



## VACCHO Media Release

# VACCHO is outraged by racism being perpetuated by The Australian newspaper

**Thursday 4 August 2016**

Ms Louise Lyons, Acting CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) has written to the Editor in Chief, Paul Whittaker to convey our utmost despair that the Nations own newspaper, The Australian, could make such an uninformed editorial decision that saw the publication of the Bill Leakes blatantly racist cartoon on 4 August 2016.

VACCHO is the peak body for Aboriginal Health in Victoria and represents 27 member Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

On National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, The Australian should be taking the opportunity to celebrate the strength and culture our communities and families have in raising Aboriginal children.

Educating the public on the crucial impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child is a shared national vision to close the gap.

Instead, our national newspaper has made a deliberate decision to publish an outdated, overtly racist cartoon that plays to the majority uninformed public, further inciting stereotypical misconceptions of Aboriginal culture and parenting practices.

Racial discrimination is well documented as a contributing factor to poor health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Racial stigmatisation of Aboriginal parents will not reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the youth justice or child protection system but further disadvantage the most vulnerable in our community.

A political cartoonists primary role is to push boundaries and provoke discussion but not in a manner that is prejudice and unlawfully aggravates racial hatred.

It is well documented that members of communities targeted by racism can feel anxious, unwelcome and less confident to participate in public life and debate. "I am surprised that an Editor of our national newspaper, has twisted the words of a respected Aboriginal academic to justify the publication of Leaks cartoon as pursuing a national debate" said Ms Lyons.

VACCHO has offered Bill Leaks and colleagues the opportunity to participate in VACCHO's Cultural Safety Training, as education always triumphs over ignorance. VACCHO also urged the Editor in Chief to apologise to their readers and our Aboriginal community.

It is important to stamp out racism, and VACCHO would like to remind the wider population that racism must not be tolerated and must be reported. If you experience or witness racism, report it to [reportracism.com.au](http://reportracism.com.au) or [antihate.vic.gov.au](http://antihate.vic.gov.au).

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