

Anti-racism action plan 2024 to 2027

To receive this document in another format, email Aboriginal Engagement and Diversity and Inclusion aboriginaldiversityinclusion@dffh.vic.gov.au.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, September 2024.

ISBN 978-1-76130-667-9 (pdf/online/MS word)

Available at Anti-racism action plan 2024 to 2027 www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/anti-racism-action-plan (2406121)



Secretary foreword

I am proud to introduce the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's *Anti-racism action plan 2024–2027*.

The Yoorook Truth and Justice Commission has asked us to think about and address both past and present injustices faced by First Nations people, including racism.

Our plan includes all the different backgrounds and faiths in Victoria. It ensures fairness and inclusive workplaces for staff and the communities we serve.

Anti-racism aligns to the department's vision. It means promoting inclusion and fairness, stopping discrimination, and supporting people in need.

The plan is for all staff and lists steps to tackle racism. It was created with input from staff and national research.

We will focus on 6 main drivers:

- develop and measure racial literacy
- remove racial bias
- create systems and processes to call out racism
- improve recruitment processes
- strengthen workplace culture
- ensure transparency and accountability.

These steps will help create a safe and welcoming work environment and improve our services.

Everyone in our department has a role to play in building a workplace that is free from all forms of racism.

As Secretary, I am proud of the commitment we are making. Together, we will make our department more inclusive, fair and respectful for everyone.

Peta McCammon

Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department, DFFH) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and pays respect and recognises the contribution from their Elders past and present. The department proudly acknowledges the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples as the world’s oldest living culture and the contribution of generations of Aboriginal leaders who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities. The department recognises the intergenerational consequences of colonisation, dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies and acknowledges the impacts and structures of colonisation still exist today. Our department is committed to addressing these impacts by embedding cultural safety and self-determination in all that we do, so that Aboriginal Victorians have decision making power and control to determine what is best for them. Aboriginal self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The department is committed to developing strong enduring self-determined partnerships with Aboriginal People and communities that will contribute to growing prosperous, healthy and strong Victorian Aboriginal People and communities.

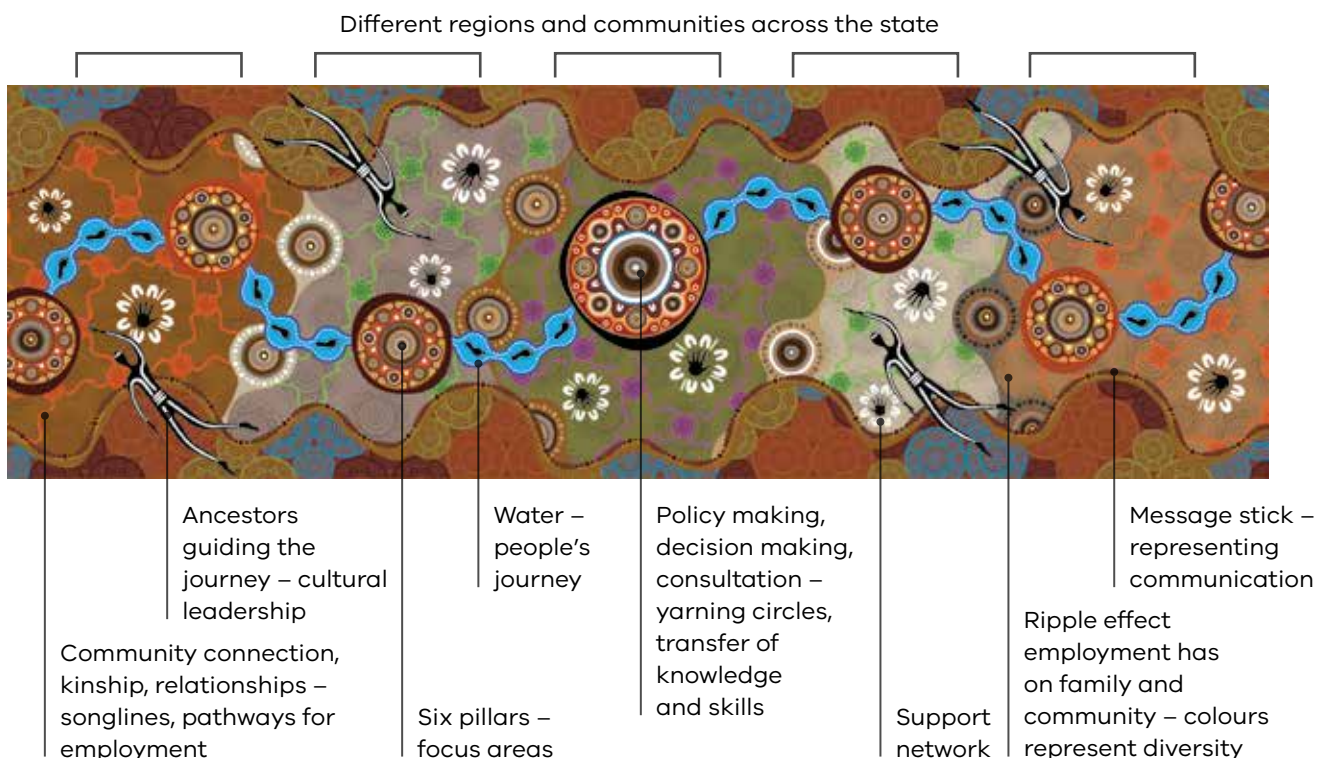
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Statement

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, pay respect and recognises the contribution of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in Victoria. Throughout this document the term ‘Aboriginal’ is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Artwork and about the artist

The artwork *Yanyabak Dana* means ‘to walk towards or on a pathway’ in the Yorta Yorta language.

