Australian Human Rights Commission

Mapping government anti-racism programs and policies

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respect to their ongoing traditional custodianship of the ancestral lands and waters we work and live on throughout Australia.

We would like to extend this acknowledgement to people who belong to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities who have been denied the right to enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion, and use their language.

This report was prepared by PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC) and the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at UTS for the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, First Nations, Indigenous	This research report prioritises the use of First Nations People to recognise the unique and rightful place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia. The term indigenous is used to refer to Indigenous Peoples of the world.
AGD	Federal Attorney-General's Department
AHPRA	Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency
AHRC, the Commission	Australian Human Rights Commission
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
AMC	Australian Multicultural Council
Anti-Racism	Anti-racism is an active process, unlike the passive stance of 'nonracism'. Therefore, anti-racism work requires consistent, committed and targeted action and attention. Anti-racism involves actively attempting to combat racist policies, practices, culture and ideas. Anti-racism is about more than being 'not racist'. It involves active decisions that seek to combat injustice and promote racial equity. It can be helpful to think of anti-racism as a skill set that we can all develop and use to promote a better, more equitable society.
APS	Australian Public Service
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
CALD	Australia's population includes many people who were born overseas, have a parent born overseas or speak a variety of languages. Together, these groups of people are known as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations.[1]
CLO	Department of Home Affairs Community Liaison Officer
Community Sector, CSOs	Organisations that are not-for-profit and established for community service purposes, which provide for the wellbeing and benefit of others. CSOs promote, provide or carry out activities, facilities or projects for the benefit or welfare of the community or

[1] Australian Government | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) Australia's Health 2018, accessed 19 February 2024

	any members who have a particular need by reason of youth, age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social or economic circumstances.[2]
CTE	Countering Terrorism and Extremism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DE & I	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Diversity, equity, and inclusion are three closely linked values held by many organisations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations.[3]
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
DSS	Federal Department of Social Services
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
Framework	Throughout this document, we may use Framework to refer to the National Anti-Racism Framework. The Framework is being developed separately to the services of this project, however outputs from this project will be considered in the development of the National Anti-Racism Framework.
HESA	Higher Education Support Act 2003
IDC	Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee
Jumbunna	University of Sydney, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research
Justice Reinvestment	Justice reinvestment is a long-term, community-led approach that aims to prevent crime, address the drivers of contact with the justice system, and improve justice outcomes for First Nations people in a particular place or community.[4]
LGA	Local Government Area
LGNSW	Local Government NSW peak body
MYAN	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NRL	National Rugby League

[2] Australian Government | Department of Social Services (2023) A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector: Issues Paper, page 9

[3] McKinsey&Company (2022) What is diversity, equity and inclusion? accessed 19 February 2024

[4] Australian Government | Attorney-General's Department (2024) Justice Reinvestment, accessed 19 February 2024

NSW STARTTS	NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
OPCAT	Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture
PCYC	Police Citizens and Youth Clubs
PIC	PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting Pty Limited, trading as PwC Indigenous Consulting
PMC	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Racial Discrimination	Under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, 'the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.'[5]
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RDA	Racial Discrimination Act 1975
SARC	Strong and Resilient Communities Activity (DSS)
SES	Senior Executive Service as defined in the *Public Service Act 1999* to provide strategic leadership contributing to an effective and cohesive APS.[6]
Social cohesion	The belief held by citizens of a given nation-state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other.[7][8]
SOSOG	Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Voice Referendum	On 14 October 2023, Australians voted in a referendum about whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The referendum did not pass.[8]
WALGA	Western Australia Local Government Association
We	Throughout this document, we may use the word 'we' to collectively refer to PIC and its project partner, Jumbunna.

[5] UNHCR, Office of the High Commissioner, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Part 1, Article 1.1, accessed 10 October 2023

[6] Australian Government | Australian Public Service Commission (2024) Senior Executive Service, accessed 19 February 2024

[7] LARSEN, C.A., 2013. The Rise and Fall of Social Cohesion. The Construction and De-construction of Social Trust in the USA, UK, Sweden and Denmark. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[8] Australian Government | National Indigenous Australians Agency (2024) Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, accessed 19 February 2024

Welcome to Country	Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have always been a part of First Nations cultures. Boundaries were clear, and crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter. Today, while these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances, the essential elements remain: welcoming visitors and respect for Country. Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country.[9][10]
Welcoming Cities	Welcoming Cities is a national local government network of cities, shires, towns and municipalities committed to an Australia where everyone can belong and participate in social, cultural, economic and civic life.[10]

[9] Reconciliation Australia (2024) Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country, accessed 19 February 2024

[10] Welcoming Cities (2024) What is Welcoming Cities, accessed 19 February 2024

Contents

1. Executive summary

1.1 Project context

The 2023 Mapping Social Cohesion Report found that social cohesion is under pressure and declining in Australia, citing declines in a sense of national pride and belonging, increasing financial strain and a weakening sense of social inclusion and justice as signs of further weakening of the social fabric of the nation.[11]

As part of five independent foundational research pieces to support the development of a new National Anti-Racism Framework, in 2023 the Commission engaged PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC), with subject matter expertise from Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research (Jumbunna) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to identify and document existing national, state, territory, and local government programs and policies with relevance to antiracism.

In 2022 the Federal Government committed $7.5m over four years to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC, the Commission) to support the development of the Framework and facilitate anti-racism public education and awareness initiatives. As part of the foundational research for the new Framework, the Commission sought to enhance their understanding of existing anti-racism work conducted or funded by the three tiers of government in Australia, identify opportunities for expansion of existing initiatives, and highlight the gaps in programs and policy that can be consolidated and addressed by a national Framework.

The research findings presented here will be used by the Commission to support the development of the National Anti-Racism Framework.

1.2 Research approach

A research framework was co-designed with the Race Discrimination team to establish a considered approach to identify and baseline relevant policies and programs of government (federal, state, local) over the past five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23. A mixed method approach was used to conduct the research for this project to consider data from different sources: quantitative (what could be measured via desktop research) and qualitative (what could be observed via key stakeholder interviews).

Through the scoping phase for the National Anti-Racism, the Commission had identified the importance of centering First Nations peoples' experiences. Both PIC and Jumbunna recognise that change happens when First Nations peoples are actively involved in the processes that will affect them, thus our approach to this project promoted First Nations ways of being, knowing and doing.

[11] Scanlon Foundation (2023) O'Donnell, J, Mapping Social Cohesion 2023, page 6.

The research focused on analysing data collected from a number of sources including:

- Preliminary interviews with key stakeholders to develop the research approach
- Publicly available government information on relevant policy and programs, including legislation, strategies, plans and frameworks, Reconciliation Action Plans, resource materials, campaigns, research, reviews and evaluations, position statements and grant funding programs, and
- Interviews with stakeholders from federal, state/territory and local government, community sector organisations and peak bodies, First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community experts and academic research specialists.

