



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**

everyone, everywhere, everyday

Human rights issues affecting African Australian communities

Western Sydney and Perth Roundtables – 2011

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1 Acknowledgements

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- The Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre for their partnership with the Commission, and financial support for the Western Sydney roundtable
- The Equal Opportunity Commission Western Australia for partnering with the Commission in the organisation of the Perth roundtable
- Members of the Project Reference Group for their invaluable contribution in the development of this initiative and facilitation of the roundtables
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in NSW, Western Australia, the Community Relations Section and the Settlement Policy Division in Canberra for providing data and key interagency contacts
- And finally, roundtable participants for their generous contributions and participation in this initiative.

2 Introduction

The Commission facilitated two roundtable discussions in Western Sydney and Perth on 28 July and 23 September respectively. The roundtables brought together over 80 participants representing government departments/agencies, community organisations and representatives of African Australian communities. The roundtables aimed to:

- raise awareness of the key human rights issues raised in the *In Our Own Words – African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion* report (the Report)
- foster discussion among key stakeholders on human rights issues affecting African Australian communities
- develop advocacy strategies to address human rights issues affecting African Australian communities

This document provides a summary of the discussion that took place at the roundtables.

Opening

Race Commissioner Graeme Innes AM and Commissioner Yvonne Henderson of the Equal Opportunity Commission Western Australia (EOC WA) made opening statements at the Western Sydney and Perth roundtables respectively. They welcomed participants to the roundtables – a next step in building upon the findings in the Report. They also highlighted some of the key challenges to the settlement and integration experience of African Australians identified in the Report and the

importance of ensuring policy design, service delivery and resourcing adequately respond to these (attached at Appendix 1).

Following this, participants were provided with a brief introduction to the Report in order to provide the background and context for the day's discussions (attached at Appendix 2).

After these introductory presentations, participants at the Perth roundtable noted that there is little acknowledgement of the local or professional knowledge or expertise/capabilities that exist in African Australian communities. As a result, even where there is expertise within African Australian communities external consultants/facilitators are often hired to do research/consultations involving such communities.

In addition, Perth participants observed that their role as instigators of the initial consultation phase of the project was not adequately recognised in the Report. They requested full recognition of all stakeholders working with African Australian communities.

Participants in Perth also raised questions about the scope of the consultation phase of the project particularly in terms of how the Commission defined 'African'. In response, Commission staff and some leaders of Western Australian African communities noted that the consultation phase of the project was opened to all who considered themselves to have an African background regardless of skin colour.

Perth participants also observed that there seems to be too many consultations targeting African Australian communities with very little action on implementation of findings. This has led to strong feelings of consultation fatigue among many. Participants further observed that the few community leaders and elders constantly engaged are suffering from burn out. They emphasized the need for action and community leadership on initiatives that affect them. To this end, there was a call for increased support towards a unified platform, such as an overarching umbrella group, to provide strong representation and links between African Australian communities and government and service providers.

Small group thematic discussions

Participants were divided into four groups according to the major challenges faced by African Australian communities identified in the Report:

- child protection and family law
- legal assistance
- training and employment
- health care and housing.

Following group discussions, each group reported back to the plenary highlighting the key challenges as well as recommendations and suggestions for addressing these challenges. Other participants then had an opportunity to add to this during the plenary discussion.

Following is a summary of the discussions under these four themes.

3 Summary of issues

3.1 Child protection and family law

The *In Our Own Words* Report highlights that information about the child protection system and family law is a pressing concern for newly-arrived African Australians. The Report stresses the need for child protection agencies to develop culturally sensitive approaches to assessment and intervention.

In the roundtable discussions, participants highlighted the significant challenges at both the service delivery and policy levels.

Challenges at the level of service delivery:

Participants at both roundtables said that the approach of many child protection agencies fosters a sense of 'us' and 'them' and a feeling among some African Australian communities that their family values are considered substandard.

Participants also noted that the limited understanding among service providers of the cultural backgrounds of African Australian communities can have a negative impact on otherwise good initiatives.

