



## **NATIONAL ANTI-RACISM PARTNERSHIP AND STRATEGY**

### **DISCUSSION PAPER**

In February 2011, the Australian Government announced Australia's new multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*,<sup>1</sup> which reaffirms the importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation.

A key component of the policy is the establishment of a national partnership to develop and implement a National Anti-Racism Strategy for Australia.

A zero tolerance approach to racism goes hand in hand with the broad acceptance of multiculturalism in Australia. It is integral to achieving a fair go for all.

As Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, I will be leading the development of the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. The Government's intention is that the Partnership will draw on existing expertise on anti-racism and multicultural matters across three government departments – the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The Partnership also includes the Australian Multicultural Council, for whom this Strategy is a key priority. Indeed, the Government committed to developing an anti-racism strategy in response to the recommendation of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council.

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) also participate in the Partnership as non-government representatives.

This discussion paper has been prepared to stimulate debate, discussion and input to the National Anti-Racism Strategy. It is not intended to be a detailed discussion of all of the issues relating to racism in Australia. Rather, it provides an overview of the background to the Strategy and to key issues, accompanied by a series of questions to guide submissions to the Strategy.

We want your views about what we do well in the fight against racism as well as your thoughts on where and how we can do better.

We hope you will contribute – by completing our survey, making a submission on the issues identified in this paper, or participating in a public event.

**Helen Szoke**  
Race Discrimination Commissioner  
March 2012

## **About the National Anti-Racism Strategy and Partnership**

### **The aim of the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy is:**

*To promote a clear understanding in the Australian community of what racism is, and how it can be prevented and reduced.*

### **The objectives of the Strategy are to:**

- *create awareness of racism and how it affects individuals and the broader community*
- *identify, promote and build on good practice initiatives to prevent and reduce racism, and*
- *empower communities and individuals to take action to prevent and reduce racism and to seek redress when it occurs.*

## **Key areas**

The Partnership has been tasked with designing, developing and implementing the Strategy, with five key areas of effort:

- research and consultation
- education resources
- public awareness
- youth engagement, and
- ongoing evaluation.

It is anticipated that the Strategy will be drafted by 30 June 2012 and implemented between 2012-2015.

## **WHY DO WE NEED AN ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY?**

Australia is a multicultural nation. From the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who represent the oldest continuous culture in the world, through to the newly arrived communities that have made Australia their home – cultural, religious and

linguistic diversity are fundamental to our national identity. This is something to be celebrated.

However, far too many individuals and communities in Australia still experience prejudice, racial discrimination and racism on a daily basis, in any number of situations – in employment, in education or sport, or simply when walking down the street.

Racism has a significant impact both on the individuals who experience it, and the wider community. Research shows that there are significant links between experiences of racism and discrimination and poor physical and mental health, reduced productivity and reduced life expectancy.<sup>2</sup> Further, it is well-recognised that racism presents barriers to social and economic participation which can in turn cause social exclusion and entrench disadvantage, sometimes for generations. More broadly, racism and prejudice undermine social cohesion and work against our commitment to a diverse and inclusive community.

Of course, Australia is not the only country where racism exists. Every country has their distinct experience of racism influenced by their own history and culture. We will need to develop responses to racism that are appropriate to the Australian context and which complement our shared values of equality and a fair go for all.<sup>3</sup>

## **WHAT IS RACISM?**

Racism takes many forms. In general, it is a *belief* that a particular race or ethnicity is inferior or superior to others. Racial discrimination involves any *act* where a person is treated unfairly or vilified because of their race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin.

Racism may take the form of stereotyping, name calling or insults, commentary in the media, speeches at public assemblies and abuse on the internet. It can include directly or indirectly excluding people from accessing services, employment, education or sporting activities.

Racism can occur systemically, as the result of policies, conditions and practices that affect a broad group of people. For example, research shows that systemic racism can result in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experiencing poorer outcomes in education,<sup>4</sup> or job applicants without Anglo-Saxon names finding it difficult to gain job interviews.<sup>5</sup>

Just as other forms of discrimination may relate to a number of attributes, so does the experience of racism. For example, racism may compound the experience of discrimination of a woman, who is treated less favourably on the basis of her religion *and* her gender, or an older person, who is discriminated against on the basis of their skin colour *and* their age.

In its most serious manifestation, racism is demonstrated in behaviours and activities that embody race hate, abuse and violence – particularly experienced by groups who are visibly different because of their cultural or religious dress, their skin colour or their physical appearance.

Ultimately, racism is a tool to gain and maintain power. It is also inextricably linked with socio-economic factors, and frequently reflects underlying inequalities in a society.