The research analysed and assessed this data against the following framing reference points:

- anti-racism
- multiculturalism
- social cohesion, and
- equity, including special measures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, equality, and discrimination, with respect to race, ethnicity, cultural background, and religion.

1.3 Summary of our findings

High level key findings from the review of identified publicly available government policies and programs are summarised below.

Key Finding 1: Avoiding 'racism'

Overall, there is a reluctance on the part of government to use the term 'racism'. Government preference over the past decade for the use of 'social cohesion' has weakened approaches to anti-racism work. There is a current lack of a systemic government-led strengths-based, inter-sectional and coordinated approach to addressing racism in Australian society.

Key Finding 2: Failure to measure impact

Work that is being done is failing to enter public awareness in any meaningful way. Limited or no monitoring and evaluation means there is little or no impact assessment of work already being undertaken, including government funded programs run by community organisations.

Key Finding 3: Blaming the victims

There remains a focus on victims and/or those communities experiencing racism or racist behaviours to 'fix the problem' with little or no focus on the broader community to address the issue.

Key Finding 4: Ad hoc, disjointed, disconnected and reactive

Government work at all levels appears to be ad-hoc, disjointed, often disconnected from other similar approaches, and frequently reactive to situations arising domestically or internationally. Such work is heavily siloed and there is a lack of whole of government approaches that are not reliant on the Australian Human Rights Commission, as a small authority, to lead and drive. Lack of coherence and direction *across* government agencies and *between* governments is apparent. This is also the case across sectors considered in this research – government, nongovernment organisations and academia. Victoria is an example of where cross-sectoral approaches can work – when academic experts, government agencies and local councils are aware of and leverage each other's experience and expertise.

Key Finding 5: Focus on internal staffing strategies

The most common work across agencies and tiers of government is internally focused in the form of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies and programs aimed at First Nations and CALD staff, alongside people living with disability and women. However, some of this work has been in place for more than a decade and little to no focus is directly on addressing racism in the workplace - rather, racism is part of an overall 'basket' of issues to be considered. Reconciliation Action Plans have the capacity to shift this for those government agencies that have them in place, with a commitment to review internal policies for anti-racism approaches now a requirement introduced by Reconciliation Australia and not government itself. At the local level, the City of Darebin in Victoria is the only example of a council identified by this research with a dedicated anti-racism staff position.

Key Finding 6: Disconnect between expert research outcomes and government work

There is a disconnect between emerging academic research and government practice. Significant federal funding has supported excellent academic and other research, but it is not clear if or where research findings are driving policy and program development or informing practice by government to achieve outcomes for communities.

Key Finding 7: Competing communities

The current policy approach in this space contributes to an 'either/or' situation between First Nations and CALD communities, leading to victimised communities competing with each other for funding.

Key Finding 8: Limited focus on racism and First Nations communities

The equity work undertaken by government focused on First Nations communities is focused *into* those communities aimed at addressing disadvantage and does not include a focus on addressing the racism experienced by those communities from external forces. No evidence could be found to support work being undertaken aimed at those who perpetrate racism towards First Nations communities. Post-Voice Referendum,

there is a need for government to reaffirm support for addressing racism towards First Nations peoples.

Key Finding 9: Racism not a consideration for local government

While there are excellent individual examples of local government work, generally local government does not see anti-racism work as a consideration, either at local council or their state/national peak body levels.

Key Finding 10: Good practice examples are available

The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) provides an example of legislation addressing online racism and the funding of Reconciliation Australia a good example of funding to the community sector leading to practical and useful outcomes addressing racism in the community. Projects led by All Together Now and the Scanlon Institute, and the University of Western Sydney Challenging Racism project, as well as the *Australian Reconciliation Barometer*, provide examples of evidence-based research work undertaken in the community sector.

Key Finding 11: Failure of political bipartisanship

Unlike other policy areas, continuity in work on racism is heavily reliant on, and susceptible to, the attitudes of the government of the day. More recent conservative governments have stepped away from traditional bipartisan approaches in this space and, unlike their predecessors, can no longer be seen as drivers of anti-racism work. This has led to a gap in corporate knowledge in the public sector, and a current sense of 'reinventing of the wheel'.

Key Finding 12: Limitations due to lack of engagement with this research

There are limitations to the findings of this research due to a small sample of publicly available information made available by governments, and a lack of interest or engagement with the research project.

1.4 Recommendations

A set of key high-level recommendations have been included here for consideration by the Commission and other government bodies, based on the outcomes of this research. They are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** Establishment of a National Anti-Racism Council that brings together First Nations and CALD leaders and experts for the first time to advise government on strategic directions for policy and programs.
- **Recommendation 2:** Development of a nationally recognised definition of racism.
- **Recommendation 3:** Development of a clear, whole of government strategic approach to addressing racism and racist behaviours in Australian society.

- **Recommendation 4:** Inclusion of a formal monitoring and evaluation approach in the Framework for tracking and reporting on progress and implementation of government work addressing racism.
- **Recommendation 5:** Addressing racism in schools to ensure victims do not leave education facing lifelong disadvantage, and perpetrators do not enter adulthood believing racist behaviours are acceptable and do not attract accountability.
- **Recommendation 6:** Establishment of a national database or clearinghouse of anti-racism work, policies and programs, research and outcomes.

Further details and analysis of these recommendations can be found in Chapter 6.

2. Introduction

In 2022, the Australian Government committed $7.5m over four years to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the AHRC, the Commission) to support the development of an initial National Anti-Racism Framework (the Framework) and facilitation of anti-racism public education and awareness initiatives. The Commission anticipates its current work on the Framework will serve as a central reference point for anti-racism action across sectors and inform the future development of a national anti-racism strategy.

The Commission also recognises the crucial role of public awareness and education initiatives in anti-racism and will continue to develop its work in these areas. The Commission anticipates that policy, education and public awareness initiatives will build the groundwork for a national anti-racism strategy in the long term. Wide-ranging consultations and public submissions informed a scoping report on the Framework published in December 2022, which identifies principles, cross-cutting themes and priority sectors to be involved in the design and implementation of the Framework. The AHRC continues to build the draft Framework with government and civil society, including those with direct lived experience of racism.

The Commission is undertaking five research projects and consultation with experts in key priority areas as foundational research for the development of the Framework, including, but not limited to:

- racial literacy
- data
- media regulation and standards
- existing government anti-racism initiatives, and
- mapping anti-Asian racism.