The artist Dixon Patten is a traditional descendant from the Gunnai (Gippsland), Yorta Yorta (Goulburn Valley), Gunditjmara (Western District) and Dhuduroa (Snowy Mountains) peoples.



Contents

Secretary foreword	3
Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners	4
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Statement	4
Artwork and about the artist	4
Introduction	7
Definition of racism	9
Our values	9
Strategic and policy context	9
Yoorrook Truth and Justice Commission	9
Our vision	9
Glossary	14
Understanding racism	16
Principles for understanding racism	16
Types of racism	18
Possible consequences of racism	20
Some people face racism more than others	21
Experiences of racism	21
Impact of racism	24
Anti-racism and drivers of change	25
Why anti-racism is important	25
Key drivers of change to eliminate racism	25

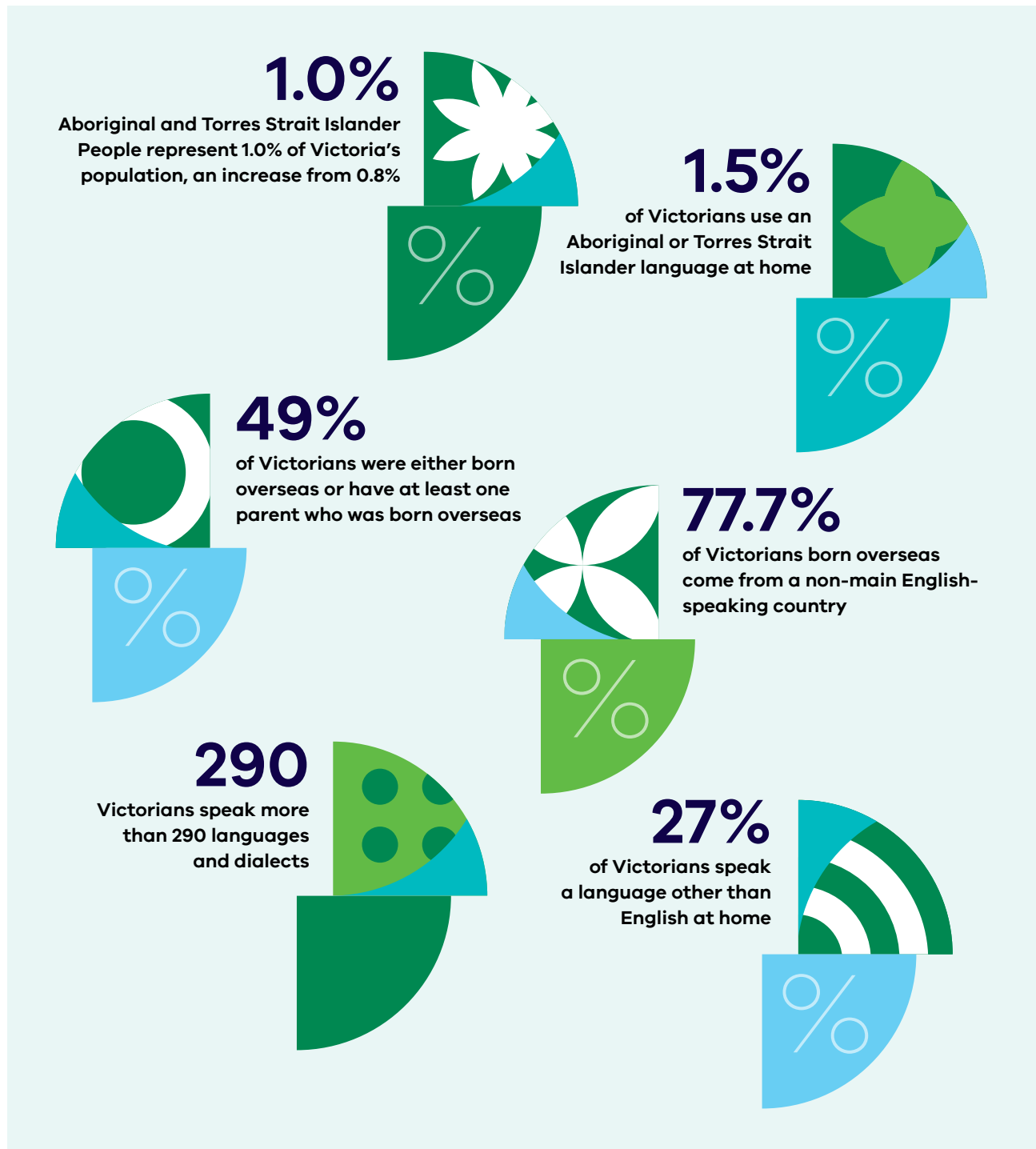


Responsibilities and obligations	28
Department staff	28
Discrimination and human rights	28
Health, safety and wellbeing	29
Action plan	30
Driver 1: Racial literacy	30
Driver 2: Centre lived experience	31
Driver 3: Audit for racial equity	32
Driver 4: Remove racial bias in recruitment and recognition	33
Driver 5: Workplaces are psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive	35
Driver 6: Create the capability and systems to call out racism	36
Monitoring and progress reporting	37
Reporting and responding to racism	38
Who can report racism?	38
How to report racism	38
References	39

Introduction

Victoria is home to one of the most diverse societies in the world. We are committed to empowering communities to build a safer, fairer, and more inclusive Victoria.

The strength of Victoria and the department's workforce is our diversity. The 2021 census¹ showed that:



1 ABS (2022). Census 2021. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools>



Every employee should be psychologically healthy, safe, and included in the workplace, no matter:

- where they are from
- what they look like
- what they believe
- what language they speak.