Participants further discussed the need for service providers to be provided with better information about the specific needs of African Australian communities so they can design services that better respond to these needs.

Participants in the roundtables shared experience of how some interventions aimed at responding to issues of child protection and family law are not sustained owing to drip feeding of funds and insufficient investment or commitment.

In Perth, participants noted that there are gaps in service delivery and limited coordination among service providers, owing in part to competition resulting in duplication of efforts.

At the Western Sydney roundtable, participants said that many child protection agencies applied a 'needs-based approach' rather than a rights-based approach to service delivery.

Western Sydney participants also shared experiences of good practice in child protection work, such as the *'African Learning Circle'*, supported by the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Family and Community Services. However, they observed that information about such initiatives does not go far and wide enough.

Challenges at the policy level:

Under policy level challenges, participants at both roundtables said that the provision of a one year program of intensive English to newly arrived African Australians is insufficient to cater for the varying levels of support needed by people from different backgrounds and circumstances. They shared experiences of many people who have been through the program but find it difficult to communicate with the

Department of Community Services on child protection issues. Participants further discussed how this language barrier contributes to limited knowledge of child protection laws and systems among many in the communities.

The seeming lack of trust in the child protection system among many in African Australian communities was noted as another challenge.

Anecdotally, participants reported that there seems to be an increasing number of African Australian children in out-of-home care placements.

In Western Sydney, participants observed that there are different systems for refugees across States and Territories resulting in unequal access to primary care services, which assist families to avoid entry into child protection system.

Recommendations

Participants identified the following key recommendations to address these challenges:

For service providers:

- Periodically evaluate good practice programs in order to strengthen the body of knowledge to improve service delivery programs
- Service providers should work towards better coordination and communication, and explore new ways of working together to maximize their impact in communities
- Improve communication with communities by using more culturally appropriate engagement strategies. This includes provision of information to African Australian communities in ways that are accessible and do not overwhelm them
- Learn to apply a human rights-based approach to service provision. This could be done by training staff on human rights, respecting the right to information for parents and promoting early intervention (particularly early referral in mainstream services before it becomes a child protection matter).
- Strengthen communities to organise and take leadership in issues that affect them.

For government departments and agencies:

- Encourage and support various pathways to mediation including the use of family group conferencing
- Facilitate more engagement with communities through consultations and ongoing dialogue on child protection laws and systems
- Design and implement policies and programs in ways that address the diverse needs of the population rather than a 'one-size fits all' approach
- Review the English Language program to adequately meet the varying needs of communities.

3.2 Legal assistance

The *In Our Own Words* Report highlights that African Australian communities have major concerns about their engagement with the justice system and their relationship

with law enforcement agencies. For example, the Report reveals that communities have low levels of awareness of Australian laws and the justice system and there is a seeming mistrust between the police and the communities. Furthermore, the Report highlights the need for legal literacy for newly-arrived communities, and the provision of affordable legal services.

In the roundtables, participants discussed the complexity of legal procedures and legal aid processes which makes it difficult for many in African Australian communities, particularly new arrivals, to effectively navigate the system. This is impeding the ability of many within such communities to access their rights in Australia. In Perth, participants shared experiences of how some people who suffer employment-related injuries do not claim the compensation to which they are entitled because they lack information and knowledge about how to do so.

Participants said that there is limited understanding of Australia's justice system and legal procedures within African Australian communities which sometimes results in inadvertent breaches of the law. This includes a lack of knowledge of their rights when questioned by the police in public. Anecdotally, participants reported that there seems to be an increasing number of young African Australians in the Australia's prisons, particularly young African Australians.

In addition, participants noted that appointment times and choice of venue for legal assistance fail to consider the difficulties of obtaining child care and using public transport for people seeking such assistance. This coupled with other costs of legal services (usually related to loss of work-related wages) is impeding access to justice for many within African Australian communities. This is compounded by the fact that many community legal services are overstretched, owing largely to funding constraints.