### **The incidence of racism and racial discrimination in Australia**

The 2011 *Mapping Social Cohesion* report showed that 14% of Australians surveyed by the Scanlon Foundation reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of their colour, ethnic origin or religion. This figure has been increasing in recent years – it was 9% in 2007, 10% in 2009 and 14% in both 2010 and 2011.<sup>6</sup>

National data from the *Challenging Racism Project* was released in 2011 and measures the prevalence of racism and racist attitudes in Australia.<sup>7</sup> The research found that:

- around 85% of respondents believe that racism is a current issue in Australia
- around 20% of respondents had experienced forms of race-hate talk (verbal abuse, name-calling, racial slurs, offensive gestures etc)
- around 11% of respondents identified having experienced race-based exclusion from their workplaces and/or social activities
- 7% of respondents identified having experienced unfair treatment based on their race
- 6% of respondents reported that they had experienced physical attacks based on their race.

### **WHO EXPERIENCES RACISM IN AUSTRALIA?**

#### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience high levels of racism in Australia, across multiple settings. For example, the Challenging Racism data released in March 2011 found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents experienced four times the racism of non-Aboriginal Australians in relation to contact with police and in seeking housing.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, 2008 research found that 27% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the age of 15 reported experiencing discrimination in the preceding 12 months, in particular by the general public, in law and justice settings and in employment.<sup>9</sup> More recent research has found that three out of four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regularly experienced race discrimination when accessing primary health care, contributing to some people not being diagnosed and treated for disease in its early stages.<sup>10</sup>

It has been identified that the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today are compounded by the historical disadvantage caused by previous racially discriminatory policies.<sup>11</sup>

### *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia are themselves diverse, having quite different experiences of migration and settlement. As a result, their experiences of racism vary considerably.

The Challenging Racism research found that people born overseas experienced higher rates of racism than those born in Australia, and were twice as likely to experience racism in the workplace.<sup>12</sup>

Recent research suggests that “settled” migrants tend to experience lower levels of racism or racist attitudes than more recent arrivals to Australia.<sup>13</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission’s recent work with Arab and Muslim Australians<sup>14</sup> and African Australians<sup>15</sup> suggests that these communities are at a higher risk than more recent arrivals of experiencing discrimination and prejudice. This supports previous research undertaken by the Commission that found “visible” ethnic and religious minorities, are groups more likely to be regularly subjected to racism because their “difference” in terms of skin colour, dress or cultural/religious practices singles them out as targets of racism.<sup>16</sup>

### **HOW DO WE CURRENTLY RESPOND TO RACISM?**

Australia’s responses to racial discrimination and racism are guided by the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD). This treaty was the first major human rights treaty agreed through the United Nations in the 1960s. 175 countries have ratified the treaty, pledging to take steps to eliminate racism and discrimination.

Other international conventions which Australia has signed mandate the protection of religious beliefs and cultural identity. The *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) protects the right to freedom of religion and belief. It provides that everyone has the right to adopt the religion or belief of their choice, and to practice it in private or in public. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) protects the right of all peoples to self-determination and to take part in cultural life.

Domestically, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (RDA) gives effect to Australia’s obligations under ICERD. The RDA promotes equality before the law for people of all races, national and ethnic backgrounds and prohibits discrimination in areas of employment, education, sport, buying goods and using services. In 1995, the RDA was extended to make racial vilification against the law.

State and Territory jurisdictions also prohibit racial discrimination in their anti-discrimination legislation.

Legal frameworks such as these are important but they are only one part of the solution to racism. They need to be accompanied by other measures, such as effective education, if we are to sustain progress in the fight against racism over time.

We know that there are already many successful programs and policies aimed at combating racism in Australia.<sup>17</sup> Ideally, the new national Anti-Racism Strategy will build on these and other examples of good practice in preventing and addressing racism.

## **WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU**

We want to hear your ideas about how we can most effectively tackle racism, through our own individual actions, and at a broader community level.

You can contribute by:

- Completing our electronic survey at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism/survey.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism/survey.html)
- Making a submission in response to the questions below.

We have organised a range of questions under each of the objectives of the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy.

You don't need to answer all the questions and they are not exhaustive. If you feel that key issues have been overlooked, please expand on these points in your submission.

### **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?
2. What information would be useful to include in a campaign to prevent and reduce racism?
3. How could we better acknowledge the contributions to Australia of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities?

### **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?)
5. What measures should governments at all levels take to address racism?
6. What role can business, the arts, sporting organisations, community groups, service organisations and the media play in addressing racism?

7. How can we involve young people in addressing 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?
9. What tools or resources do we have at the community level which could be better utilised in the fight against racism?
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?)

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

11. What strategies or approaches can be used to help individuals and communities who experience racism to speak up or take action? If you have experienced racism, what would have helped you to speak up or take action?
12. What strategies or approaches can be used to help bystanders address racism where and when it occurs?

**HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION**

- Email - please send to: [antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au)
- Hard copy - please send to:  
National Anti-Racism Secretariat  
Race Discrimination Team  
Australian Human Rights Commission  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney NSW 2001

The Commission will arrange for translation of submissions received in languages other than English.

**Closing date for submissions:**  
11 May 2012

**Confidentiality**

Submissions will be treated as public documents unless confidentiality is requested. The Australian Human Rights Commission may:

- include a list of submissions on the website
- refer to submissions in the text of the strategy and other Commission publications

- publish selected submissions on its website.

If you want your submission, or any part of it, to be treated as confidential, please indicate this clearly.

Requests by members of the public for access to confidential submissions will be determined in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth).

### **Find out more**

For more information about the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, go to [www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism) or contact us:

Email: [antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au)

Phone: 02 9284 9600 or 1800 620 241 (TTY)





<sup>1</sup> *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy*, launched on 16 February 2011 <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-multicultural-australia/multicultural-policy/>  
<http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-multicultural-australia/multicultural-policy/>  
(viewed 1 February 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Vic Health, *Making the link between cultural discrimination and health* Vic Health letter 1 June 2007  
At <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/en/Publications/VicHealth-Letter/Making-the-link-between-cultural-discrimination-and-health.aspx> (viewed November 2011). Further, a growing body of evidence suggests that discrimination and racism are linked to a range of adverse health conditions among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as smoking, substance use, psychological distress and poor self-assessed health status: Dr Yin Paradies, A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, August (2006) 35(4): 888-901, p 1. At: <http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/dyl056v1> (viewed 23 November 2011). Similarly, some research suggests a link between ethnic and racial discrimination and poor mental health and wellbeing: Vic Health 2008 Research Summary 3 *Ethnic and race-based discrimination as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing* (2009) At [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au) (viewed August 2011)

<sup>3</sup> A number of other countries have had national anti-racism strategies in place that may be useful to inform the development of Australia's National Anti-Racism Strategy. These include: Norway's Action plan to promote equality and prevent ethnic discrimination (2009-2012) – see: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld/Topics/ethnic-discrimination/action-plan-to-promote.html?id=588606>; Scottish Government Race Equality Statement (2008) – see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18934/RaceEqualityStatement>; Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism (2005) – see: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/CH34-7-2005E.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Loretta de Plevitz, 'Systemic racism: the hidden barrier to educational success for Indigenous school students', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol.51, No.1, 2007, pp54-77. Accessed at [www.acer.edu.au/documents/AJE\\_51-1\\_Plevitz\\_e.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/AJE_51-1_Plevitz_e.pdf) (viewed 1 February 2012)

<sup>5</sup> Alison Booth, Andrew Leigh, Elena Varganova, 'Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence From a Field Experiment'. Research School of Economics, Australian National University, accessed at <http://apo.org.au/research/does-racial-and-ethnic-discrimination-vary-across-minority-groups-evidence-three-experiment> (viewed 1 February 2012)

<sup>6</sup> The research was based on a random phone survey of 2,000 people conducted in June-July 2011. See: Markus, A, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2011: the Scanlon Foundation Survey*, Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements, Monash University, Victoria, accessed at <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/scanlon-foundation-surveys.php> (viewed 1 February 2012)

<sup>7</sup> The research was based on random phone surveys with 12,500 people conducted between 2001 and 2008. See: *Challenging Racism Project* at: [http://www.uws.edu.au/social\\_sciences/soss/research/challenging\\_racism/findings\\_by\\_region](http://www.uws.edu.au/social_sciences/soss/research/challenging_racism/findings_by_region) (viewed 27 November 2011).