Racism harms the psychological and physical health and safety of Victorians. It affects opportunities, experiences, and outcomes by benefiting some and disadvantaging others.

We recognise that racism is not only the result of individual behaviours and attitudes. It is also embedded in workplace systems and cultures. Racism has a high personal cost for people and workplaces. It affects:

- staff wellbeing
- productivity
- innovation
- our ability to carry out policies, programs, and services.

Our department is committed to an anti-racism approach. We recognise the strength and value of our diverse workforce. We take a proactive approach to addressing racism in our workplaces.

We are all responsible for making sure the department is psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive.

This commitment is vital to making sure our policies, programs, and services:

- are culturally inclusive
- actively counteract discrimination
- promote fairness.

This *Anti-racism action plan* is the department's commitment to eliminating all forms of racism in our workplaces. It applies to all department staff. The action plan sets out clear steps to address both individual and systemic racism in all forms.



Definition of racism

Racism takes many forms. It includes prejudice, discrimination, violence, or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity, or national origin.

Racism does not just involve obvious violent or intimidating behaviour. It can reveal itself through people's actions and attitudes.

It can also be seen in systems and institutions that operate in ways that lead to unfair outcomes.

Racism is more than just words, beliefs, and actions. It includes all the barriers that stop people from experiencing dignity and equality because of their race.

Our vision

We are a proactive leader in:

- eliminating all forms of racism
- empowering people to express their identity.
- fostering a sense of belonging in the department.

We dismantle structural and systemic barriers so everyone can reach their full potential.

Our workplace is psychologically healthy, safe, inclusive, and respectful.

Our values

As public servants, we have a responsibility to:

- maintain a high level of public confidence
- make decisions without bias and ensure freedom from discrimination
- improve outcomes on an ongoing basis
- make decisions and give advice in line with human rights
- actively protect and support human rights
- lead by example in all that we do.

Strategic and policy context

The Anti-racism plan builds on and complements the department's:

- *People Strategy 2024 – 2026*
- *Aboriginal workforce strategy 2021–2026*
- *Aboriginal cultural safety framework*
- *Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027.*





Yoorrook Truth and Justice Commission

Establishment of the Commission builds on Victoria's work on treaty, and the Victorian Government's commitment to recognise historic and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria. The Action Plan supports the department to ensure it is addressing systemic racism that negatively impacts First Nations Peoples.

Diversity and inclusion framework priority focus areas

This action plan is in line with the 4 priority focus areas of the Diversity and inclusion framework. This means the two are consistent with each other, helping us achieve our vision and goals.

Figure 1: Diversity and inclusion framework for priority focused areas

Focus area	
<p>Strategy and business alignment</p> 	<p>Diverse people’s lived experience is core to policy, programs and services. It improves business practices and outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.</p>
<p>Leadership and accountability</p> 	<p>DFFH’s leadership profile, governance and workforce reflect the diversity of the community. All staff are accountable for creating an inclusive workplace.</p> <p>To achieve outcomes, we are transparent, accountable and have measurable targets.</p>
<p>Employment and careers</p> 	<p>We empower the voices of our diverse workforce. We value diversity of thought and create a workplace where all employees are supported to develop and progress their careers.</p>
<p>Culture and safety</p> 	<p>Culturally safe actions are embedded into systems and practices as the norm. Work environments are accessible and safe. There is prevention, early intervention and suitable responses to discrimination and inappropriate behaviours.</p>

Policy context

The action plan is underpinned by departmental, state and Australian Government policies and laws. Tables 1 to 3 outline the relevant policies, laws, and initiatives.

Table 1: Departmental policies

Policy	Location
Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027	Internal document
Aboriginal workforce strategy 2022–2027	Internal document
Aboriginal cultural safety framework	Internal document
Health, safety and wellbeing strategy 2024 to 2027	Internal document
People strategy 2024 to 2026	Internal document

Table 2: Victorian Government laws, policies, and initiatives

Policy	Location
Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001	Victorian Legislation's Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 page https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/racial-and-religious-tolerance-act-2001
Equal Opportunity Act 2010	Victorian Legislation's Equal Opportunity Act 2010 page https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/equal-opportunity-act-2010
Multicultural Victoria Act 2011	Victorian Legislation's Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 page https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/multicultural-victoria-act-2011
Anti-Racism Strategy Taskforce	Victorian Government's Anti-Racism Strategy Taskforce page https://www.vic.gov.au/anti-racism-taskforce
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006	Victorian Legislation's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 page https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006 Translated factsheets by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC): VEOHRC's About the Charter in your language page https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/about-the-charter-in-your-language-october-2023
Self-Determination reform framework	First Peoples-State Relations' Self-determination reform framework page https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/self-determination-reform-framework
Yoorrook Justice Commission	Yoorrook Justice Commission website https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au
Victorian Aboriginal affairs framework	First Peoples-State Relations' Victorian Aboriginal affairs framework page https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework
Victorian. And proud of it: Victoria's multicultural policy statement	Victorian Government's Multicultural policy statement page https://www.vic.gov.au/multicultural-policy-statement
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004	Victorian Legislation's Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 page https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/occupational-health-and-safety-act-2004

Table 3: Australian Government laws, policies and initiatives

Policy	Location
Racial Discrimination Act 1975	Federal Register of Legislation's Racial Discrimination Act 1975 page https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00274/latest/text Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) guidance for employers: AHRC's Racial discrimination page https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/racial-discrimination
National Anti-Racism Framework	AHRC's National anti-racism framework page https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/projects/national-anti-racism-framework
National Agreement on Closing the Gap	Closing the Gap's National Agreement on Closing the Gap page https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/projects/national-anti-racism-framework