The Commission understands that the design and implementation of the Framework will require support across all tiers of government. For this to be done effectively and contribute to the systemic change required, identifying existing government initiatives that address racism is necessary to establish a clear baseline, identify gaps and provide recommendations.

As such, the Commission seeks to enhance its understanding of existing anti-racism work conducted or funded by the three tiers of government in Australia, identify opportunities for expansion of existing initiatives, and highlight gaps in programs and policy that can be consolidated and addressed by a national Framework.

In 2023, the Commission engaged PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC), with subject matter expertise from Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

(Jumbunna) at UTS to identify and document existing national, state, territory, and local government programs and policies.

This report documents the findings of the research. It is intended that this report will support the Commission to identify gaps in existing work on understanding and addressing racism and racist behaviours in Australia as well as recommendations for potential inclusion in the Framework.

3. Research project methodology and approach

3.1 Our approach

Scope

The Commission engaged PIC and Jumbunna to identify and document existing federal, state and territory, and local government programs and policies with relevance to anti-racism.

The scope of the programs and policies included at minimum government programs and policies over the last five years relating to:

- anti-racism
- multiculturalism
- social cohesion, and
- equity, including special measures for First Nations peoples, equality, and discrimination, with respect to race, ethnicity, cultural background, and religion.

At a high level, the research activities undertaken were:

- Designing an approach within a research framework to identify and baseline relevant policies and programs of government (federal, state and local) over the last five years
- Undertaking desktop research to identify relevant programs and policies across each tier of government, including internal government programs and policies relating to the public service and government funding provided to non-government or community organisations via grant programs to facilitate relevant initiatives
- Depth interviews with key stakeholders to identify relevant programs and policies, and
- Collating and synthesising insights into this final report for the Commission.

The research framework is a standalone document developed as part of this project provided to the Commission on 26 October 2023.

Research activities

In conducting the research activities, the team undertook research in the following categories:

- federal policies and programs,
- state and territory policies and programs,

- local government policies and programs, and
- community sector policies and programs funded by the Federal Government.

The research team conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and identified over 280 pieces of information. This breakdown is as follows:

- 11 Federal Government interviews involving 21 representatives:
  - Federal stakeholders included departmental staff from four agencies targeted via advice from the Race Discrimination team and the desktop review findings and seven from the community and academic sectors.
  - Approximately 130 pieces of information were identified.
- Three state government and non-government organisation (NGO) interviews involving six representatives:
  - Representative breakdown included one government agency and two NGOs funded by state government entities.
  - Approximately 120 pieces of information were identified.
- Six local government stakeholders including local councils, peak bodies and organisations funded by local government. Further, one interview was conducted with a First Nations stakeholder from a local community-controlled organisation and reference was made to working with First Nations people across all seven interviews.
  - Approximately 31 pieces of information were identified.

Further information about the interviews can be found in Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C.

3.2 Limitations

The data collected to inform the research presented a number of limitations for analysis undertaken for this project. These are listed here.

Limited participation in interviews

The original aim of the research was to conduct up to 30 individual or small group depth interviews with stakeholders across three government tiers. Despite the efforts of the research team and the Race Discrimination team to engage stakeholders, limited number of interviews took place. This meant that overall, there was limited engagement with the research, particularly by state/territory and local government stakeholders.

Barriers to engaging with First Nations stakeholders

The unsuccessful Voice Referendum in October 2023 seriously impeded the ability of the research team (a First Nations-led team itself) to engage First Nations stakeholders

to participate in the research. Those who did choose to take part at a personally and professionally challenging time provided the project with deep and insightful data.

Limited to no connectivity challenged the scope and limits of the research

The lack of joined-up approaches to anti-racism work across and within governments impeded the capacity of the research team to fully identify and document federal, state, and local government programs and policies within the project scope.

Limited publicly available information

The data collected through the four desktop reviews (federal government, state government, local government and funded community sector initiatives) is limited by what governments make publicly available. Only federal grant program funding allocations were able to be mapped within the scope of this research due solely to the Australian Government Grant Connect website, a centralised information system. No similar system is available at the state level which meant similar data collection was not within project scope. Further, the number of local councils nationally prevented the research team from interrogating local government funding to the community sector, and the national peak body and those state/territory peaks the research team were able to interview were unable to provide any detailed information.

4. Detailed findings and insights

4.1 Federal government

Australian government work addressing racism can loosely be traced to the United Nations (UN) *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* in 1948 and the role the then Calwell Government played in the Declaration's adoption. However, it took concerted and bipartisan efforts in the decades that followed to enact Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (RDA). This is the foundational federal legislation which sets out the principle of equity for people in Australia regardless of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status. The RDA enshrines in domestic law Australia's commitments under the aforementioned Declaration as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to which Australia is a signatory.

Another key international human rights instrument is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 and endorsed by Australia in 2009 (Australia is not yet a signatory). The UNDRIP articulates the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, or to have control over their own economic, social, cultural and political destinies.

It is also worth noting the recent 2021 Australian Statement for the Interactive Dialogue on Combatting Racism.

In addition to the RDA, relevant domestic legislation includes:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Act enacted in 1986.
- The *Racial Hatred Act 1995* which amended the RDA to allow people to complain about publicly offensive or abusive behaviour based on racial hatred.

At a policy level, the Federal Government currently has an Australian Multicultural Council (AMC), a ministerially appointed body under the Department of Home Affairs which provides advice to government on multicultural affairs, social cohesion and integration. In lieu of a national First Nations representative body, the Coalition of Peaks, a representative body of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations and member bodies formed as an act of self-determination to be formal partners with Australian Governments and share in decision-making on Closing the Gap.

The research team found a greater stakeholder response rate at the federal level, as well as more published information by Federal Government departments and agencies. A desktop review was undertaken of relevant websites using the search terms 'racism', 'First Nations', 'multicultural' and 'equity', and 11 interviews conducted involving 21 Federal Government stakeholders. This section provides a summary of the outcomes of those federal level research activities.

4.1.1 Desktop review summary

In conducting a desktop review of anti-racism and associated policies, programs and investment by the federal government, approximately 130 pieces of information were identified through a search of publicly available information and deemed in scope.

Workplace equity, not anti-racism

A significant number of Federal Government policies and programs identified through the desktop review are internal functioning diversity, inclusion and equity strategies. Agencies with Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are explicitly committed to addressing racism within the workplace due to the required clause inserted by Reconciliation Australia in recent years.