Participants highlighted the lack of services in the legal system for people in need of particular types of legal assistance including immigration support for those within African Australian communities who wish to bring their loved ones to Australia.

Participants in both roundtables discussed the limited resourcing for accreditation of qualified and experienced translators and interpreters for languages from new and emerging communities by National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). This can lead to significant disadvantage for such communities particularly in court settings. Participants discussed how in many court proceedings and in health settings the skills level of interpreters is often ignored and providers simply request an interpreter. There are a range of interpreter qualifications required for different services, which are often disregarded when interpreters with required qualifications and in specified languages are not available.

Participants further discussed the lack of trust between young African Australian men and police and the mutual misunderstanding of each other's cultural background. Participants observed that, for instance, many young African Australian men are unaware of the fact that congregating in large numbers in public spaces, considered normal by African Australians, may lead to the police to asking them to 'move on'. They also noted that police in Australia are unaware of this cultural practice of African Australians.

Participants in both roundtables observed that many initiatives/programs related to the legal system do not focus on prevention but rather intervene when the community member is already in contact with the law.

In Western Sydney, participants discussed the lack of alternate dispute resolution processes, and shared experiences of how effective processes that exist within communities such as 'Elders' Panels' remain unrecognised.

Western Sydney participants also said that a lack of access to legal assistance for many in African Australian communities is sometimes compounded by amateur legal advice offered by otherwise well-meaning people.

The lack of appropriate consultation or involvement of community leaders in legal issues affecting African Australian communities was raised by Perth participants. They observed that this is compounded by a sense of confusion around who to contact/consult, in the absence of a representative peak body for African Australian communities.

Recommendations

Participants made the following recommendations to address the challenges:

For government departments and agencies:

- Support the utilisation of culturally appropriate liaison officers and support persons by police and correctional authorities to act as a link with communities and also work towards addressing racism and discrimination. To this end, participants called on the relevant government departments and agencies to employ members of African Australian communities in key law enforcement agencies
- Update current resources in regards to the justice system and circulate appropriately within the communities and the public sector. This means that information needs to go beyond the 'basics' – it should provide information on how to navigate the legal/justice system. State-based Equal Opportunity Commissions were called on to take up this issue with the relevant departments and agencies of government
- Provide resources for service providers to undertake sustained awareness-raising in communities on the justice system including introducing legal education soon after arrival for newly arrived African Australians
- Support law enforcement agencies, particularly the Police Force, to proactively engage young African Australians through education and other activities like sport in order to build trust and promote the value of compliance with the laws of Australia
- Work closely with leaders of African Australian communities to resolve key issues in relation to the justice system
- Invest in the recruitment of interpreters/translators with the appropriate qualifications and experience for the police, the courts, correctional authorities and other crucial services for African Australian communities
- Ensure appropriate education on the needs of African Australian communities and how to respond to these in all government departments.

For service providers:

- Increase legal literacy through sustained awareness raising and other appropriate methods for African Australian communities – not just for leaders of the communities but for any member in need of such assistance
- Focus interventions to place emphasis on prevention, which means that service providers in this sector should not wait until the community is in contact with the law before offering assistance
- Support African Australian communities in understanding ways of early detection of mental illness and drug abuse, as some young people within these communities are becoming increasingly disengaged as a result of drug abuse.

3.3 Employment and training

The *In Our Own Words* Report highlights that meaningful employment is essential to successful settlement in Australia. African Australians come to Australia with considerable qualifications and experience and are eager to gain employment and contribute to their new home. However, the Report highlights that many face considerable barriers when they seek suitable work and training, and stresses the need for improvement in vocational training opportunities, provision of effective job placement and career advice.

In the roundtable discussions, participants observed that the issues in the Report are still valid and that the situation is getting worse in some areas. They emphasized the need to focus on action. Following is a summary of the challenges discussed:

Participants in both roundtables noted that some African Australians have gained qualifications from tertiary institutions but continue to find it difficult to secure meaningful employment. This is owing to the considerable barriers many face including discrimination and limited job application and interview skills.