- <sup>8</sup> Kevin Dunn et al, *Challenging Racism: the anti-racism research project, 2008 Attitudes to cultural diversity, old racisms and recognition of racism, state level comparisons (opens in new window)*, 4Rs Conference (University of Technology, Sydney) 30 Sept - 3 Oct 2008. Accessed at [http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school\\_of\\_social\\_sciences\\_and\\_psychology/research/challenging\\_racism/publications](http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school_of_social_sciences_and_psychology/research/challenging_racism/publications) (2 February 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: An overview 2011*, note 42. At: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737418989> (viewed 23 November 2011)
- <sup>10</sup> Yin Paradies, Ricci Harris, Ian Anderson, *The impact of racism on Indigenous health in Australia and Aotearoa: towards a research agenda*, March 2008, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health: Discussion paper series No. 4, Accessed at: [www.lowitja.org.au/files/craah\\_docs/Racism-Report.pdf](http://www.lowitja.org.au/files/craah_docs/Racism-Report.pdf) (viewed 1 February 2012)
- <sup>11</sup> See, for example, Reconciliation Australia, *Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2010*, Question and Answer Fact Sheet, At: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/barometer-2010> (viewed 1 February 2012) which notes respondents' belief that previous race-based policies continue to affect some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.
- <sup>12</sup> Kevin Dunn et al, *Challenging Racism: the anti-racism research project, 2008 Attitudes to cultural diversity, old racisms and recognition of racism, state level comparisons (opens in new window)*, 4Rs Conference (University of Technology, Sydney) 30 Sept - 3 Oct 2008. Accessed at [http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school\\_of\\_social\\_sciences\\_and\\_psychology/research/challenging\\_racism/publications](http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school_of_social_sciences_and_psychology/research/challenging_racism/publications) (2 February 2012).
- <sup>13</sup> For example, the 2010 and 2011 Scanlon Foundation surveys indicated a long-term change in Australian opinion, with a large measure of acceptance of groups once stigmatised: "The level of negative feeling towards immigrants from Italy and Greece was found to be less than 3%; it was 7% towards immigrants from Vietnam and 13% from China.": Markus, A, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2011: the Scanlon Foundation Survey*, Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements, Monash University, Victoria, accessed at <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/scanlon-foundation-surveys.php> (viewed 1 February 2012), Executive Summary, pp1-2.
- <sup>14</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) *A dialogue on human rights and responsibilities (2008) Report on the Commission's Muslim Women's Project 2006*. Accessed at [http://humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/livingspirit/index.html](http://humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/livingspirit/index.html) (viewed 1 February 2012), Australian Human Rights Commission, *Ismae – Listen, National Consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*, 2004. Accessed at [http://humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/ismae/report/chap1.html](http://humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/ismae/report/chap1.html) (viewed 1 February 2012).
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *In our own words African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues* and Australian Human rights Commission 2010. Accessed at <http://humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/review/index.html> (viewed 1 February 2012). See also Australian Human Rights Commission, *African Australians: human rights and social inclusion issues project: A compendium detailing the outcomes of the community and stakeholder consultations and interviews and public submissions*, 2010. Accessed at <http://humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/compendium/index.html> (viewed 1 February 2012); Australian Human Rights Commission, *Human rights issues affecting African Australian communities: Western Sydney and Perth Roundtables*, 2012. Accessed at [http://humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/2011\\_roundtables/index.html](http://humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/2011_roundtables/index.html) (viewed 1 February 2012).
- <sup>16</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, "I want Respect and Equality" A summary of Consultations with Civil Society on Racism in Australia", 2001. Accessed at [http://humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/consultations/consultations.html](http://humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/consultations/consultations.html) (viewed 1 February 2012).

<sup>17</sup> A number of local and State Governments within Australia have implemented strategies to combat racism, encourage cultural harmony and social cohesion in their communities. See, for example:

- Queensland Multicultural Policy - A multicultural future for all of us <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural/about-us/queensland-multicultural-policy-a-multicultural-future-for-all-of-us>
- WA Framework for Substantive Equality <http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Substantiveequality/AboutSubstantiveEquality.aspx>
- Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2009-2012 <http://www.reconciliation.qld.gov.au/reconciliation/reconciliation-action-plan>
- VicHealth Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity project <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/LEAD>
- Queensland Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural/community/community-partnerships/local-area-multicultural-partnerships-lamp-program>

Many sectors of Australian society have also implemented policies and practices that aim, in part, to tackle racism and its impact. For example:

#### *Media*

- SBS's *Codes of Practice 2006*  
<http://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate/view/id/109/h/Codes-of-Practice>
- SBS's *The Greater Perspective: Protocol and Guidelines for the Production of Film and Television on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*  
<http://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate/view/id/106/h/The-Greater-Perspective>
- The ABC's *ABC Codes of Practice 2011*  
[www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/codeofpractice2011.pdf](http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/codeofpractice2011.pdf)
- *The ABC's Reconciliation Action Plan for the Years 2009-2012*  
<http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/abcrap.htm>
- Free TV's Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice  
[http://www.freetv.com.au/content\\_common/pg-code-of-practice.seo](http://www.freetv.com.au/content_common/pg-code-of-practice.seo)

#### *Sport*

- Play By The Rules  
<http://www.playbytherules.net.au>
- AFL Multicultural Program  
<http://www.aflcommunityclub.com.au/index.php?id=605>

#### *Internet*

- All Together Now  
<http://www.alltogethernow.org.au/>
- Welcome to Australia  
<http://www.welcometoaustralia.org.au/>

#### *Arts*

- Australia Council's Arts in a Multicultural Australia Policy  
[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/about\\_us/policies/arts\\_in\\_a\\_multicultural\\_australia\\_policy\\_2006](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/about_us/policies/arts_in_a_multicultural_australia_policy_2006)
- Kultour  
<http://www.kultour.com.au/>
- The Anti Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B)  
<http://arab-vass.com/>

#### *Business*

- Ethnic Business Awards  
<http://www.ethnicbusinessawards.com/>