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Aboriginal Cultural Safety	An environment which is safe for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity and experience (Williams 2008)
Anti-racism	The proactive position to address and undo racism by removing barriers to justice, fairness, and inclusion. Anti-racism recognises that past injustices affect the present moment and acts to build a better world.
Anti-racist	Someone who actively promotes racial fairness. They use understanding, actions and policies to address and remove systemic racism and its impact. They consistently and consciously reject all forms of racial discrimination and inequality.
Casual racism	Subtle or indirect forms of racism expressed in everyday interactions and behaviours. It is sometimes unconscious or without malicious intent. It includes jokes, stereotypes and dismissive attitudes that maintain racial prejudices. Casual racism can contribute to a culture of discrimination and exclusion.
Cultural safety	When everyone is safe to be and express their identity and culture. A culturally safe workplace is an emotionally and psychologically safe place where: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• people from marginalised groups can thrive without disrespect, prejudice and bias.• everyone can examine their own cultural identities and attitudes.
Culturally and racially marginalised (CARM)	People who cannot be racialised as white. This group includes people who are Black, Brown, Asian or any other non-white group. They face marginalisation due to their race. The term 'culturally' recognises that people may also face discrimination due to their culture or background.
Marginalisation	Excluding a person or group from equal access to resources, services, and opportunities, and treating them as inferior.

Term	Meaning
People from nonmain English speaking countries (NMESC)	<p>People from multicultural and multifaitah backgrounds with cultural backgrounds not from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom • Ireland • New Zealand • Canada • USA • South Africa. <p>NMESC is used in mechanisms to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act • set targets • address barriers that unfairly affect some employees.
Privilege	A special right, advantage or immunity given or available only to a person or group.
Race	<p>A broad and vague social construct that tries to put people into different categories based on shared characteristics like skin colour, eye shape and ancestry.</p> <p>The idea of 'race' has no biological basis and has been scientifically debunked. However, ideas of race are still part of the systems and structures of society today. This includes beliefs that some races are superior to others.</p>
Systemic racism	Refers to the history, ideology, culture and interactions of institutions and policies that work together to perpetuate inequity. In Australia systemic racism stems from settler colonial legacy, the White Australia policy and successive laws and policy failures. It describes the way in which institutions and structures fail to provide adequate service provision and equal opportunities to people because of their racial or cultural background. It is responsible for certain communities experiencing poor life outcomes, lower pay, over representation in child protection and criminal justice systems and less opportunities for employment and advancement within leadership positions.
White privilege	<p>The unearned advantages given or available to white people in racially structured societies. It is often invisible to the people who have it.</p> <p>It results in various societal benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being presumed innocent • greater access to resources • more representation and access to opportunities.



Understanding racism

To address racism, we first need to understand what it is.

Diversity Council of Australia's *Racism at work* shows that understanding racism can be hard for some people due to:

- personal experiences of racism
- racism changes over time
- institutional, structural, and systemic racism being 'hard to see' as it is part of the 'normal' way of doing things by the dominant culture.²

To understand racism, we must consider the systemic, social, and psychological factors that maintain race discrimination and prejudice. This includes:

- recognising the historical context and structural unfairness built into societies
- understanding the ongoing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- acknowledging privilege and power dynamics
- understanding how biased attitudes and actions affect people and communities.

Principles for understanding racism

The action plan is in line with 5 foundational principles for understanding and addressing racism in workplaces: These are:

- recognise First Nations peoples' experience
- be informed by people with lived experience
- take an intersectional approach
- recognise our default worldview is white
- understand racial privilege.

Recognise First Nations peoples' experience

Recognise the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations in all anti-racism initiatives.

These initiatives should be supported by:

- Aboriginal cultural safety framework
- Aboriginal workforce strategy.

Be informed by people with lived experience

When considering racism, get insights from people who face racism firsthand.

These conversations should happen in a way that protects the people sharing their experiences of racism. Make sure your approach:

- promotes racial safety
- protects the person from more exclusion, marginalisation, or harassment.

² Diversity Council of Australia, *Racism at work: how organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism* <https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work>



Intersectional approach

Intersectionality recognises that people can face discrimination and oppression based on race and other characteristics, such as:

- gender
- sexuality
- class
- disability.

Racism does not occur in isolation. It interacts with other systems of oppression, creating even worse experiences for marginalised people. This results in even more disadvantage and marginalisation.

Recognise our default worldview is white

There is an unconscious perception that whiteness and western English-speaking backgrounds are 'the norm' or default. In Australia, this is Anglo-Celtic in particular.

In effect, this creates an unconscious belief that other racial identities and customs are inferior to 'the norm'.

Understand racial privilege

Racial privilege refers to the rights, opportunities, and protections some people have because of their race. People with racial privilege may enjoy certain experiences that are denied to people from marginalised groups. This includes white privilege, the unearned advantages given or available to white people in racially structured societies. It is often invisible to the people who have it.

Marginalised groups face stereotypes and unfairness based on their race, ethnicity, or religion.

Racial labels may be pinned on people based on arbitrary physical traits and characteristics like:

- skin colour
- hair texture
- facial features
- accent
- language
- name
- religion
- clothing.



Types of racism

Racism is not always expressed or experienced as obvious forms of hatred, prejudice or vilification. Some forms of racism are hard to see as they may be viewed as the way things have always been done.

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination involves openly treating people unfavourably because of factors like:

- race
- gender
- age
- religion
- disability.

It is obvious, explicit, and intentional. It results in unfair treatment or exclusion.

Laws aim to prevent such discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all, no matter their background.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is when an unreasonable rule, policy or practice has an unfair effect on people based on their:

- race
- gender
- other protected characteristics.

