



Media Release

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Campaign to address strong link between racism, and depression and anxiety in Indigenous Australians

beyondblue will today launch the *Invisible Discriminator*, an Australian-first campaign that shows the devastating psychological effect that subtle racism has on Indigenous Australians.

This comes as new research shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still face widespread racism from other Australians. This includes people thinking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are lazy and that it's ok to make jokes about them.

The campaign centres on TV ads showing non-Indigenous Australians engaging in subtly racist acts, such as treating Indigenous Australians with suspicion or avoiding them, which is just as likely to cause distress as more overt forms of racism like verbal abuse.

***beyondblue* Chairman The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC**, who will launch the campaign with **Senator Nova Peris OAM, Aunty Diane Kerr** and the **Jindi Worabak Dance Group** at the **Korin Gamadji Institute, Punt Rd Oval, Richmond, VIC, today at 9.45am**, said the ads, which will appear on TV, online and outdoor billboards, are badly needed.

"This research shows that racism in Australia is still common and that many people engage in racist behaviour," he said. "Racism, like any form of discrimination, leads to distress, which in turn can lead to depression and anxiety."

"We have launched this campaign to tell people that it doesn't matter if it's subtle or overt – racism is still racism and it ruins lives. ABS data tells us that Indigenous Australians are twice as likely to die by suicide as non-Indigenous Australians, and are almost three times more likely to experience psychological distress. Racial discrimination contributes to these tragic statistics and it's about time things changed," he said.

The [TNS survey](#) of more than 1,000 non-Indigenous Australians showed **nearly half (42%)** believe Indigenous Australians are given unfair advantages by government, **more than a third (37%)** believe Indigenous Australians are sometimes a bit lazy and **almost one third (31%)** believe Indigenous Australians should behave more like 'other Australians'.

The survey also found many Australians think it's acceptable to discriminate, with one in five admitting they would move away if an Indigenous Australian sat nearby and one in 10 saying they would tell a joke in the pub about an Indigenous Australian. Many more people say that, while they wouldn't do these things, they do not see them as discriminatory.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said many people harbour unconscious bias, and the *Invisible Discriminator* character in the ads represents the voice inside the heads of some non-Indigenous Australians.

"Unfortunately, many people don't realise when they are discriminating against Indigenous people and therefore, don't understand the profound effect it has on how they feel about themselves. This can be very damaging to their mental health," she said.

"This campaign challenges everyone to put themselves in someone else's shoes and ask how they would feel if they were treated with suspicion, laughed at and avoided."

"The best way to reduce harm caused by subtle racism is to stop it, and if you see it happening, call it," Ms Harman concluded.

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