



Guide: Creating anti-racism messaging and campaigns

This guide is intended for supporters of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign interested in developing their own anti-racism public awareness initiatives, communications, messaging or campaigns.

Race is a social construct, which means that racial difference is given different meaning in different contexts in order to perform specific functions.¹ For that reason, there is no ‘one-size fits-all’ approach to anti-racism.² Instead, anti-racism should respond to the ways in which race and racism are deployed in particular contexts.

There have been many forms of anti-racist action and advocacy over the long history of anti-racism. It is likely that no single approach may be effective on its own.³

This guide provides some insights gained through the process of developing the 2022 *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign. The Australian Human Rights Commission is indebted to those who provided their expertise through consultations, scholarship and expert advice, much of which has informed this guide.



¹ Stuart Hall, *The Fateful triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2017); Stuart Hall: Race, The Floating Signifier (Media Education Foundation); Alastair Bonnett, ‘Roots of Resistance’ in *Anti-Racism* (Taylor & Francis, 1st ed, 1999) 9–46.

² David Singh and Chelsea Watego, *A Matter of Land, Life and Death: Reframing the Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Anti-Racism Framework* (Submission to the National Anti-Racism Framework, 2022), 5.

³ Chelsea Watego, David Singh and Alissa Macoun, ‘*Partnership for Justice in Health: Scoping Paper on Race, Racism and the Australian Health System*’ (Discussion Paper, The Lowitja Institute, May 2021), 28-29.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before committing to anti-racism campaigns or initiatives within your organisation, it is important to spend time learning about the role of racism in shaping society, including how it may play out within your organisation or community.

The [Racism. It Stops With Me](#) website provides information about racism and practical steps that you can take to develop your skills in anti-racism on an individual and organisational level. It includes [useful definitions](#) and examples of the different ways racism operates. The [Questions and Context](#) section highlights some of the ways that racism shapes society, including in various sectors such as sports, health, politics and the arts. The [Resource Hub](#) also contains information about other organisations and initiatives that can support deeper learning. The [Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool](#) can help you identify areas in which your organisation could strengthen its approach to anti-racism, cultural diversity and inclusion.

Anti-racism campaigns and initiatives must be accompanied by a genuine and meaningful commitment to **long-term structural change** within your organisation or community, particularly by those in positions of power or authority. For further reading on the needs for structural change in Australia, check out the [National Anti-Racism Framework scoping report](#).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



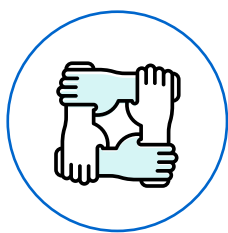
CENTRING EXPERTISE AND PERSPECTIVES

Anti-racism is not new and has been practiced in various forms for centuries.⁴

In Australia, there is a long history of both racism and anti-racism. First Nations people have unique experiences of racism that can overlap with, but are distinct from, other lived experiences of racism.² This is due to the specific racial oppression and dispossession inflicted on First Nations people via historical and ongoing colonial violence.² In response, First Nations peoples and communities have practised anti-racism and resistance, and championed racial justice in Australia for centuries. Meaningful anti-racism should always acknowledge the expertise and experience of First Nations people, and centre the messages being shared by these communities.

When communicating anti-racism throughout your organisation or creating anti-racism campaign materials it is important to centre the perspectives of people and communities with direct lived experience of racism. Wherever possible, engage in a process of codesigning any messaging or materials with these people and communities. There may be people within your organisation willing to engage in this process. Alternatively, you may need to seek external consultation or advice.

⁴ Alastair Bonnett, *Anti-Racism* (Taylor & Francis, 2005) 9–46; Teun A. van Dijk, 'Introduction' in *Antiracist Discourse Theory and History of a Macromovement* (Book, Cambridge University Press, 2021) 1, 2.; Yin Paradies, 'Anti-Racism and Indigenous Australians' (2005) 5(1) *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 1, 3.