Indirect discrimination may not be obvious. It creates unfairness by affecting certain people or groups more than others.

For example, hiring practices and processes may favour candidates from the western backgrounds. People from non-English speaking backgrounds are overlooked despite their skills, experience and qualifications.

We must identify and fix these policies and practices. Doing so will overcome unconscious bias and create more equal opportunities for all.

Casual racism, benevolent racism and microaggressions

Casual racism, including microaggressions, involves subtle yet harmful forms of prejudice. It includes remarks, actions or behaviours that demean or stereotype people. These may form part of everyday interactions.

Casual racism includes:

- seemingly harmless comments
- dismissive attitudes
- stereotypical jokes
- assumptions.

Microaggressions can include:

- touching people's hair
- back-handed compliments, such as, 'You speak English well'
- asking people where they are really from.

Single instances of casual racism may not seem significant to some. However, they can take a toll on health, safety, and wellbeing. Casual racism can make people feel invalidated, marginalised, and unwelcome.

Casual racism can be considered work-related violence.

Benevolent racism is often revealed through seemingly positive comments, beliefs, and actions. People may hold discriminatory beliefs and racist stereotypes about a group of people and act in a way they think is helpful or kind to that group.

For example, a person may believe that people who speak English as a second language are less capable. They may try to 'help' people from that group. However, their 'kindness' stems from a negative belief that the people are inferior and need extra help.

Institutional, structural, and systemic

Institutional, structural, and systemic racism are interconnected and pervasive forms of racial discrimination. They are deeply entrenched in societal systems and structures.

Institutional racism involves discriminatory practices, policies and biases in government institutions that maintain unfairness for marginalised racial or ethnic groups.

Structural racism is rooted in historical injustices like colonisation, segregation, and discrimination. These policies and practices that have shaped power, resources, and opportunity.

Systemic racism is the overarching framework that institutional and structural racism operates in. These biased systems interconnect and create unfair outcomes for different racial and ethnic communities.

Together, these forms of racism highlight how deeply rooted biases and discriminatory practices are across society today.

Hate crime

A hate crime is an act motivated by bias against a particular group based on:

- race
- religion
- gender
- sexual orientation
- other characteristics.

People committing hate crimes intend to harm other people or communities because of their differences. Hate crime cause fear and send a message of intolerance.

There are laws specifically for hate crimes. This recognises the broad impact of the crime and the message of discrimination it sends.

Possible consequences of racism

Possible workplace outcomes for different types of racism are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Possible workplace consequences for different types of racism

Type of racism	Example	Consequence
Direct discrimination	Insisting that all employees always speak English, even during their breaks.	Misconduct
Indirect discrimination	Not hiring someone from a racial group because 'those people are unreliable'.	Inappropriate behaviour or misconduct
Casual racism and microaggressions	Negative stereotypes or jokes based on race. 'You're Asian, you must be good at fixing computers.'	Inappropriate behaviour or misconduct
Institutional, structural and systemic	Putting in place policies for religious days of significance and public holidays only for the dominant culture and excluding others.	Discrimination
Hate crimes	Verbal or physical abuse of someone because of their race.	Misconduct

Note: Credit to Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

Some people face racism more than others

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience profound structural, systemic and institutional racism.

Diversity Council of Australia's Racism at Work Survey revealed that 50% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had at least one incident of workplace discrimination or harassment.³ This is the highest of all groups.

Ethnic minorities and migrant communities face systemic racism around past and current migration and settlement experiences.

Newly arrived migrants from racially marginalised groups are more likely to face racism than those from countries with a long history of migration in Australia.

Racism towards groups can get worse during different historical moments.

Who does not experience racism?

Racially privileged people can experience hurtful racial prejudice and stereotypes. However, they do not experience racism.

It is not racism as it does not have the systemic power to affect social and economic status in a way that causes and maintains disadvantage.

In Australia, racially privileged people are mostly from white, Anglo Saxon, English-speaking backgrounds.

Experiences of racism

What staff told us

During consultations for the Diversity and inclusion framework and Aboriginal workforce strategy, staff reported high instances of racism in our workplaces and when working with clients. The action plan has been informed by what we have heard from our people, including data from:

- 2023 Aboriginal Cultural safety survey
- 2023 Diversity workforce survey.

The department is committed to building a positive and strong culture. Leaders play a major role in creating positive culture by:

- supporting open discussions
- encouraging staff to express concerns
- supporting processes that raise concerns to proper levels.

³ Diversity Council of Australia, Racism at work: how organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism <https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work>

What national evidence tell us

Racism is historically and structurally entrenched in Australia. This has harmful consequences.

Diversity Council of Australia's Racism at work report found 43% of non-white Australian employees commonly face racism at work.⁴

Newly released data from Call It Out's annual report showed that 51% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people witnessed or faced racism in person.⁵

Scanlon Foundation's *Mapping social cohesion 2023* noted that people from non-speaking English background are more likely to be discriminated against due to their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face the highest rates of workplace discrimination and harassment of any demographic. Half faced harassment or discrimination in the past year, compared to 24% of non-Indigenous workers.⁷

Migrants from the following backgrounds were all much more likely to face discrimination than migrants from European backgrounds:

African
Asian
Central American
South American.⁶

In the last year, racial discrimination was experienced by:

11%
of people born in Australia

34%
of overseas-born Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds because of their skin colour, ethnicity or religion

12%
of overseas-born Australians from English-speaking backgrounds

4 Diversity Council of Australia, *Racism at work: how organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*. <https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work>

5 During the 12-month period from March 2022 to March 2023. Allison, F. Cunneen, C. and Selcuk, A. (2023). *'In every corner of every suburb': The Call It Out Racism Register 2022-2023*, Sydney: Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney. <https://callitout.com.au/resources>

