Submission to the National Anti-Racism Partnership & Strategy Discussion Paper

Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project

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Objective 1: Create awareness of racism and how it affects individuals and the broader community

1. What can we learn from how Australia has dealt with racism in the past? What achievements should we build on? What mistakes should we learn from?

Better Leveraging from Strengths

Research by the Challenging Racism project reveals Australians hold many positive attitudes about cultural diversity. For example, 87 per cent of Australians agree ‘It is a good thing for society to be made up of people from different cultures’. Further, 84 per cent dispute the idea of a racial hierarchy.¹ The anti-racism strategy should seek to build on these positive attitudes, and use them as part of campaigns to point out incongruencies between these positive attitudes and racist behaviour.

Public Acknowledgment of Racism

Having said this, public acknowledgment that racism exists in Australia is a necessary first step to addressing racism and must be part of an effective anti-racism strategy. Public acknowledgement that racism exists in Australia is high: 84 per cent of Australian respondents to the Challenging Racism survey acknowledged the existence of racism in Australia.² Acknowledgment of racism at a political level should be equally high; it shores up the case for remedial anti-racism action at both a national and a local level.

2. What information would be useful to include in a campaign to prevent and reduce racism?

Diversity among Groups

The need to examine diversity within groups relates strongly to an ‘everywhere different’ approach to framing effective anti-racism initiatives. The issue here is that ‘ethnic’ areas in Australian cities in particular are not homogeneous. They represent a wide mix of different ethnic groups, some of which are culturally distinct from the host (commonly seen as Anglo-Celtic) society, and others much less so. Nor are they static. Anti-racism campaigns should

depict the heterogeneity of Indigenous Australians and culturally and linguistically diverse Australians.

**Locally Appropriate Anti-Racism Campaigns**
Research by the Challenging Racism Project has demonstrated the ‘everywhere different’ nature of racism. This literature contends that racism varies by place. If this is the case, anti-racism programmes will be most effective when tailored to this local variation.

**Objective 2: Identify, promote and build on good practice initiatives to prevent and reduce racism**

4. **What are the priority areas in which we should be addressing racism (for example: employment, education, sport, the media, cyber-racism?)**

**Institutional Anti-Racism**
Addressing racism in key settings including institutions/organisations such as workplaces, educational institutions and sporting organisations should be a priority. Action in these settings should be undertaken with not only the goal of organisational change, but with the goal of changing broader social norms.

**Cyber Racism**
A good deal of commerce and culture has moved onto the internet, and so has racism, including both organised racism and everyday racist discourse. The numbers of complaints regarding internet based racism and racist vilification have been expanding in recent years, and constitute a growing proportion of all such complaints. There are concerns that youth are particularly exposed to racism within social media spaces and through Short Message Services (SMS). There has been very little research on racism and anti-racism in internet, and too little policy consideration of anti-racism in this space. We do not know enough about how racism is dealt with by Internet Service Providers (ISPs), how many complaints are made, nor how anti-racism organisations and activists operate. ISPs (such as YouTube, facebook and MySpace, etc) must be mandated to report on their current operating procedures for handling complaints / reports. How are complaints triaged, and what benchmarks are used to determine responses? There is a stated industry preference for self-regulation of these matters, for non-reporting, and for adhoc tolerance-building initiatives. These self-regulatory regimes are self-serving, non-transparent and ineffective. There is an urgent need for proper reporting to the relevant government agencies (e.g.

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AHRC) of the number, nature and outcomes of all reports and complaints of racism within these internet spaces. In this way the Australian Government can better meets international reporting and recording responsibilities.

5. What measures should governments at all levels take to address racism?

State and Federal Level Leadership
Locality based anti-racism is a current policy focus in Australia, yet must be accompanied by leadership and support. At this point in time Victoria and Queensland have state-based locally oriented programmes in place: the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) in Victoria, and the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships (LAMP) programme in Queensland. This type of formalised state support for local anti-racism would be beneficial across all states and territories as a means of providing support, leadership and resourcing for local anti-racism projects.

Improved Measures and Reporting
- Access and Equity benchmarks to test for substantive equality
- Formal recording and reporting of racism as per ICERD requirements

6. What role can business, the arts, sporting organisations, community groups, service organisations and the media play in addressing racism?

‘Micropublic’ is a term used to refer to local places of everyday interaction where negotiations of difference commonly take place. Key micropublics include schools, workplaces and sporting clubs. These spaces are politically important as they are sites where intercultural interaction is most often worked out. We need to acknowledge that the types of organisations listed here are important spaces of anti-racism. Organisations can play a role by ensuring they have appropriate policies around recruitment and retention of staff, staff training and accessible avenues for reporting and redress of racism that occurs in the workplace.