Legislation supporting work on anti-racism

There are some key pieces of federal legislation that, while not grounded in addressing racism, are supporting work on anti-racism. These include:

- The Aged Care Act (1997) Cth which provides commitment at 2-1 (e) for the facilitation of access to aged care services regardless of race, culture, language and gender.[12]
- The Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth) (HESA), an object of which is to support a higher education system that is characterised by quality, diversity and equity of access.[13]
- The Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) which established the eSafety Commissioner and their office as the main point of contact for the public on online safety with a mission to work to promote safer, more positive online experiences, and with powers to protect all Australians from serious online abuse.[14]

Delivering core business without discriminating

As with state and territory government outlined at 4.2 below, a large number of policies and programs aimed at community fell short of actively addressing racism and racist behaviour and were instead focused on supporting staff to engage with First Nations and/or CALD communities and ensuring departmental work is not discriminatory.

Blaming the victims, encouraging assimilation

The bulk of work within the scope of anti-racism approaches is focused into those communities who experience racism and not those cohorts or individual, or structures, systems and policies that perpetrate such behaviour. This is the case for work with CALD communities under multicultural affairs and settlement services; with First Nations communities in Indigenous affairs, health, social services delivery and

[12] Australian Government | Federal Register of Legislation (2024) Aged Care Act 1997, accessed 15 January 2024

[13] Australian Government | Department of Education (2024) Higher Education Support Act 2003 and Guidelines, accessed 12 January 2024

[14] Australian Government | eSafety Commissioner (2024) How the Online Safety Act supports those most at risk, accessed15 January 2024

education; and work focusing on hate speech, online safety and countering violent extremism.

The overarching government focus is on social cohesion which has often been interpreted as non-Anglo-Celtic communities shifting to 'fit in' or assimilate to the dominant culture to avoid the risk of experiencing racism.

The exception to this appears to be the Australia Sports Commission which makes resources and tools available to support sporting codes and community sports clubs to examine their own structures and approaches.

Avoiding the R word

Limited examples were found which overtly use the word 'racism' in policy or program titles and objectives. Exceptions identified in the desktop research were all focused on First Nations communities, again with the exception of the Australian Sports Commission which, through its Inclusive Sport work, includes links to resources explicitly calling out racism (e.g. Show the Racism the Red Card[15] and the AHRC Spectator Racism Guidelines[16]).

4.1.2 Stakeholder interviews

Federal stakeholders included departmental staff from four agencies targeted via advice from the Race Discrimination team and the desktop review findings, and seven from the community and academic sectors.

Challenges

While existing government work was acknowledged, a lack of clarity on how to address racism and associated issues at the national level was nominated by many interviewees as a key challenge. Underpinning this is the pressure of what was described by one participant as 'a giant tsunami of misinformation, disinformation (and) escalation in a more permissive social media environment (of) forms of hate speech and discrimination'.[17] The need to address growing levels of hate speech and incidents driven most recently by a rise in right-wing extremism and nationalistic groups, the Voice Referendum and international crises (e.g., the current situation in Gaza) was identified as creating challenges for government in policy and legislative responses, and reporting.

[15] Australian Government | Australian Sports Commission (2024) Anti-racism videos and podcasts, accessed 15 February 2024
[16] Australian Government | Australian Sports Commission (2024) Anti-racism templates and resources, accessed 15 February 2024
[17] Federal stakeholder interview (Departmental)

"I don't think that there is any problem with the policy settings, with the values that they reflect with their direction. But I do think that they are being swamped and overtaken…by a range of other influences and dynamics. You know, it's, it's, so it's gotten to the point where you think policy is not really going to, you know…what can you do with policy? Right? Yep, you have a great policy, we do have really strong policies… But I think that any policy would struggle to withstand the onslaught that we're experiencing now. So, despite all those policies, we are seeing increased polarisation, we have seen a surge in hate-based speech, more hate-based speech and incidents, rather than hate-based crimes, the caveat there being massive underreporting of hate-based crimes. So we, you know, I would be one of those people who would say, well, we can't really talk about whether hate-based crime is rising or falling, because we have such a poor evidence base for it, because of underreporting, that we're just not going to be able to, you know, really effectively gauge it till we have a good reporting system, which is a national, nationally consistent one."[18]

The Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) provides a step forward in addressing online racism and the funding of Reconciliation Australia are good examples of funding to the community sector leading to practical and useful outcomes. Projects led by All Together Now and the Scanlon Institute, and the University of Western Sydney Challenging Racism, as well as the *Australian Reconciliation Barometer* project provide examples of evidence-based work undertaken in the community sector. [19]

Lack of leadership

A lack of concerted leadership at the political and bureaucratic levels was a concern across the stakeholders interviewed. Political leadership is discussed below. Issues regarding leadership across the Australian public service (APS) were identified at two levels:

- the lack of senior executive (SES) level staff in the APS with lived experience who can drive anti-racism work, and
- the lack of a strategic, national direction on addressing racism.

'We're very dependent on allies in the government system – people who experience racism themselves or white allies.'[20]

[18] Federal stakeholder interview (Departmental)

[19] Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues Vol 22 | Issue 3-4(2019) Dhirodkar, S, Bias against Indigenous Australians: Implicit association test results for Australia, accessed 22 February 2024

[20] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

You say potato...

A key challenge identified by both government and non-government stakeholders was continually diminishing bipartisanship at the federal level that was evident until approximately 25 years ago. In the ensuing period, the shift from political bipartisanship on approaches to racism has led to increasing shifts in polemic in this policy space as governments have changed. Most stakeholders interviewed believe that opportunities for work increase with a Labor government and, in recent times, decrease or substantially weaken with a Coalition government, which had not been the case historically.

> *'In my experience, I find that as, as a kind of, you know, government agency, we'll do what the government of the day expects us to do. So, if there isn't any great push from the government for us to deliver on something in particular (it's) not going to happen. So, you know, I, because I've worked in the space for a really long time and have seen kind of the, the ups and downs of support from different governments over those years...you really see the difference between a Labor government and a Coalition government in terms of their support of those these particular bits of work. And look, you know, the government at the moment has got a really keen interest, (has) given the Australian Human Rights Commission, $7 million or whatever it is to put together this national anti-racism, which is amazing. They're also doing, you know, the multicultural framework review at the moment as well, which again, is really good because it's when these things all kind of come into play, that that in a public service like the Australian public service, people sit up and take notice. So, you've got those two things happening. Then you've got the Australian Public Service Commission doing work on a CALD employee strategy, which they've not never done before, either. So, it's kind of, it feels to me like the planets are aligning a little bit. Which is great.'*

Unsuccessful attempts by the previous Coalition Government to amend the RDA and the removal or break up of standalone departmental multicultural teams and branches in some agencies were examples given of direct political interventions, and public service responses to government agendas.

There are significant frameworks at the federal level with a range of policies and programs attached that address broader diversity and inclusion within the APS. However, it was identified that specific issues around racism can be lost or not addressed in a more general focus on access and equity and social cohesion. A shift from directly addressing racism to a broader social cohesion agenda, as well as weakening or losing the focus on racism in diversity, access and equity approaches has created what one stakeholder described as an unclear environment in which racism as a term has become unpopular. What this means for addressing, for example, structural or institutional racism - as identified in the Closing the Gap National Agreement as a government priority - is unclear.