6 Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, *Mapping social cohesion 2023*. <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/publications/mapping-social-cohesion-report/2023-mapping-social-cohesion-report>

7 ABS (2022). Census 2021. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools>

Fifty-nine percent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders peoples reported they have experienced racism based on their appearance with 44% reported hearing racial slurs sometimes, often or all the time.⁸

Around 95% of the most senior positions in Australia are held by people from Anglo-Celtic or European backgrounds:



75.9%
from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds

19%
from European backgrounds



0.4%
from an Indigenous background.⁹

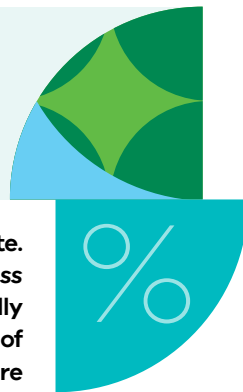


4.7%
from non-European backgrounds



Racially marginalised people with intersectional identities face more racism. For example:

Racism impact employees' retention rate. According to DCA's *Cracking the Glass Culture Ceiling report*, 60% of racially marginalised female executives and 79% of racially marginalised senior managers were considering leaving their employers in the next year of their employment.¹⁰



1.6 - 1.8x

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities are 1.6 to 1.8 times more likely to face racism than non-Indigenous people without disabilities



8 Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute (Brown, C., DAlmada-Remedios, R., Gilbert, J. OLeary, J. and Young, N.) Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute, 2020.

9 Diversity Council of Australia, Racism at work: how organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism. <https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work>

10 Diversity Council Australia, Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up to and End Workplace Racism, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022. https://www.dca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/_pda/2023/07/dca_members_only_synopsis_report_racism_at_work_final_0.pdf



Impact of racism

At the individual level, racism:

- negatively affects health, safety and wellbeing
- undermines confidence
- negatively affects people's ability to safely complete their work.

The impacts of racism can be so significant that they affect physical health and everyday life.

Racism entrenches disadvantage by locking people out of social and economic opportunities.

At the department level, racism:

- results in significant costs, including to attract and keep staff
- undermines self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians
- affects our ability to provide programs and services to diverse communities
- undermines our goal of building a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria.

Anti-racism and drivers of change

Why anti-racism is important

Anti-racism is the proactive way to oppose racism and to create racial equity.

Challenging racism needs an active approach to combatting systemic unfairness.

It needs ongoing engagement, education and action.

Anti-racism practice involves actively addressing and undoing racism by removing barriers to justice, fairness and inclusion. This approach aims to:

- breakdown systemic injustices
- promote equality
- foster a society where everyone is valued and treated with dignity and respect, no matter their background.

Key drivers of change to eliminate racism

This action plan sets out 6 drivers (see Figure 2) to remove all forms of racism from our workplaces and protect our staff's health, safety and wellbeing.

The action plan also outlines the actions needed for each driver to make sure all staff use an antiracism approach.

Driver 1 - Racial literacy

Racial literacy involves having the understanding, knowledge and skills needed to recognise, talk about and address racism, including:

- behaviours and systems that constitute racism
- anti-racism
- the effects racism has on people.

Examples of being racially literate include:

- being able to identify or describe someone without relying on their race or physical attributes
- understanding, identifying and responding to racist practices at work
- being able to listen deeply without becoming defensive
- understanding how privilege gives inherent benefits.

Driver 2 - Centre lived experience

Include people who experience racism in discussions and solutions to address racism.

Racially privileged people who do not face racism are not elevated over those who do.

Allyship and speaking up is important. However, it should not take away from the voices of and spaces for people who have faced racism.

Driver 3 - Audit for racial equity

We are committed to using data-driven decision making to identify and address unfair treatment based on race in our department.

We include the perspectives of people with lived experience at every stage of data collection, analysis and action.

We recognise cultural differences as a strength. We use a racially inclusive approach to existing data sources like:

- workforce profiles
- employee lifecycle stages
- grievances
- feedback from diverse employee networks.

Driver 4 - Remove racial bias in recruitment and recognition

We address biases, both conscious and unconscious, that may influence our hiring processes, including in:

- candidate screening
- interview processes
- decision making.

These biases may:

- cause unequal opportunities and systemic barriers for people from certain racial backgrounds.
- maintain unfairness in workforce representation
- mean marginalised racial groups do not get fair recognition, promotions, or rewards for their work.

Driver 5 - Workplaces are psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive

Racism can have severe psychological and emotional effects on people. It can cause stress, anxiety and even physical health issues.

It can also create a toxic work environment, affecting productivity and morale.

All staff understand their duty to create psychologically healthy and safe workplaces, free from racism and discrimination. This includes:

- putting in place policies and procedures to prevent and address racism
- training and education to ensure understanding and accountability
- building a culture of respect and inclusivity among staff.

Driver 6 – Create the capability and systems to call out racism

We prioritise addressing racism. We make sure it is a focal point on our agenda, letting us confront it directly.

It is harder to call racism out without data or evidence on the nature, extent and impact of racism in an organisation.

We understand we need an effective system of redress. This includes strong complaints mechanisms for people who experience racism. This makes sure their concerns are heard and addressed promptly.

Figure 2: Drivers to eliminate racism



Source: Adapted from work by Diversity Council Australia

Responsibilities and obligations

Department staff

All staff

Together, we are all responsible for adopting an anti-racism approach in our ways of working and making the action plan a reality.

All staff are responsible for creating psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive workplaces free from racism and other forms of discrimination.