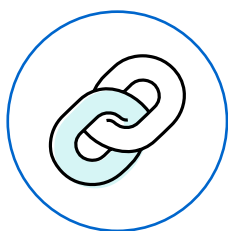


HARM MINIMISATION

When communicating anti-racism messaging in your organisation, it is important to ensure that those who may choose to share their lived experiences of racism are able to do so in a way that is:

- voluntary
- anonymous, where desired
- in a setting that is culturally safe (as outlined below)
- supported by an internal or external person or team trained to work in a way that is culturally safe and trauma-informed.

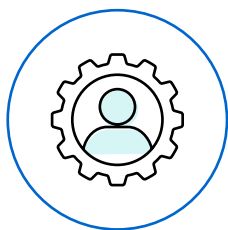
Your organisation should also ensure that anyone whose lived experience of racism or anti-racism expertise is drawn on are adequately remunerated.



INTERSECTIONALITY

It is important to consider the way that experiences of racism intersect with and are compounded by other forms of discrimination, such as discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, religious belief, class, age or ability.

This concept, coined as ‘intersectionality’ by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989,⁵ is also explored in the [key terms](#) section of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* website.



FOCUS ON THE SYSTEMIC NATURE OF RACISM

To address racism in a meaningful way, we need to understand the different ways it operates. When communicating anti-racism messaging, it is important to be clear that racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. Racism is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race.

You can read more about the nature of racism and systemic racism in the [commit to learning](#) and [key terms](#) sections of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* website.



CULTURAL SAFETY

As outlined above, it is important for organisations to have processes in place to create a culturally safe environment when developing anti-racism campaigns or sharing messaging.

‘Cultural safety’ is a term first used by Māori nurse and anthropologist Irihapeti Ramsden in the 1980s in the healthcare industry,⁶ but is also commonly used to discuss the level of safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in Australian workplaces.⁷ It is both a framework and outcome that enables safe and accessible environments to be defined by employees and those who access services.

Cultural safety has been identified by many as a best-practice approach to addressing race-based barriers and harms experienced within the workplace. Find out more in the [National Anti-Racism Framework](#) scoping report.

⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’ (1989) 1989(1) University of Chicago Legal Forum 138.

⁶ Irihapeti Merenia Ramsden, ‘Cultural Safety and Nursing Education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu’ (PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2002).

⁷ Diversity Council Australia and Jumbunna Institute, [Gari Yala \(Speak the Truth\): Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians](#) (Report, Diversity Council Australia and Jumbunna Institute, 2020) 11.

TARGET AUDIENCE

It is important to carefully consider your target audience and create messaging that resonates with them. Anti-racism is an ongoing journey and it can be difficult to unlearn racial prejudice and collectively build a world that is racially just and equitable. Meet your audience where they are and acknowledge that, as an organisation, you want to commit to the journey together.

GOALS AND EVALUATION

When planning your organisation's approach to anti-racism messaging, an important step is mapping the wider environment to identify contextual factors that may influence the campaign's success (e.g., previous incidents of racism/discrimination that may resurface). Consider if your organisation is ready to launch an internal or public facing campaign, or whether there are more pressing structural issues that need to be addressed first.

It is important to develop specific, tangible and measurable objectives and consider how your campaign will be evaluated before it begins.



TIPS FOR FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

There are many great resources available to support meaningful and effective messaging for promoting racial justice and equity. Some examples include:

- [Raise the Age Messaging Guide](#)
- [Incarceration Nation Conversation Guide](#)
- [Passing the Message Stick](#)
- [Messaging this moment: A handbook for progressive communicators](#)

[Passing the Message Stick](#) is a First Nations-led research project that seeks to transform the way we talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice. Many of the lessons learned from that project may be useful in conversations and campaigns about racism more broadly. Some examples include:

1

Start the conversation by discussing shared values, such as *fairness, justice, freedom, safety, equality, dignity, community*

2

Use a strength-based approach when discussing negatively racialised communities and avoid deficit discourse. 'Deficit discourse' refers to the patterns of thought, language or practice that represent people in terms of deficiencies or failures.⁸ Avoid deficit-based, homogenising language, such as: *vulnerable, disadvantaged, living in poverty*. For more information, check out this [Summary Report](#) on deficit discourse by the Lowitja Institute

3

Avoid negation – don't repeat the opponents' message. Negation is when we say what something is *not* rather than explicitly stating what it *is*. Negating a particular mistruth often serves to reinforce it. Instead, we need to reframe the conversation and be clear about what we know.⁹

Read more about this and other insights in the [Passing the Message Stick report](#).