Don’t use the ‘R’ word

The need to be explicit about racism was nominated as a challenge by some participants. The lack of explicit use of the word ‘racism’ was raised by many federal participants as reflecting historic approaches to addressing colonialism and structural racism in Australia. Many spoke of a ‘denial culture’ about privilege, the enduring effects of colonialism on First Nations and some other communities, and of attitudes more broadly that allow structural or institutional racism to continue. In a sense, the inability of the nation to have a mature discussion about racism, discrimination and inequity undermines the often very good work undertaken or supported by government. At a minimum, this creates confusion and can stymie progress:

> *‘Because racism is a dirty word. We can't actually say it. We can't say it because people get offended. Okay, because, you know, if we start talking about racism, again, my experience has been that they go oh, no, no, no baby, we should say discrimination, but I'm sorry. Racism and discrimination are two separate things. Like you can be discriminated against based on your race. Okay, but discrimination and discrimination laws are really quite different to out and out racism. Okay. And then let's not have a conversation about systemic racism, because then people get oh my god, please, like me, I'm not racist.’*[21]

The October 2023 Voice Referendum has sharpened these concerns for some:

> *‘There is a great deal of denial still in the country about privilege, about the enduring effects of colonialism on say, Indigenous Australians. And, and the denial of racism more broadly. On the latter, it's not as profound as it used to be, there's more acknowledgement of that. Acknowledgement of privilege is less strong. But I think the Voice referendum shows us more than anything that the extent of community understanding, the acceptance of the enduring disadvantage from colonialism for Indigenous Australians, is nowhere near well enough accepted. And that fundamentally was what was able to be leveraged to defeat the Referendum. And fundamentally it is what will defeat anti-racism as well unless it can be challenged. And so challenging privilege and a denial of privilege and denial of racism is a pretty important barrier for us.’*[22]

However, one stakeholder from a non-government organisation disagreed about using the term ‘racism’ in work aimed at behaviour shifting:

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[21] Federal stakeholder interview (Departmental)

[22] Federal stakeholder interview (Academia)

> *'There are some very self-righteous individuals that think that Australia doesn't talk about race, therefore, they're in denial, and therefore, they are not dealing with race in the way that they should. That's not necessarily the case. And it's a bit backward thinking that you need to get Australia to go through this great cathartic exercise of facing up to race in order to move beyond racism.'*[23]

Some stakeholders identified strong positive associations in their research between Australians' belief in structural racism and support for any form of anti-racism measures. Others believe that centering activities on racism alienates those whose beliefs and behaviours need to shift. One community sector participant nominated the need for a focus on addressing the fears and concerns of perpetrators to ultimately address racist behaviours:

> *'Because there's a certain group of people in the community that just think [of anti-racism information or campaigns] well, that's, that's targeting me, and I'm not one of them. But in fact, racism has to be broken down into its component parts. What are the actual fears that the perpetrators are dealing with, that need to be addressed in order for them to get beyond that fear? And, and move forward? …What are these components? And how do we address them? Because if you don't do that, you won't they won't matter what you do under some sort of anti-racism banner. So, I think this area of equity, but it has to be a population wide equity, non-equity simply to those people that we think are the most likely to be victims, they probably are. But that's not what's going to solve the problem for them.'*[24]

Carrying the cultural load

Several issues were raised in interviews that can be grouped together under the theme of communities that are the target of racism and racist behaviours having to bear the responsibility for addressing the problem. Many of those interviewed nominated key stakeholders in anti-racism work as almost exclusively CALD communities and their organisations. Some participants did note a more recent shift in focus beyond work with CALD communities to addressing right-wing extremism, hate speech and mis- or disinformation, as mentioned above.

Some noted that the individualistic nature of work addressing racism in Australia often fails to support building neighbourhood and community strength and social cohesion. A victim-centered approach cannot address shifting the mindsets and behaviours of those who perpetrate or support racist ideas and behaviours.

[23] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

[24] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

'My main problem with any anti racism programs is that they very rarely delve into, what are the drivers of people that perpetuate micro or macro aggressions? Or how did those people consciously or unconsciously inform systems and approaches to things and that's my main concern because I just, I just think always talking to the victim is, is a very easy one, it sets up the expectations that generally anti racism programs can't meet. And then at the same time, it allows, it ensures that society lets those people down. So, then they lower their expectations again. So, there's a whole variety of different ways that that sort of thing plays out, which I find concerning.'[25]

Resourcing constraints

Funding was raised by all participants as a challenge. Departmental staff were unable or unwilling to share information about their funding levels and appeared to have limited knowledge of budget allocations. Unsurprisingly, most APS staff nominated current resourcing levels as a barrier to increasing their capacity for antiracism work. In the words of one public servant interviewed, 'We do what we are resourced to do.'[26]

The need to reactively respond to domestic and international crises and associated community impacts was raised as a constraint on both resourcing and the ability to plan.

Some specific concerns were raised by non-government stakeholders about restrictions on how community sector organisations can use grant funding. The marked difference in levels of funding available to tertiary intuitions and the community sector to conduct research was also nominated as an issue.

Funding for innovative approaches was noted by one community sector participant interviewed who said 'there is a real need for micro-funding for innovation in this space. We know the key forms of racism are systemic and institutional (so there) needs to be funding for CSOs to come up with solutions and scale up.'[27]

Partnerships versus lack of coordination

While some departmental participants provided examples of challenges resulting from siloed and disconnected work within and across departments, others spoke of inter-agency partnership work and partnerships beyond the Federal Government.

For example, the Multicultural Affairs branch in the Department of Home Affairs works closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD). The work of the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) and Justice Reinvestment

[25] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

[26] Federal stakeholder interview (Departmental)

[27] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

teams within AGD, while not explicitly focused on addressing racism, provides opportunities for collaboration across the Federal Government through Interdepartmental Committees (IDCs). The OPCAT work includes the ability to hold other agencies to account under Australia's international human rights commitments.

Partnership approaches extend to the community sector. Services Australia has a national multicultural advisory group that engages with peak multicultural agencies, and Multicultural Affairs in Home Affairs hosts the National Multicultural Advisory Council.

However, a lack of coordination on racism work was identified by most stakeholders interviewed as a key challenge. This includes coordination:

- across Federal Government policy and programs
- across Federal Government grants funding to the community sector
- with state/territory and local government, and
- across government-funded research and data collection.

As referenced later in this report there is significant research in Australia on racism and anti-racism, but it is disjointed and not connected in ways that would coordinate research findings with policy action aimed at robust outcomes.