Participants of the two roundtables also discussed the general lack of skills recognition for many African Australians with overseas qualifications leading to significant challenges in securing and sustaining jobs.

Western Sydney participants reported that many people without literacy skills in the communities are unable to pursue education/training programs because they are forced to work long hours and several jobs to cover the high costs of living (particularly in urban areas).

In Western Sydney, participants said that young people with limited understanding of English and those who are shy do not get the additional assistance provided by agencies and other organisations and often their parents do not know how to help them. They discussed how this negatively affects the chances of many young African Australians to complete training programs and enter the labour market.

Participants in Western Sydney further discussed how discrimination in education settings is contributing to the low retention rate in schools and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) for young African Australians between the ages 18-25 years. Participants noted that generally there are low expectations of African Australians in the wider community. For example, participants reported that in the school setting,

some teachers and career counsellors discourage young African Australians with aspirations by telling them not to aim too high.

They also discussed the issue of limited career advice provided by TAFE for young people. Participants said these challenges can result in social isolation and low self-esteem which impacts their chances of securing employment.

Participants in the Western Sydney roundtable commended the revision of 'teacher induction programs' to include cultural awareness training for new full time teachers. It was however observed that many older teachers are yet to take such training.

Western Sydney participants also noted that though Multicultural support officers are available in key government departments and agencies they do not seem to be reaching many young African Australians.

In the area of employment, Western Sydney participants discussed how the limited number of dedicated apprenticeships for refugees, and discrimination in the workforce, result in limited job opportunities and low-level positions for many in African Australian communities. In addition, it was reported that some employers have a preconceived view that African Australians do not meet their standards and are therefore reluctant to offer them apprenticeships.

Participants also discussed the issue of poor communication between employers and employees mainly due to lack of cross-cultural understanding and how this negatively impacts the employment opportunities of African Australians.

Participants further observed that many African Australians work within their own community since opportunities to participate in the general workforce remain limited for many.

Participants at both roundtables shared their experiences of how barriers in seeking employment result in under-employment and low self-esteem for some, and how this contributes to mental health outcomes and other family violence related issues within African Australian communities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for government departments and agencies with regards to:

Training

- Create transitional primary classes for new arrivals to enable them to catch up with mainstream Australian children. This means these children should spend more time in an Intensive English Centre (IEC) in order to gain more confidence in the language. Government should therefore invest in establishing more IECs that provide longer-term programs.
- Educate career counsellors and others in the school system to encourage African Australian children to pursue their aspirations and fulfil their potential. The Report should be disseminated to stakeholders in the school system particularly career counsellors and their associations

- Establish an African parents' education advisory group and develop protocol on educating children and to explore ways to combat anti-social behaviour among children and young people
- Support women's courses in childcare, sewing, and other areas that could lead to the establishment of social enterprise businesses such as family day care and generate a level of self-sufficiency among women in African Australian communities
- Use sport and cross-cultural public events as major tools of re-engaging young people in African Australian communities.

Employment

- Work with the private sector to organise a targeted expo with major employers to discuss job and training opportunity pathways for African Australian communities
- Increase links between volunteer agencies and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups with the aim of enhancing CALD groups' participation in volunteering and work experience initiatives
- Provide job seeker assistance and training in migrant resource centres, including services for resume writing and job interviews
- Work with employers to enable people to begin part-time employment that can then lead to opportunities for ongoing employment
- Representatives of local councils (Community Development Officers) recommended for African Australian communities to utilise council-supported programs around employment by contacting councils in their local areas.

3.4 Healthcare and housing

The *In Our Own Words* Report highlights that African Australian communities face significant barriers in accessing and enjoying health and housing rights which can lead to social isolation and exclusion. The Report points to the need for health professionals and real estate agents to better understand the background, experiences and perspectives of African Australians so they can deliver more appropriate and effective services in these areas.

