly commit to eliminating racism and discrimination, embedding cultural safety, and applying a human rights lens to all policies and programs.

Q6. What does a successful multicultural Territory look like?

- Representation of culturally diverse Territorians in leadership, public service, and governance roles.
- **Preventative compliance** with the Positive Duty across all sectors.
- Policy co-design with affected communities.
- Intersectional data collection to address systemic inequities.

Q7. Do these principles support your vision?

Yes, with refinements:

- “Safety and respect” should explicitly reference compliance with the *NT Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* and NARF’s call for cultural safety minimum standards.
- “Empowerment” should include economic security as a critical element of inclusion.

Q8. Additional principles

- **Accountability:** measurable targets, transparent reporting, and independent monitoring (aligned to NARF Recommendation 7).
- **Intersectionality:** policies must address overlapping forms of discrimination.
- **Equity:** focus on fair outcomes, not just equal treatment.

Priority Areas for Action

Q9. Do you agree with categories, outcomes, and key actions?

Yes, but each must be underpinned by enforceable anti-discrimination compliance. Actions on social cohesion should be coupled with structural anti-racism measures, including racial literacy training (NARF Recommendation 20) and systemic policy reform.

Aligning with the NT areas, the NT ADC Recommends

Building our Community

- **Language services plan for the NT:** co-design a multi-year, whole-of-government plan to ensure high-quality, consistent interpreter and translation services across all NT Government agencies and funded providers. This should include consistent quality standards, fair remuneration, sustainable workforce pathways, and training for staff in effective interpreter engagement — to ensure equal communication access for all communities in the NT

- **Civics & citizenship readiness:** support the federal review of the citizenship process and strengthen NT civics participation supports for new arrivals.
- **Youth focus:** embed a multicultural youth stream in the multicultural strategy to reflect the national emphasis on youth leadership and participation.

Wellbeing and security

- **Health cultural safety:** Funded health services should provide care that is respectful and safe for people from all cultures. This means regular anti-racism training for staff, always using qualified interpreters when needed, and making cultural safety part of everyday practice.
- **Workplaces:** NT Government agencies and funded organisations should have ongoing anti-racism training for all staff, plus clear and accessible ways to report and deal with racism at work.
- **Justice & online hate:** Make it easier for people to report racism to police and complaints bodies, and work with the national government to strengthen laws and protections against online hate speech.

Social Cohesion and Lifestyle

- **National day alignment:** The NT should officially recognise 21 March — the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — and lead an annual, Territory-wide program of events and activities, aligning with the National Anti-Racism Framework and the national directions
- **Plan to celebrate diversity:** Take part in the national plan to celebrate multiculturalism, and make sure NT festivals and grant funding are aligned to strengthen community connections and social cohesion.
- **Media and arts ecosystem:** Direct NT Government advertising for multicultural initiatives to independent multicultural media, and partner with communities to co-fund arts projects that reflect and celebrate the NT’s cultural diversity.

Q10. Additional key actions

- Mandate Positive Duty compliance for all recipients of multicultural grants.
- Introduce **racial literacy and anti-racism training** across government, service providers, and funded community organisations (NARF Recommendations 20, 27–30).
- Publish an annual ‘State of Multiculturalism in the N’ report with intersectional data (NARF Recommendations 59–63). Resource and establish an NT-wide system to track and report on racism and anti-racism efforts. This should be designed together with communities, collect data on race and ethnicity, publish regular progress reports, and support independent reporting services. It should also link with national standards and the planned National Anti-Racism Data Plan.
- Strengthen protections for migrant workers in high-risk industries, with oversight and enforcement mechanisms (NARF Recommendation 15).

3.4 Minister’s Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs (MACMA)

Q11. Awareness of MACMA

Yes, it plays a key role in linking government with culturally diverse communities. It is worthwhile structuring MACMA so that members are appointed through a transparent, merit-based process and continue to reflect diversity across regions, lived experiences, and faith backgrounds. The Council should

release regular public updates and an annual report, and share leadership with community representatives in overseeing the Strategy's implementation.

Q12. Positives about MACMA

- Direct channel to Minister.
- Early identification of emerging issues.
- Inclusion of key organisational stakeholders.

Q13. Improvements

- Expand membership to include representatives with lived experience of racism and regional/remote voices. Ensure membership include intersectional groups representing women, disability, religious organisations, LGBTIQASB+ and senior Territorians.
- Introduce modest remuneration to remove participation barriers.
- Align MACMA's work to **NARF-aligned anti-racism monitoring**.

Q14. MACMA's 10-year goals

- Monitor implementation of the Multicultural Strategy and MAP.
- Act as a formal mechanism for community-led anti-racism policy advice.
- Partner with the NT ADC to promote Positive Duty and cultural safety compliance across all multicultural programs.

3.5 Multicultural Peak Bodies

Q15. Role of peak bodies

In the NT context — where nearly a third of the population is multicultural, where new and emerging communities are regularly forming, and where social cohesion can be fragile — a strong Multicultural Peak Body should be far more than an advisory figurehead.

Multicultural Peak Bodies should consider the following roles:

Core Strategic Roles

- **Shape policy and law reform:** Actively contribute to policy development across government, not just in "multicultural" portfolios, ensuring all legislation considers multicultural impacts.
- **Drive anti-racism and social cohesion initiatives:** Lead Territory-wide campaigns to counter racism, promote inclusion, and build bridges between communities
- **Monitor and report on government commitments:** Track the implementation of the Multicultural Strategy and publish independent progress reports to ensure transparency and follow-through.

Community Development and Support

- **Support new and emerging communities:** Provide governance training, leadership mentoring, and organisational development for new groups so they can represent themselves effectively.
- **Capacity-building for community leaders:** Offer training in advocacy, media engagement, governance, and conflict resolution.

- **Emergency and crisis coordination:** Act as a first point of contact between multicultural communities and government during emergencies (e.g., public health, disasters, sudden migration events).

Sector Coordination

- **Convene the multicultural sector:** Bring together service providers, cultural associations, and advocacy groups to align priorities and share resources.
- **Coordinate input into consultations:** Ensure community voices are organised, informed, and heard in government decision-making processes.
- **Connect to national networks:** Link the NT to national multicultural and anti-racism policy developments, ensuring Territory priorities are represented federally.

Public Voice and Representation

- **Visible, trusted spokesperson:** Represent the multicultural community in media, public forums, and civic events.
- **Promote cultural celebration:** Partner with communities to showcase cultural diversity as a source of Territory pride, while linking celebration to deeper conversations about rights and equity.

Long-term Vision

- **Act as a strategic anchor:** Provide consistent leadership and institutional memory in a jurisdiction where communities may be transient and leadership changes often.
- **Embed lived experience in governance:** Ensure that the voices of people who experience racism and exclusion directly shape strategy, funding, and program design.

Q16. Additional feedback

- Tie core funding to **performance indicators** on anti-racism, cultural safety, and Positive Duty awareness.
- Require public reporting on actions taken to eliminate discrimination, consistent with NARF's accountability and transparency principles.

Closing Statement

The NT's Multicultural Strategy and Action Plan should be a **rights-based, enforceable anti-racism roadmap**, not only celebrating diversity but dismantling the structural barriers that undermine it.

By embedding the **Positive Duty** into funding and service delivery, applying NARF's principles of racial literacy, cultural safety, and accountability, and adopting intersectional approaches, the NT can lead nationally in implementing a jurisdiction-level anti-racism framework.

The NT ADC stands ready to work with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, peak bodies, and communities to ensure the Strategy delivers a safe, inclusive, and equitable Territory for all.

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