

Australian African Network Media Release

10 October 2007

Minister's comments on African migrants fuels racism says mother of African Australian child

“As the mother of a mixed African-Australian child and living in partnership with an African, I know first-hand the personal impact of racism within Australia,” says Liz Tinney.

Just recently, our friend's 4 year old child was told by her best friend that she didn't want to be her friend any more because there were black people at her birthday party and she (the four year old friend) “didn't like black people”.

Liz adds, “This experience is not uncommon for African-Australian children and their parents, and the recent comments by Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews about Sudanese refugees and subsequent racist media coverage by some commercial television channels definitely affects all of us”. Liz is a member of a community based group, the African Australian Network, which was established last year to support connections between African and non African Australians. She says that experiences of racism often impact on the stability of Australian-African families and play a significant role in the survival of these mixed families.

Since Kevin Andrews' statements about Sudanese refugees, the Australian African Network has sought support from all Australians to challenge the Minister's racial attacks. “The impact of the Minister's statements affects not only the lives and experiences of Sudanese families but the lives of all African Australians, and most sadly those of our children. It also affects all Australians who want to live in a society based on justice, respect and a valuing of diversity” says Liz. Asked to define the problem created by Mr Andrews' comments, AAN Co-Convenor, Annie Stopford said “We are concerned that the racial card is being used as another 'Tampa' just before the election, waving a green flag for racist comments to be validated through the media. The comments are a political stunt that, if left unchallenged, could have grave results for the Australian society for many years to come. They need to be challenged by all Australians who believe in justice, and who value diversity and respect for all”.

Australians are responding to the call to oppose the Minister's racial comments. “This should not be left entirely to the African communities to fight – all Australians must say ‘NO’ to racism. If we stay quiet, then we are condoning the comments. “ A small but committed organisation, the AAN is fully aware that whilst the Minister's racial comments are particularly damaging to Sudanese refugees, the reverberations affect all other Africans, and African Australian children and families. The AAN invites all Australians to take a stand against racism and sign a petition to say ‘NO to racial politics’. Go to: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/australians-say-no-to-racial-politics.html>

CONTACT: Liz Tinney
Phone: 9789 6509

For more information on the Australian African Network (AAN) go to their new website www.australianafricanetwork.org.au