In the roundtable discussions, participants discussed the challenges to accessing and enjoying the right to health and housing. Following is a summary of the challenges identified under each of these areas:

Healthcare

Under healthcare, participants noted limited understanding of the complex health system, in particular the referral process from GP to specialists, as a key barrier faced by many within African Australian communities. Many also encounter challenges in communicating with doctors due to their limited understanding of the English language. This is compounded by the reluctance of some doctors to use interpreter services for those who need it.

Furthermore, participants said that there is limited education on sexual health, maternal health, mental health and relationship issues among African Australian

communities as well as negative perceptions about sexual and mental health. This results in many health problems within these communities.

Participants noted that skilled migrants do not have access to Medicare which negatively impacts on their health and the health of their families.

Participants stressed that mandatory reporting of health conditions, for instance sexual and other family and domestic violence issues, results in under-reporting of such conditions and issues to GPs by African Australian communities.

Participants also discussed other health challenges faced by African Australian communities, including the limited understanding of genetically based diseases like sickle cell anaemia among many health practitioners in Australia, the high cost of dental service, long waiting periods for access to the public health system, and changes in diet for many within these communities.

In Western Sydney, participants shared experiences of the general sense of despondence among some in African Australian communities. One participant, a medical practitioner, said 'we see sad, tired families ...and vulnerability is seen on people's faces'.

Housing

Participants indicated that many in African Australian communities face discrimination in the private rental market as real estate agents are generally reluctant to rent their properties to large families. Given that African Australians often have large families, they find it difficult to access appropriate and affordable housing in the private rental market. They often have to split families up to secure accommodation which has adverse implications on the mental health and well-being of families. This problem is compounded by a shortage of public housing in many areas, resulting in long waiting periods.

Participants also discussed the flow-on effect of the high levels of unemployment among African Australian communities which makes it difficult for many to afford the ever increasing cost of housing and how this contributes to mental health problems in these communities.

In addition, participants highlighted the lack of interpreting services and general lack of adequate information (tenancy rights, bonds, house maintenance issues, etc.) to effectively navigate the private rental market sector.

Recommendations

Under healthcare, participants made the following recommendations to address the issues raised:

For government departments and agencies to:

- Communicate, in accessible and plain language, the health care delivery system so as to facilitate understanding of the system among communities
- Promote cultural awareness and competence among health care service practitioners – building understanding and respect for the cultural backgrounds of members of African Australian communities. In addition, building

understanding of health practitioners on health conditions specifically affecting Africans, for example, sickle cell anaemia

- Consider subsidising dental care. This means that basic dental care should be included in Medicare.

For service providers:

- Empower African Australians to prepare questions for health providers prior to appointments to assist with overcoming language barriers
- Facilitate health literacy for African Australian communities. Such an initiative should be supported by Health Departments
- African Australians to play a proactive role in engaging the health care system and professionals about the best strategies to provide services to their communities.

In the area of housing, participants made the following recommendations:

For government departments and agencies:

- Assist African Australians to secure housing, provide direct linkages between Centrelink and real estate agents, provide housing brokerage services and develop relationships between community organisations and real estate agents to advocate for more affordable housing for African Australian communities
- Increase investments in public housing sector to address the housing needs of vulnerable communities
- Increase awareness of discrimination complaints procedures available to African Australian communities, such as complaints to State-based Equal Opportunity Commissions and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

For service providers:

- Increase awareness of African Australian communities about tenancy rights and responsibilities and other relevant housing issues.

4 Looking forward

Following the discussions and participants' responses to the roundtable evaluation, the Commission recommends that:

- Stakeholders, including government departments and agencies, State-based Equal Opportunity Commissions and the Commission, work together to support efforts towards a unified platform for strong representation of African Australian communities.
- Roundtables are organised periodically to ensure ongoing engagement between government departments and agencies, service providers and African Australian communities to facilitate more interaction among them. Government departments/agencies are particularly encouraged to support such initiatives.
- Government departments and agencies to provide support to community organisations to develop a database of effective projects or approaches in

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Summary of Western Sydney and Perth Roundtables – 2011

service provision. This will reduce duplication in service provision, facilitate better coordination among service providers and improve the dissemination of information among communities.