Either/or First Nations versus CALD communities

Many participants identified an 'either/or' attitude in government that forces a choice in resourcing and policy focus between First Nations and CALD communities experiencing racism and racist behaviour. It is important to note the distinctions between these communities and the unique experiences and impacts of colonialism on First Nations peoples, families and communities and the need to avoid homogenous, one-size-fits-all approaches.

Interviewees identified the 'anchoring' of anti-racism work in CALD communities, and a focus on religious diversity in particular, which does not overtly engage with First Nations peoples' issues and experiences. Some participants also nominated work focused on First Nations/non-Indigenous community relations as a gap in their own work.

As with other tiers of government, much of the work undertaken by federal agencies is internal and aimed at APS staff but fails to overtly include reference to racism, apart from Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) due to the clause inserted by Reconciliation Australia in recent years.

The impact of the failed 2023 Voice Referendum was raised by First Nations and non-Indigenous participants as a 'lightning rod' for the need for government to reaffirm its commitment to addressing racism against First Nations (and all) communities.

Strengths

This section is a summary of the range of what federal participants nominated as positive strengths. These included the following:

- The community engagement mechanisms in departments such as Services Australia and Home Affairs.
- A strong research program funded by government including to the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion and Mapping Social Cohesion report, and the Challenging Racism Project based at the University of Western Sydney and implemented in collaboration with Deakin University, Curtin University and the University of Technology Sydney.
- The biennial national research study undertaken by federally funded Reconciliation Australia since 2008 that produces the Australian Reconciliation Barometer measuring attitudes towards reconciliation across five dimensions including race relation, historical acceptance and institutional integrity.
- Ministerial forums and advisory councils, such as those chaired by the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs twice yearly.
- Formal inter and intra-departmental mechanisms, such as Services Australia's quarterly multicultural advisory forums attended by states and territories and the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) intergovernmental forum.

Services Australia and Home Affairs, through the Multicultural Affairs branch, both have external facing engagement supports with communities. Services Australia has provided supports for CALD communities for over 25 years in the form of in-house languages services, its own panel of interpreters and translators for customers and a multilingual phone service, as well as information sessions at the local community level to provide information and collect advice to report back to the agency.

Services Australia also delivers multicultural awareness training to its own agency at staff and SES levels as well as to other agencies.

The Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers (CLO) number around 50 and are based in each state and territory. They serve as points of contact for information-sharing and access for multicultural communities, and provide sentiment reports back to government to inform policy and program responses. Home Affairs has been building the CLO network in recent years and believes the strength of the network was evidenced by its successful dissemination of COVID-19 information into CALD communities during the pandemic.[28]

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner, an entity within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

[28] Information provided by Department of Home Affairs Multicultural Team

(DITRDCA), has a prevention and education team which targets programs to First Nations and CALD communities including language resources, training, and provision of general advice. For example, the Office partners with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) in program delivery to First Nations communities and engages with community sector organisations to identify how to support them to raise awareness of online safety. They currently have an identified project on image-based abuse and Islamic women and are considering how best to safely and effectively communicate the project in a culturally safe and appropriate way.

The AGD Justice Reinvestment team sits within one of five joint taskforce groups established under the Closing the Gap National Agreement with the C0alition of Peaks that has a strategic framework now being implemented with a key aim of reducing racism and holding institutions to greater account.

The aforementioned Scanlon Institute social cohesion work funded by the Scanlon Foundation informs government policy and program development, and Australia remains possibly the only nation with an index of social cohesion. Home Affairs' Living Safely Together website provides an example of practical information explicitly referencing social cohesion to combat violent extremism. ASIO emphasises social cohesion as a mechanism for countering threats to national security, and social cohesion has become integrated in a wide range of federal government policies and programs.

> *'And this, you know, this fantastic annual social cohesion survey and index that we have (we are) the only country in the world to actually measure it in the way that we do. And I think that says something, you know, that says something important about, you know, about the way that we look and the way that we value social cohesion.'*[29]

> *'I think it's important to note that they [Home Affairs] do put social cohesion at the centre of their policy settings on countering (violent extremism), so the difference between counterterrorism and countering violent extremism is that the countering violent extremism framework actually does locate the promotion of social cohesion, the promotion of embracing multiculturalism pretty much at the centre of where it's going in policy terms, and I think that point is often overlooked, you know, when people are having a go, or they conflate what, they conflate the important distinctions in policy and program terms between what countering terrorism looks like versus what CVE looks like.'*[30]

An example of government responsiveness to issues affecting communities was the experience of Asian Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a driver for the Commission to partner with the Online Hate Prevention Institute and Meta on in-

[29] Federal stakeholder interview (Community)

[30] Federal Stakeholder interview (Community)

depth research that built on past work on anti-Asian racism in Australia and added the lens of racism in social media. The 2022 *Anti-Asian Racism in Australia Social Media* report highlighted how mainstream and social media played a significant role in Asian Australians' experiences of racism during the pandemic, finding that the internet enabled racism to spread further and faster, and be facilitated by anonymity.[31]

> *'The Asian Australians experiences of racism during the COVID 19 pandemic research… fed into… the Association of Independent Schools New South Wales community cohesion project. The New South Wales Law Society used the findings … to increase their capacity to respond effectively to… that and also other underreported harms.'*[32]

At the national level, the annual Harmony Week aligned with the International Day for the Elimination of Racism sees government funding provided to community organisations, local councils, schools, and others for local celebrations and events.

Opportunities

The current review of the national Multicultural Framework, the work being undertaken by the Commission on the National Anti-Racism Framework and the inclusion of Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government organisations to decrease the proportion of First Nations people who have experiences of racism provide the most significant opportunities in recent years to address racism. Many stakeholders view the Multicultural Framework Review as a significant opportunity for substantive changes in how government addresses key themes of discrimination, harassment and racism. However, the point must be made that this work is focussed on CALD communities and not First Nations communities, although advice provided to this research team is that those conducting the review are aware of the shared experiences of racist behaviour between the cohorts.

The National Anti-Racism Framework and Multicultural Framework review also provide opportunities to consider a more coordinated effort around research and data management concerning racism and anti-racism. The Closing the Gap priority is considered further below.

What is racism?

Australia has a significant advantage in its diverse population and a high level of community support for a more equal society, which extends to support for addressing racism – although the general population is more passively supportive of, rather than actively involved in, anti-racism efforts.

[31] Online Hate Prevention Institute (2022) Anti-Asian Racism in Australian Social Media, accessed 15 February 2024

[32] Federal Stakeholder interview (Community)

While this presents an opportunity to leverage what is a largely positive disposition towards diversity in this country, three key issues arise from our research:

- Stakeholders engaged in the project were unaware of a clear, national definition of racism
- There is no national agenda setting out what success in addressing racism looks like, and
- Work continues to focus on communities who experience racism and racist behaviours, with only limited work aimed at perpetrators – which was identified as necessary to achieve real progress.