7. How can we involve young people in addressing racism?
Research by the Challenging Racism Project suggests that two important venues for involving young people in anti-racism should be:
- Cyber (and social media) anti-racism
- Schools, potentially including work on bystander anti-racism

8. Can you give examples of strategies that you have seen used or been part of that have been successful in preventing or reducing racism? Why were they effective?

We would like to highlight the importance of rigorous evaluation of anti-racism strategies and suggest this should be considered a key component of the national anti-racism strategy. Successful strategies are best identified via rigorous evaluations. When dealing with inter-

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6 See: Greco T, Priest N, & Paradies Y (2010): Review of strategies and resources to address race-based discrimination and support diversity in schools. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Carlton, Australia.
personal anti-racism strategies, it is best to use past research as a guide otherwise the intervention may backfire.\textsuperscript{8} Although very little research has been done using a “before and after” evaluation, research finds that racist attitudes can be changed for the better with both students\textsuperscript{9} and with older Australians in the community.\textsuperscript{10}

A review looking at way to prevent race-based discrimination in the workplace was commissioned by VicHealth. This review describes a range of possible interventions that are used in the workplace and reviews evidence of the effectiveness of cultural diversity training and measures to encourage cross-cultural contact in the workplace.\textsuperscript{11}

10. How could these experiences be shared to help promote good practice? (For example: a best practice website, clearing house, seeding funding for pilot programs, changing criteria for Government grants programs?)

A Clearing House of resources around racism and anti-racism would be useful. An excellent example of one that is run by A/Professor Anne Pedersen at Murdoch University is the Prejudice Mob: \url{http://www.psychology.murdoch.edu.au/prejudice.html}

Objective 3: Empower communities and individuals to take action to prevent and reduce racism and seek redress when it occurs

Virtues of speaking up and out

Given the everyday nature of much racism, action by ordinary people, especially those who witness racism, could play an important role in anti-racism. Everyday action by ordinary people has the potential to unsettle normalised, but potentially problematic, occurrences. Everyday action may benefit not only those targeted by racism, but also perpetrators and bystanders themselves.\textsuperscript{12} Assertive responding to racism, or speaking up and out, has been shown to stop racist behaviour at the moment of confrontation, and also over the longer term.\textsuperscript{13} Everyday action has the potential to impact on social norms. Public condemnation of...

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VicHealth 2012, Preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity in the workplace (An evidence review: summary report), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.


racism by ordinary individuals can overcome what social psychologists call ‘false consensus effects’, which result from individuals overestimating general community support for their racist views.\textsuperscript{14}

**Bystander / pro-social action: Enablers, barriers, tips for action**

Bystander anti-racism can be thought of as action taken by ‘ordinary’ people in response to interpersonal or systemic racism. Developing individuals capacity to engage in this form of anti-racism has been largely absent from government policy in Australia, yet bystander anti-racism has the potential to stop racism at the time it occurs; prevent the physical, psychological and social harms that are associated with racism; and, importantly, build social norms that are intolerant of racism. Research suggests that bystander anti-racism behaviour can be successfully taught.\textsuperscript{15} Bystander anti-racism is politically significant in developing effective approaches that shift the burden of anti-racism away from targets.

Research has identified a number of factors that either facilitate or constrain bystander anti-racism. A full list is provided in Table 1 overleaf. Obstacles to bystander anti-racism include a lack of identification between a bystander and the person targeted by racism; and perceptions of risk, both to personal safety and social status. Enablers include factors such as an awareness of the harm caused by racism; empathy for the target; and a sense of personal responsibility for acting.


Table 1: Potential Enablers and Obstacles to Bystander Action

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers of bystander action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of what constitutes racism</td>
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<td>Awareness of harm caused by racism</td>
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<td>Perception of responsibility to intervene</td>
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<td>Perceived ability to intervene – skills (optimism, self/collective efficacy)</td>
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<td>Desire to educate perpetrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affective responses to racism: empathy, expressing anger, disapproval etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-racist social norms</td>
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<tr>
<th>Obstacles to bystander action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exclusive group identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of violence or vilification, being targeted by perpetrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception that action would be ineffective</td>
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<td>Lack of knowledge about how to intervene</td>
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<td>Gender role prescriptions for women</td>
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<td>Impression management, preserving interpersonal relations</td>
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<td>Desire to avoid conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom of speech/anti-political correctness</td>
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<td>Social norms that are tolerant of racism</td>
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