5 Appendix

5.1 Appendix

Speech by Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Yvonne Henderson at roundtable on human rights issues affecting African Australian communities

Date: 23 September 2011

Venue: Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia, Perth

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuck of the Noongar people, and pay respect to their elders – past and present.

Thank you all for coming today - representatives of government departments and agencies, non-government organisations and leaders within African Australian communities. The focus is on human rights issues affecting African Australian communities, which is a largely new and emerging community in Australia.

I want particularly to thank members of the African Women's Council of Western Australia for their role in instigating the consultations.

Today's session represents the continuation of a journey that started in 2007 when Tom Calma, then Race Discrimination Commissioner, initiated the *African Australians: human rights and social inclusion* project. The main objectives of the project were to identify what can help – and what can hinder – the settlement and integration experiences of African Australians; and to suggest practical solutions to inform the development of policies and programs and services for African Australians, as well as broader community education initiatives.

Though it was not the first initiative to draw attention to the challenges facing African Australians, it is the first that considers the everyday living experiences of African Australians from their own point of view, from a national perspective, and within a human rights context.

As part of the journey, over 2,500 African Australians participated in 50 community meetings across Australia. In addition, over 150 representatives of government departments, and non-government organisations, participated in the consultations, for a period spanning nearly three years. The Commission received over 100 public submissions from individuals and organisations.

The product of the consultations is the report titled: *'In Our Own Words – African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues' (the Report)*. The Report, which was launched in June last year, highlights the key challenges that require specific consideration in policy design, service delivery and resourcing, largely in the areas of training and employment, education, health, housing and access to the justice system.

The consultations highlighted many initiatives and programs led by your various departments and organisations to address these challenges. The Report also highlighted many good practice initiatives across Australia that are doing a fantastic job with African Australian communities. And I urge you to continue your great work in these areas.

The plain truth, though, is that critical challenges remain. For instance, African Australians continue to experience racism and discrimination in many areas of life; many also have limited knowledge of rights, and ways of navigating the system; and there are gaps at the systems and policy level that negatively impact their daily living

experiences.

We heard a lot of stories during the consultations of how discrimination impacted African Australian communities. In one community consultation in South Australia, a participant said- 'The big problem is that even if there is work, or even if there is some houses, it is the people and how they think about Africans that is the bigger problem. We get told that we cannot be trusted, that we are lazy. This is much harder to fight than looking for houses'.

Such experiences are not just anecdotal. Many independent research studies suggest that racism remains a critical issue in Australia. For example, the Challenging Racism project, led by Professor Kevin Dunn at the University of Western Sydney, maps racist attitudes and experiences of racism across Australia. Research conducted through a national telephone survey with 20,000 people across the country indicates that:

- Around 85 per cent of people believed that racism is a current issue
- 20 per cent had experienced race-hate talk
- Around 11 per cent experienced race-based exclusion, and
- 6 per cent had experienced physical attacks based on their race or traditional dress

This is indeed ironic, given the diversity of the Australian population, and the country's long history of a multicultural society. In situations like this, it is those on the margins of society - small, new and emerging communities – who are most vulnerable.

The government's new multicultural policy provides for the development of a national anti-racism strategy. This will also provide opportunity to address some of the systemic issues in the Report, and a lot of the issues you will discuss here today.

Following the launch of the Report in June last year, the Commission ensured its wide circulation in Australia through our website, and the distribution of hard copies; it was also profiled in the *2008-2010 Access and Equity in Government Services Report*.

I understand that some in African Australian communities, as well as some community organisations, are using the Report as an evidence base for initiating projects, and for local advocacy. This is great, as the issues it highlights are crucial to the enjoyment of human rights for such people. This is leadership from the communities in advancing their human rights interests.

But the journey for the full enjoyment of the human rights of African Australians is far from over. A whole-of-government approach is required to address many of the policy and systems issues. This is because the issues are so complex that no one government department can address them alone.