Community sector stakeholders called on the Commission to 'be brave' in developing the Framework and to use it as a mechanism to bring together groups who share experiences; to be strategic in messaging to go beyond CALD and First Nations peoples so the broader community can recognise the messages, and to be bold enough to state what the issues are facing Australian society.

> *'One of the problems with anti-racism is that there is no sense of what does success look like and in what timeframe? So, if you don't want racism to exist in Australia, what does Australia actually look like? How do we communicate with each other? How do we talk about our diversity in five years' time, 10 years' time (which is what we are) actually trying to aim for?'*[33]

> *'I think, from a government perspective, and I think you've mentioned Scanlon already, like their research for this year, is, you know, confronting in terms of looking at the trajectory of social cohesion, but we are buoyed by the response to the questions around recognition for multiculturalism remaining high, even in that kind of context. So, for us, we think there's great opportunities in that environment, to look at kind of progressing and setting up that perspective moving forward, as well as the work supporting AHRC. Like there (are) complimentary lines of activity and effort happening now. So, we're hearing messaging around kind of internally within the public service as well as externally. I do think there's great opportunities for us moving forward. I think it is a challenging budgetary environment for everyone, as well. So, it's just it's working through, you know, what are some shorter-term things we can focus on and what's longer term? Because this isn't a quick (process).'*[34]

AGD OPCAT and Justice Reinvestment work as future levers

While the AGD OPCAT and Justice Reinvestment teams do not have specific remits to identify and address racism, the nature of the issues they address and their reporting

[33] Federal interviewee (Community)

[34] Federal interviewee (Departmental)

requirements provide opportunities to gather data specifically about the experiences of First Nations peoples. Representatives of those teams interviewed for this project considered that a national framework or strategy that includes racism in the criminal justice system would be useful to inform their work.

Rise of hate speech and online misinformation

The Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) gives the eSafety Commissioner increased powers to address online harm. While the Act does not make specific reference to racial discrimination, vilification or online hate speech it does enable the Commissioner to act in certain relevant circumstances, for example:

- Via a range of complaint schemes to report content to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner who can then investigate
- The Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme, through which the Office of the eSafety Commissioner can consider racial discrimination under the higher threshold of eligible types of content deemed to be harassing, menacing and offensive in all the circumstances and intended to cause serious harm to an Australian individual
- The Act's online content scheme which allows for the Commissioner to order the removal of materials covered by its classifications, such as material inciting violence, promoting crime or terrorism (which often has racial undertones or elements), and
- Basic online safety provisions set out in a determination by the Minister, under which the Commissioner can issue legal requests to sections of the industry to report on what they are doing to meet community expectations. For example, where service providers should enforce their own terms of service which include hate speech, racist speech and/or posts (e.g. June 2023 e-Safety Commissioner request to Twitter/X).

Currently these provisions are limited in that they only deal with individuals. Further, the threshold has been intentionally set at a high level to allow for freedom of expression, which can often rule out sanctions for harmful abuse and harassment. From a policy perspective the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner is considering gaps in the Act where online discrimination is aimed at groups.

The problem of online hate speech and mis/disinformation was raised by almost all stakeholders who took part in this research. It is an area of growing significance to government and provides a major opportunity to target policies and programs towards those who perpetrate as well as those who experience online harm. The NGO All Together Now is focused on addressing the drivers of hate speech, extremism and online misinformation, and much of their work is aimed at engaging young people. The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) also focusses on the education system and suggest, anecdotally, that young people are leaving school early to avoid

experiencing racist behaviours, and others are entering adulthood with the experience that such behaviour is acceptable, and they will not be held accountable for it.

> *'I think that when we talk now about anti racism and multiculturalism and social cohesion, we also need to be talking about some of the hate, anti-hate measures, you know, that are now being taken. So, there is quite a lot of, there's …inadequate legislation, to be perfectly honest. I mean, there's a split, some people say we've, some people say we've got plenty of laws to already deal with this stuff, we're just not enforcing them, which I think is true. Other people will say no, we actually need focused specific legislation. So, I don't think the jury's come in yet, you know, on which way to go.'*[35]

> *Far right online channels, networks (and) influencers have been very effective at influencing mainstream narratives. This impacts our ability to address systemic racism.*[36]

National strategic direction with practical outcomes

All stakeholders identified the need for a joined-up, national approach with clear priorities, underpinned by a focus on practical outcomes, that would link the work of government and the community sector and research undertaken by academics and other organisations.

Using a co-design approach with stakeholders which allows for flexibility was suggested by some participants as a way of acknowledging that consensus on how to address racism is unlikely, but that such an approach would provide a clear sense of what is feasible and practical. This includes a continuation of the co-design work many agencies already undertake, particularly in designing resources and materials. This involves working with affected communities, their organisations and experts to ensure resources are culturally safe and appropriate, and delivery is through the appropriate communication channels.

> *'So, talking research, you know, where's the ARC [Australian Research Council] on this as well? For that matter, where's the national priorities, research priorities (from) the ARC and the government?'*[37]

> *'I guess in terms of key priorities, and this may not be on (the) mark, but you know, sometimes government implements an array of frameworks, and it's a lot of words.*

[35] Federal interviewee (Community)

[36] Federal interviewee (Community)

[37] Federal interviewee (Academia)

And, and it doesn't necessarily translate to operational (implementation). So, I guess, if we're looking at another framework (we need) something that will then be translated into operation and have real meaning for those that it's been applied to.'[38]

Something that translates into the actual doing because we can, we can write a framework and you know, policies and programs that sound amazing, but operationally it's never going to work, or it's not going to fit or it's not going to achieve its intended purpose.'[39]

Monitoring and evaluation

The need for greater monitoring and evaluation of government policies and programs and the outcomes of grant funding programs was raised by all those who were interviewed. Including monitoring and evaluation of government programs provides a significant opportunity in the racism space to both monitor outcomes and create a baseline for measurement.

'Now *countering violent extremism (CVE) investment is lessening (it's) still present but more virtuous. A lot of government funding (was) spent on smaller projects that were reinventing wheels (with) no sufficient evaluation of what was being invested in.'*[40]

The challenges in measuring more intangible behaviour changes were raised. The work of the Scanlon Institute and the Challenging Racism project and the Australian Reconciliation Barometer provide salient examples of mapping, measuring and reporting.