People leaders

All people leaders, including executive leaders, are accountable for:

- creating psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive workplaces
- our workplaces being free from racism
- actively communicating anti-racism in the department
- responding to and escalating any instances of racism reported to them.

People leaders can get advice and support from People and Culture.

Discrimination and human rights

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Under the Equal Opportunity Act, the department and all staff have a positive duty to prevent and remove discrimination. This includes discrimination around race, and religious beliefs and activity.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

The Racial Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate:

- when advertising jobs
- during recruitment and selection processes
- in the terms and conditions of employment
- when making decisions about training, transfer and promotion opportunities
- when terminating employment.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities


The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities protects 20 human rights.

As part of the Code of Conduct, all staff must show they understand and apply the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. This includes:

- making decisions and giving advice in line with human rights
- actively putting in place, promoting and supporting human rights.

Section 19 of the Charter covers cultural rights. People have different family, religious and cultural backgrounds. This section gives people the right to:

- enjoy their culture
- declare and practice their religion
- use their languages, including in our workplaces.



Under section 19(2) of the Charter, Aboriginal people also hold distinct cultural rights. First Nations peoples must not be denied the right, with other members of their community to:

- enjoy their identity and culture
- maintain and use their language
- maintain their kinship ties
- maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

Multicultural staff in the department should:

- have access to multifaith rooms and facilities for religious practices
- be able to use their languages in the workplace
- enjoy their cultural foods during meal breaks.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic) employers must provide and maintain a workplace that is safe and without risks to health (including psychological health), as far as reasonably practicable.

Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of their personal health, safety and wellbeing, and that of others.

The Victorian Government is currently considering options for new *Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations* (proposed regulations). The proposed regulations aim to promote the importance of psychological health and safety at work.

The department's *Health, safety and wellbeing policy* outlines our commitment to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of:

- all staff
- people working on behalf of the department
- people in department workplaces.

The department's *Health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities* outlines the legal and departmental accountabilities for different roles to provide and maintain a healthy and safe workplace.

Work-related violence

Work-related violence (WRV) is any violence and aggression at work. WRV occurs when a person is threatened, abused or assaulted in a situation related to their work. This includes racially motivated abuse, threats or assault.


WRV might come from anywhere – clients, customers, the public or even co-workers.

WRV is **unacceptable**.

The department's *Work-related violence risk management procedure* outlines how to prevent and manage the risk of WRV in our activities and services.

Action plan

The action plan sets out the commitments, actions, roles and responsibilities for the whole department to ensure a psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive workplace.



1 Driver 1: Racial literacy

For more information on this driver, see **Racial literacy – Driver 1**.

Table 5: Driver 1 actions

Priority focus area: Leadership and accountability

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Develop and run antiracism training package for all staff	70% of staff complete training by 2027	2025	People and Culture
All people leaders, including executives, complete antiracism training	90% of people leaders complete training by 2026	2026	Executive leaders
Include anti-racism training in leadership performance development plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track, review and report on antiracism training completion rates by leaders 	2026	Executive Leaders People and Culture
White privilege and racial literacy are embedded in department training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Aboriginal Cultural Safety Trainings are refreshed and updated All Anti-racism training include 	2026	People and Culture
Develop and showcase case studies that promote and highlight best practice inclusion initiatives across the department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in Adoption and successful implantation of best practice initiatives. 	2026	People and Culture



2

Driver 2: Centre lived experience

For more information on this driver, see **Centre for lived experience – Driver 2**.

Table 6: Driver 2 actions

Priority focus area: Strategy and business alignment

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Lived experience informs decision making, such as committees and working groups to address racism	All committees and working groups include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diverse staff community of practice • multicultural and multifaith staff • Aboriginal Staff Network representation 	2025	Executive Leaders
Lived experience is included in policy, incident reporting and response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Lived experience policy and resources published. • Communications plan developed and carried out • Lived experience representation is included in People and Culture incidence reporting and response • Improved employee experience incidences of racism 	2025	People and Culture



3

Driver 3: Audit for racial equity

For more information on this driver, see **Audit for racial equity – Driver 3**.

Table 7: Driver 3 actions

Priority focus area: Strategy and business alignment

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Review People and Culture policies and processes and update to include racism definition, reporting and response	All relevant polices include a definition of racism and a link to this Anti-racism action plan	2025	People and Culture
Include questions on experiences of racism in yearly Diversity Workforce Survey	Data is collected and reported in yearly survey results	2025	People and Culture
Review all Aboriginal and inclusion training and update to include anti-racism	All training is reviewed by people with lived experience and updated	2025	People and Culture
Review position descriptions to ensure inclusive and plain language	Position descriptions are reviewed and updated	2026	People and Culture



4 Driver 4: Remove racial bias in recruitment and recognition

For more information on this driver, see **Remove racial bias in recruitment and recognition – Driver 4**.

Table 8: Driver 4 actions

Priority focus area: Employment and careers

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Develop recruitment panel member training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training module developed • Staff complete training module • Increased awareness of obligations throughout process 	2026	People and Culture
Set requirements for multicultural diversity on recruitment interview panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide on multicultural diversity developed • Guide included in interview guide and promoted in the department • Panel member training module includes information on importance of diversity on panels 	2025	People and Culture
Review recruitment policy and update to add current best practice recruitment	Relevant policies updated for inclusive recruitment best practice	2025	People and Culture
Aboriginal recruitment policy is developed and implemented	Policy is developed and communicated	2025	People and Culture
Leadership programs include dedicated opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal staff • multicultural and multifaith staff from emerging migrant communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse women in leadership fast track program have at least 2 multicultural staff from emerging migrant communities each year • Aboriginal development programs for mid-career staff set up and support progression 	2025	People and Culture
Improve the job satisfaction and retention of multicultural and Aboriginal staff. Make sure they can progress their careers at the same rate as others in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Matter Survey shows improved job satisfaction of multicultural staff • Aboriginal Cultural Safety Survey shows improved safety for Aboriginal staff 	2026	People and Culture