This roundtable, which is one of two that the Commission has hosted, is timely, for not only keeping the Report alive, but facilitating dialogue among government, non-government and African Australian community representatives.

This dialogue will result in the development of a road map for progressing the issues in the Report. It will also strengthen partnerships that will help in addressing the issues.

Thanks for the chance to speak with you this morning.

5.2 Appendix

Briefing on key findings of In Our Own Words report by Ms Michelle Lindley



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Ms Michelle Lindley
Director
Legal Section

.....
23 September 2011

Briefing on key issues

In our own words
African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues



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Today's session

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- The African Australians project
- National consultation findings
- Critical success factors
- Questions

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African Australians: human rights and social inclusion issues

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1st national investigation from a human rights perspective into:

- employment and training
- education
- health
- housing
- justice

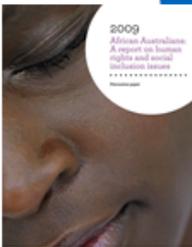


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African Australians: human rights and social inclusion issues

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- Over 2,500 African Australians and many other stakeholders participated in national consultations
- Over 100 public submissions
- Research – 4 background papers
- **Final project report** supported by suite of resources including: a compendium, and a summary guide translated into 10 African community languages in written and audio formats was released in June 2010



2009
African Australians
A report on human rights and social inclusion issues
.....
Human Rights



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National consultation findings

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There is a need to:

- address discrimination, prejudice and racism experienced by African Australians
- include African Australian communities as genuine partners
- provide information and education programs to assist service providers and other stakeholders
- engage and support African Australian communities to develop initiatives to address areas of concern they have identified



Addressing discrimination and racism

.....

The big problem is that, even if there is work or even if there is some houses, it is people and how they think about Africans, that is a bigger problem. We get told that we cannot be trusted, that we are lazy. This is much harder to fight than looking for houses.

Community consultation, South Australia

You start to feel that you have no place in this new land and you wonder what the experiences of your children will be as they grow up, and perhaps also find that the colour of their skin is the only reason that they will not be seen by some as belonging here. This is what I mostly fear.

Community consultation, NSW



Improving services for African Australians

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- Government and NGO service providers identified issues around the provision of services (service quality and service gaps) as barriers to social inclusion
- Communities were particularly concerned about the cultural 'appropriateness' of services offered to African Australians



Child protection and family violence

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- The need for child protection agencies to develop culturally sensitive approaches
- The need to inform, educate and support communities around issues of:
 - Child protection
 - Family violence



Employment and education

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- The need to provide:
 - Information to new arrivals about Australian work environment and employer expectations
 - Support for programs and initiatives to help employers understand the assets and capabilities of African Australian migrants and refugees
 - A whole of sector approach for greater access to education



Housing and health care

.....

- The need to provide:
 - Tenancy education for African Australian communities was identified as an area of urgent need
 - Adequate information about health and community services and how to navigate these complex systems.



Engaging with the justice system

.....

Sometimes we do the wrong things not because we want to break the law but because we don't know the law. How can you live without knowledge about the law?
Community focus group, South Australia

The law is often written in English. It is hard for our community to read the booklets in English. I ended up doing a course about the law and I asked if the legal brochures could be translated in different languages so that my community can know the law and then not break it.
Community focus group, Queensland



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Other emerging issues:

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- Respecting and maintaining culture, heritage and values
- Building positive gender relations
- Addressing intergenerational issues
- Countering negative media stereotypes
- Ensuring access to transport
- Using sport to enhance social inclusion



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Critical success factors of the Consultation Project

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- Partnerships
 - With and between agencies
 - With communitiesrequires relationship building and maintenance
- The First Voice of communities
- Real success, however, will be in the next steps...



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Next steps...

.....

- Commission is facilitating 2 Roundtables (Sydney and Perth)
- Key government agencies (commonwealth, state and local)
- Community leaders
- Working in partnership to develop strategies and a road map to address the issues and challenges identified in the consultations and in *In Our Own Words*

