



MEDIA RELEASE

From:

African Think Tank Inc.

**WORKING WITH
VICTORIA'S AFRICAN COMMUNITY
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AFRICAN THINK TANK SUPPORTS INDIAN STUDENTS

Melbourne, today: The African Think Tank has stated its support for Indian students victimised in racist attacks.

“We join Australian society in condemning those who make racist attacks on vulnerable students,” said Dr. Berhan Ahmed, Chairperson of the African Think Tank. “Australia is not a racist culture. But there is a racist element. The Federal government has admitted the nature of these attacks. The Victorian government must also admit that these attacks are racially based and urgently develop strategies to ensure that racial harmony is maintained.

“The members of the African communities know all too well that there are racist elements. Our members are sometimes subject to misunderstanding, harassment, and even abuse. These do not represent the main stream of Australian life. But given a culture of denial and of covering up, they become stronger. The enemies of freedom and tolerance flourish in the darkness.

“Students from other countries come here in hope, looking to improve their own lives. Overseas students are a major income source for Australia and are especially important in funding our educational institutions. This government is looking at the moment to encourage more students from Africa to come to Australia to study.

The Victorian government is acting against racists by means of the hot line, strengthened anti-hate laws, increased liaison with migrant communities, and an improved campaign to catch offenders on public transport. Nevertheless, some of the government's other actions and statements have contributed to international doubt on the safety of foreign students here. The Victorian government and police needs to publicly accept that this is racist violence, to listen to the concerns of international students and migrants, and to work with them in an open and receptive process to discourage all such bigotry and violence in our community.

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