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Recruitment practices are accessible for people where English is a second language, for example, giving interview questions before the interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of recruitment adjustments included in panel member and hiring manager training • Updated intranet content on recruitment adjustments available 	2025	People and Culture
Replace 'cultural fit' with 'cultural add' and develop education on the terminology	Included in training and hiring guides for managers and panel members	2026	People and Culture
Set specific special measure targets for multicultural and multifaith staff	10% more multicultural and multifaith special measures across classifications, with a priority focus on leadership.	2027	People and Culture
Psychometric assessments are culturally inclusive so multicultural workforce can take part successfully	Newly sourced psychometric assessments are culturally inclusive	November 2024	People and Culture
Ensure exit interview and surveys include questions to identify racism	<p>Online exit interview developed and included questions on if they faced behaviours against protected attributes (bullying, harassment and so on) – measures from results</p> <p>Note: As executive exit survey is done verbally, indicator will be set later</p>	Immediate 2024	People and Culture



5

Driver 5: Workplaces are psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive

For more information on this driver, see **Workplaces are psychologically healthy, safe and inclusive – Driver 5**.

Table 9: Driver 5 actions

Priority focus area: Culture and safety

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Anti-racism is built into the department’s health, safety and wellbeing actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and actions show no tolerance for work-related violence (WRV), discrimination and harassment • Staff have a clear complaint pathway and feel confident in raising issues • Instances of WRV (including racially motivated abuse, threats or assault) reported through eDINMAR 	2024	People and Culture
Peer Support Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes racism-related support • Staff from diverse backgrounds supported to be volunteer peer supporters 	Yearly review of Peer Support Program to identify ways to better meet the needs of our diverse workforce	2025	People and Culture
Offer culturally appropriate Employee Wellbeing and Support Program (EWSP) options for multicultural staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of the inclusive EWSP and racism supports offered • EWSP is culturally inclusive for all staff • How effective and suitable the EWSP is for multicultural staff 	2025	People and Culture
Develop dedicated EWSP and risk management initiative for frontline staff facing racism from clients	Improved wellbeing of multicultural frontline staff	2025	People and Culture
Complete data analysis and reporting on incidents involving racism to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond more effectively • better support Aboriginal and Multicultural staff 	Racism is included as a subcategory of WRV in eDINMAR	2025	People and Culture



6

Driver 6: Create the capability and systems to call out racism

For more information on this driver, see **Create the capability and systems to call out racism – Driver 6**.

Table 10: Driver 6 actions

Priority focus area: Leadership and accountability

Action	Indicator (measure)	Timing	Accountability
Run an anti-racism communications campaign	Campaign materials are in all offices and in digital formats	2025	People and Culture
People and Culture complete development activities to address racism	90% compliance rate for anti-racism training	2026	People and Culture
Ensure reporting processes adequately capture reports of racism	Enable reporting	2025	People and Culture
Put in place a strong reporting process to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• manage and investigate reported racism incidents• make sure lived experience is included• ensure higher degree of integrity and impartiality• enable adequate reporting mechanisms	Complaints process includes clear steps to address racism for all managers and People and Culture	2026	People and Culture
Create guideline for people leaders to report and manage incidences where racism occurs, including by client to staff	Process guideline developed to help people leaders respond to racism in the workplace	2026	People and Culture

Monitoring and progress reporting

The plan will be reviewed yearly to make sure it is achieving its goals.

Reports will be given to the People and Culture subcommittee of the Executive Board each year. The action plan will be a standing item on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Executive Committee.

Table 11: Reporting by level

Level	Reporting description
DFFH People and Culture Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Yearly paper to the committee on action plan progress as part of the Diversity and inclusion framework
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and report on action plan progress at committee meetings every quarterThe committee may decide to evaluate programs or strategies. These will be reported in line with the relevant timetable
Divisional executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Track relevant actions and follow the action plan
Staff and employee representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">After each report the People and Culture Committee, relevant staff and employee network representatives will be given a progress update

Reporting and responding to racism



When racism occurs in the workplace, we all must proactively report and respond to it.

Who can report racism?

Anyone can report racism.

All staff, including contractors and consultants, should understand their duty to ensure:

- psychological safety
- inclusive engagement.

All staff working in the department have a duty to call out and report racism.

Staff should be able to report negative behaviours without fear of:

- backlash
- punishment
- bullying
- career impacts.

How to report racism

The **Safe to Speak Up Hub** is a central point of advice and support for all staff and leaders.

It has information on how to speak up about inappropriate behaviour and other issues in the workplace.

The hub includes links to contacts, services and resources to help improve:

- how we include diverse perspective in our work
- our programs and services
- our response to concerns.

References

Allison, F. Cunneen, C. and Selcuk, A. (2023). 'In every corner of every suburb'. The Call It Out Racism Register 2022-2023, Sydney: Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney. <https://callitout.com.au/resources>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022). Census 2021. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools>.

Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute (Brown, C., DAlmada-Remedios, R., Gilbert, J. OLeary, J. and Young, N.) *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute, 2020.

Diversity Council Australia (2022). *Racism at work: how organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*. <https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work>.

Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, Mapping social cohesion 2023. <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/publications/mapping-social-cohesion-report/2023-mapping-social-cohesion-report>.

Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2022). *Annual Report 2021-2022*. <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/annual-report-2021-22>.

