

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Thursday, 25 August 2016

Telling It Like It Is: Aboriginal Perspectives on Race and Race Relations – first findings

The first findings from a research partnership between the University of Tasmania, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and the University of Sydney have been released today, exploring race relations in Darwin.

The three-year ARC Linkage grant project, led by Associate Professor Daphne Habibis, Penny Taylor, Pro Vice-Chancellor Aboriginal Research and Leadership Professor Maggie Walter and Associate Professor Catriona Elder is the first study to undertake comprehensive research on how Aboriginal people view settler Australians and settler Australian culture.

The aim is to provide an evidence base for attitudinal change, to develop new strategies for racial harmony, and to improve the way services are provided to Aboriginal people.

Associate Professor Habibis said: “The overwhelming evidence is that there is a race relations problem between white people and Aboriginal people.

“White stereotyping, disregard and ignorance cause enormous damage to Aboriginal people. Policy needs to address the capacities of non-Aboriginal people to engage in equal and respectful relationships.

“We need greater recognition of Aboriginal culture in policy, for example acknowledgement of family responsibilities in workplaces.

“It's time to reset the relationship.”

The project team collected data from nearly 200 in-depth interviews with 44 respondents from a cross-section of Darwin's Aboriginal residents and visitors, a survey of 474 Aboriginal people living in - or regularly visiting - Darwin, and a community Facebook page.

The study asked these respondents:

- How they view the relationship between themselves and settler Australians
- Their perceptions of settler Australian politics, values, priorities and lifestyles
- Their views on arrangements for governance in Australia
- What can be done to improve race relations between the Aboriginal population and settler Australians

Early findings included:

- White values of individualism and materialism are problematic: There was a strong theme that pressure to be materially successful came at the expense of connection to family and resulted in loneliness and high levels of stress.
- Living in a no-win world: Respondents described their daily experience as one of loss, where the odds are stacked against them, no matter what they do
- Aboriginal people know who they are and where they come from: Respondents saw white people as rich in material things, but Aboriginal people are rich in family and culture.
- Over 90% of survey respondents say Aboriginal people are talked to like they don't matter and that white people judge Aboriginal people by stereotypes.
- Nearly 50 per cent of survey respondents, including young people, say they don't mix with white people as friends. Three-quarters of survey respondents say race relations are not very good or bad and nearly 60% rated race relations as worsening over the last decade.
- Over 50% feel Aboriginal people are not wanted in Darwin. Nearly two-thirds say Aboriginal and white people are never or rarely treated the same. This was true regardless of socio-demographic factors such as level of education or whether they are homeless or home-owners.
- More than three-quarters of survey respondents feel they are treated differently than white people within the law, although two-thirds believe white law is needed to keep order.
- 94% of survey respondents say some seats in the NT parliament should be just for Aboriginal people.

A snapshot of the findings is available online here: <http://www.utas.edu.au/social-change/launch-of-arc-linkage-project-findings-telling-it-like-it-is>

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Lead researcher, University of Tasmania Associate Professor Daphne Habibis, is available for interview on 0412 262 288.

More information about Associate Professor Habibis is available online here: www.utas.edu.au/profiles/staff/sociology/daphne-habibis

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