You may also wish to access or join existing anti-racism campaigns such as [Racism. It Stops With Me](#) and [Racism Not Welcome](#).



⁸ William Fogarty, Hannah Bulloch, Siobhan McDonnell and Michael Davis, [Deficit Discourse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Policy](#) (Summary Report, The Lowitja Institute, 2018) 1.

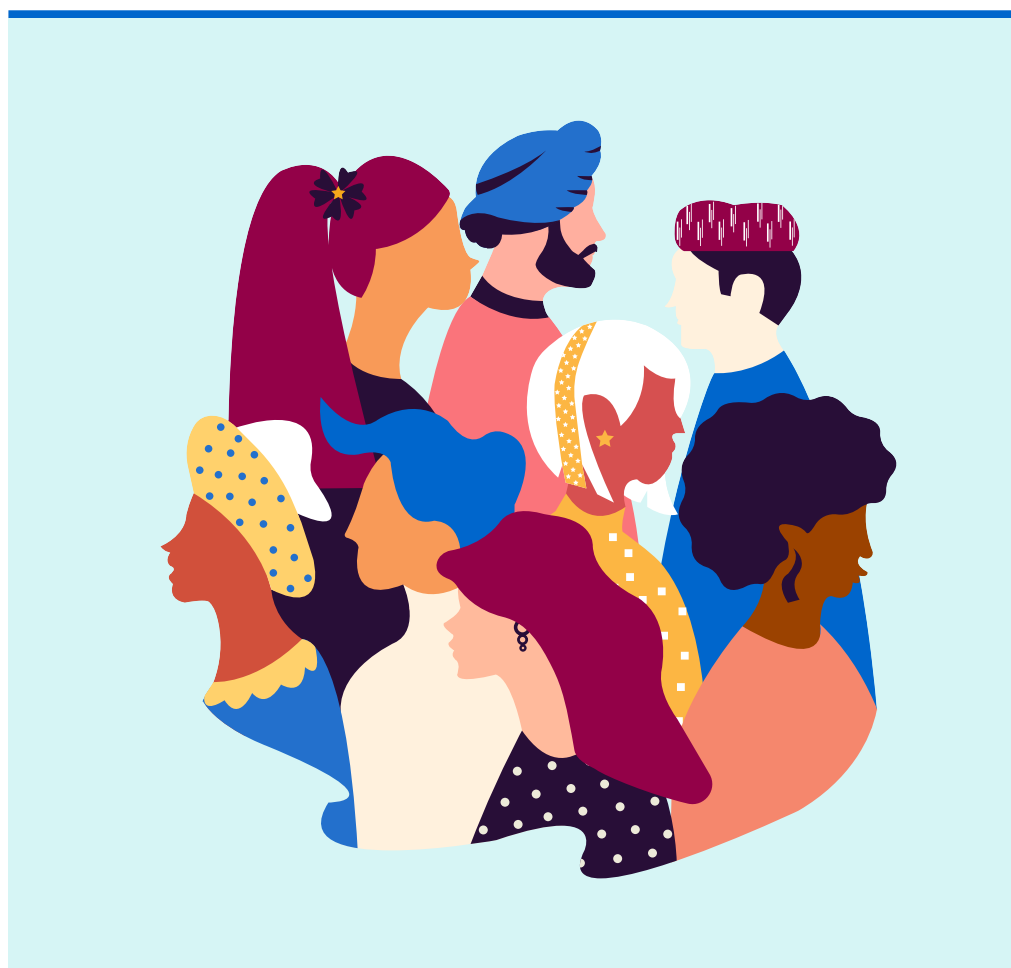
⁹ ['Passing the Message Stick'](#) (Report, 2023).

A NOTE ON PRIVILEGE

The term 'racial privilege' is often used to refer to the rights, advantages or protections experienced by people because of their racial identity. Experiencing racial privilege does not automatically mean that you have had an easy life. However, the concept of privilege can help us understand the way that racism facilitates the enjoyment of certain rights and experiences for some while denying them to others. The term privilege is explored further in the campaign website's [key terms](#) section.

Critics of a focus on 'privilege' in anti-racism have rightly noted that many of the things that have been categorised as 'privileges' are in fact basic rights that should be enjoyed by everyone.¹⁰ Others have critiqued the use of the term 'privilege' for the way that it decentres an understanding of racism as structural exploitation, undermines solidarity across communities and immobilises collective action.¹¹ Therefore, it can be helpful to focus on the lack of protections experienced by those without racial privilege in a system of white supremacy. This also includes focusing on what can be done, collectively, to address this.¹²

The Racism. It Stops With Me campaign explores examples of this in a [series of questions](#), which ask people to reflect on the impact of racial privilege in their lives. For example, "[Has my mental health ever been affected by racism?](#)" explores how racism is a determinant of both physical and mental health. In Australia, this lack of protection is exemplified in the ongoing and intergenerational impacts of colonisation, dispossession and discrimination experienced by First Nations peoples and how this interacts with health outcomes.



¹⁰ Helen Ngo, 'On White Privilege, White Priority and White Supremacy', [Overland Literary Journal](#) (online, 24 June 2020).

¹¹ Miriyam Aouragh, "White privilege' and shortcuts to anti-racism' (2019) 61(2) [Race & Class](#); A. Sivanadan, 'RAT and the degradation of Black struggle' in *Catching History on the Wing* (Book, 1985).

¹² Helen Ngo, 'On White Privilege, White Priority and White Supremacy', [Overland Literary Journal](#) (online, 24 June 2020).

ADAPTING THE RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME CAMPAIGN FOR YOUR ORGANISATION OR COMMUNITY

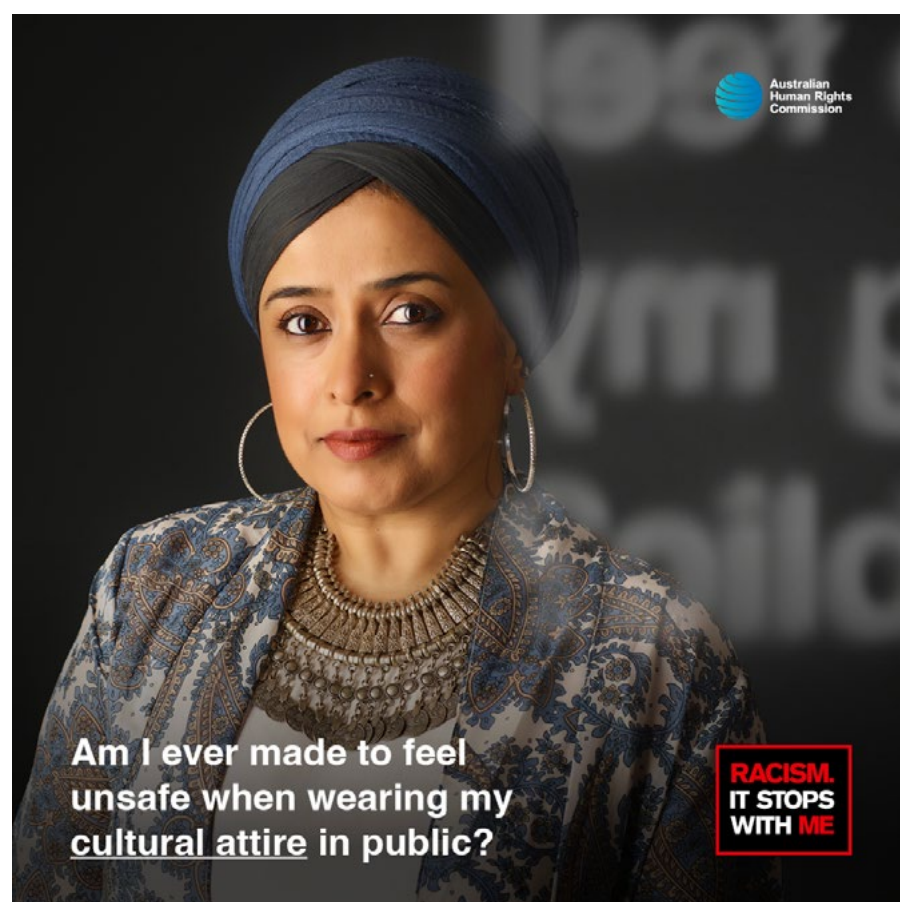
ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The 2022 *Racism. It Stops With Me* public awareness campaign invites audiences to consider the way that racism shapes society. It is specifically designed to encourage those **without** direct lived experience of racism to reflect and take action. Campaign assets feature a series of questions that interrogate how everyday experiences are impacted by racism as it operates at the institutional and interpersonal level.

To develop these questions, the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign worked with a group of academics and practitioners with deep experience in anti-racism. These questions were further workshoped via a series of consultations with people and communities with direct lived experiences of racism.

Inspiration for this approach was taken from Peggy McIntosh's concept of the '[Invisible Knapsack](#)' of [privilege](#). For McIntosh, this 'knapsack' holds a series of assumptions and benefits, allowing her to advance in life without even noticing that the way she was racialised, as a white person, was positively impacting her experiences.¹³

It is important to note that McIntosh's work leaned heavily on the work of many others who had developed society's understanding of concepts such as racism, whiteness, power and privilege,¹⁴ and the nature of race as socially constructed.¹⁵ Typically, these scholars have been from negatively racialised communities and have not received the same level of mainstream recognition received by McIntosh. The Commission acknowledges the need to do more to address this bias in our own work, and encourage others using this guide to do the same.



¹³ Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack of Privilege' (1989) [Peace and Freedom](#).

¹⁴ See, for example the concept of 'psychological wage' in W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Chapter XVI: *Black towards Slavery*' in *Black Reconstruction in America: toward a history of the part of which Black fold played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (Book, 1935) 599.

¹⁵ Stuart Hall, [The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation](#) (Harvard University Press, 2017); Stuart Hall: Race, The Floating Signifier (Media Education Foundation).

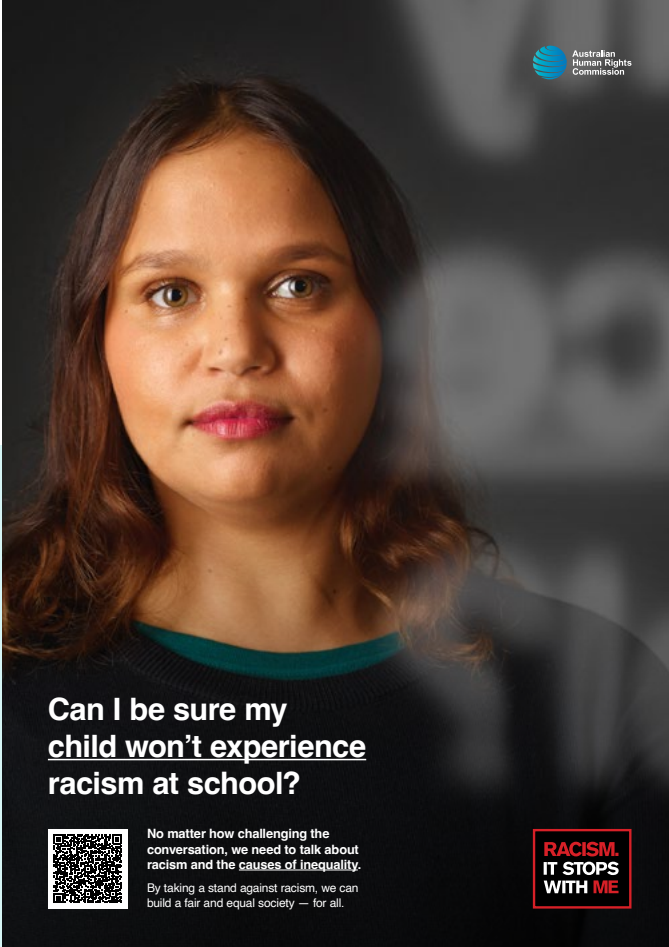
HOW TO USE THE CAMPAIGN

Since the 2022 *Racism. It Stops With Me* public awareness campaign was designed to target Australians without lived experience of racism, it is best adapted for campaigns that seek to engage a similar audience within your organisation or community.

When considering the kinds of people you might ask to participate in your campaign, consider the importance of featuring both:

- Those with lived experiences of racism, whose voices and experiences should be centred, and who have long led anti-racist action in Australia,
- Those without direct lived experiences of racism who are willing to commit to active anti-racism and stand in solidarity with those leading this work.

In late 2022-2023, the Campaign Team conducted a formal evaluation of the 2022 relaunch of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign. This included the collection of data and testimony from campaign supporters, project collaborators and other important stakeholders. An evaluation report including key recommendations for future campaign activity is available via the [campaign website](#).

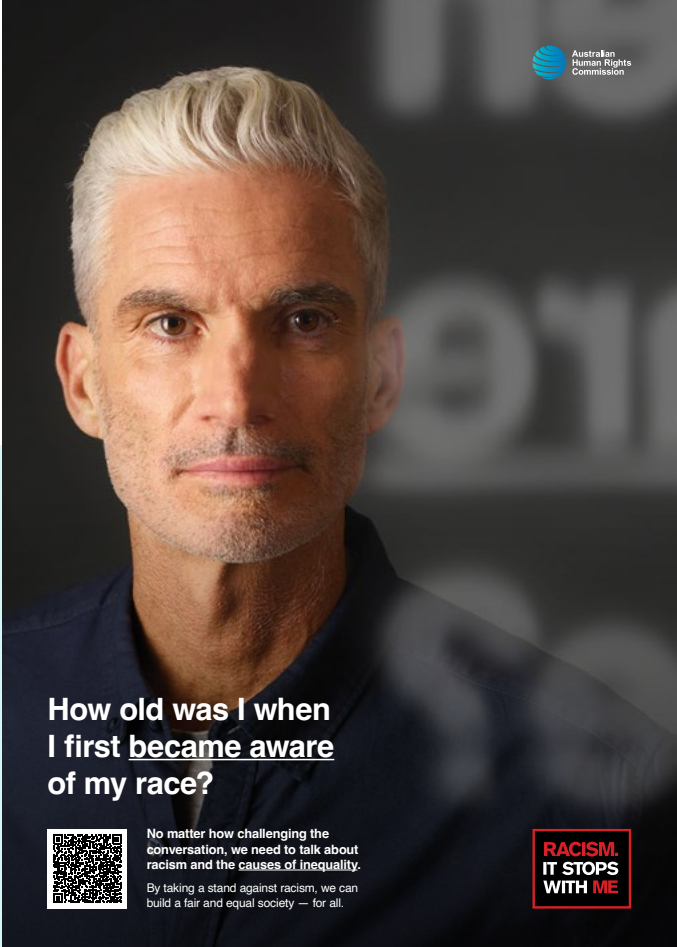


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Can I be sure my child won't experience racism at school?

No matter how challenging the conversation, we need to talk about racism and the causes of inequality.
By taking a stand against racism, we can build a fair and equal society — for all.

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How old was I when I first became aware of my race?

No matter how challenging the conversation, we need to talk about racism and the causes of inequality.
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