'Because a lot of what we do is tricky to measure. But that is a good point. That is something we've also been discussing, is how do you measure outcomes, say from grants rounds etc, around whether they achieved the purpose when it is something less tangible, like social cohesion or things of that nature?'[41]

Children and young adults

Some participants raised the education setting as a significant opportunity to effect intergenerational change. The NSW Department of Education Anti-Racism Contact Officer program was the only example provided of intervention approaches in the school system, although it was described by one stakeholder as limited in scope with its progress not yet known. Some community sector stakeholders identified racist behaviour within the school system as a significant problem that schools are currently

[38] Federal interviewee (Departmental)

[39] Federal interviewee (Departmental)

[40] Federal interviewee (Academia)

[41] Federal interviewee (Departmental)

not equipped to negotiate effectively. One stakeholder said they had seen through their work over many years young people who are racially victimised or bullied leaving the school system, which risks long-term impacts on their socio-economic status later in life. Further, this means that students perpetrating this behaviour in an education setting that fails to hold them to account are entering adulthood with a belief that such behaviour is acceptable.

> *'There is a constant need for education to counter hateful narratives that reach young people.'*[42]

First Nations

Linking the Framework with related national frameworks and strategies, particularly the Closing the Gap National Agreement, was called for by some participants to ensure outcomes for First Nations communities are also central. They noted that the Framework presents a significant opportunity to address the disparity caused by the majority of anti-racism work being focused on CALD communities; the disconnect in how government works with First Nations and CALD communities in this policy space; the significant government work with and for First Nations communities that centres equity but not racism, and the new Closing the Gap priority on addressing structural racism in government institutions, in order to create a cohesive national approach to addressing racism.

> *'So, it needs to be really, I think a national anti-racism framework has to be very clearly linked to some of those other national kinds of frameworks. So, the multicultural framework, the Closing the Gap, you know, all of those sorts of big-ticket policy areas have to be linked really, really tightly to a national anti-racism framework. And there need to be actions within that framework that are compulsory, if they're not, like I said, if they're not compulsory, you can forget it, I'm telling you now, it's just not going to happen. I've been trying internally to have people look at having our own anti racism strategy. That's gone nowhere. And look, and that's not because people don't want to do it. I know that at the end of the day, everyone's heart's in the right place. You know, they see the value in it, but when like I said, when you've got such a big rambling agency like ours, with so many expectations placed on it, you get the big-ticket items are the things that are going to get, you know, done first.'*[43]

[42] Federal interviewee (Community)
[43] Federal interviewee (Departmental)

Extracting racism from the DE&I bucket

Often racism work can be lost in the catch-all that diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) work can become. This 'soft diversity' approach can weaken or negate strategic discussions about addressing racism, particularly in workplaces.

'Often anti-racism training is just soft diversity… but we need to manage white fragility to get through the door… One of the biggest challenges is trying to sell this kind of a program. The people who need it the most are the people who resist it - you're asking people to let you make them feel uncomfortable. It is really dependent on "gatekeepers" e.g. government agencies that say we need this and will push for it internally. But systemic racism wouldn't be systemic if it was easy."[44]

4.2 State government

4.2.1 Desktop Review

In conducting a desktop review of investment in anti-racism and discrimination initiatives by states and territories, approximately 60 policies and programs were identified through a search of publicly available information and deemed in scope.

General workplace equity, not anti-racism

For the most part, the government policies and programs identified through the desktop review function were staffing strategies with a general focus on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

First Nations-specific policies and programs were often directly linked to a department's obligations under the Closing the Gap National Agreement and subsequent implementation plans, or to their Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). Though this finding does not undermine the potential impact of First Nations programs and policies within state and territory governments, by serving the purpose of fulfilling broader departmental priorities, they often fell directly within the terms of reference of those overarching documents. Often, by being under the remit of Closing the Gap Implementation and RAPs, the policies and programs inadvertently inherit the limitations of those program areas. This means that the policies and programs fall short of operationalising anti-racism and discrimination and instead on focus on promoting general ideas of workplace equity.

Policies and programs aimed at CALD or multicultural communities were again almost entirely focused on addressing workforce participation and equity in the workplace. Publicly available information demonstrates that beyond policies concerning support for and inclusion of staff for whom English may be their second language, there is no

[44] Federal interviewee (Community)

specific investment in addressing racism and discrimination against CALD communities within the workplace.

Such policies and programs extensively set out an employee's right to participate in a workplace free of racism and discrimination, and the responsibility of all staff to create a culturally safe environment. They do not, however, detail redress for employees who are subjected to racism or discrimination other than that set out by state and federal anti-discrimination laws and Fair Work legislation.

Delivering core business without discriminating

While there were some policies and programs that sought to impact community members more directly, a large proportion of them fell short of actively addressing racism and discrimination. They were instead focused on supporting staff to engage more effectively with First Nations and/or CALD communities and ensure they were not additionally disadvantaged in the process of the agency undertaking its core business.

This is clear through policies such as First Nations or CALD focused child placement principles for the child protection sector or policies that support the inclusion of children and families in educational environments when English may not be a first language, and similar policies in other sectors.

There is valid criticism among stakeholders of anti-racism efforts such as these because they limit impact to preventing additional harm rather than seeking to address existing, and in some views rampant, experiences of racism within the community.

Financial barriers to accessing anti-racism programs

The few overt anti-racism and discrimination programs that are directly aimed at the community are delivered through training modules available to the public. There are some different modalities in which these trainings take place, with some providers offering exclusively online engagement with passive learning modules and others offering face to face workshops, both pre-written and customised to the group that may engage the training. There are several barriers to the impact of these training offerings. Firstly, they are all delivered on a fee for service basis, which excludes individuals or organisations without the resources to purchase the training; secondly, as opt-in training, it remains highly unlikely that individuals or groups who have deeply engrained racist attitudes and beliefs would engage or procure the resources.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Interviews

In undertaking stakeholder interviews, it became abundantly clear that in the absence of consistent mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, much of the knowledge of the impact of anti-racism efforts at the state and territory level is held within the corporate memory of organisations and not publicly available or accessible online. While direct engagement with state and territory agencies was very limited for this research,

program examples provided via federal and local government stakeholder interviews are included here.

Community engagement with reporting racism

State and territory stakeholders shared concerns about the extent to which community members facing racism are empowered to report their experiences with a clear understanding of possible outcomes, and a full understanding of the level of personal and emotional investment the process will require of them. In line with abovementioned findings regarding anti-racism policies and programs being focused on addressing communities facing racism, stakeholders expressed further concerns about the additional barrier to reporting that community members may face in not understanding their rights, or what remediation may look like. There are two implications of this finding. Firstly, there are likely community members experiencing racism, and associated negative impacts, without access to appropriate supports to address their concerns. Secondly, data that seeks to quantify the level of racism within communities is severely limited by the obstacles – real or perceived - community members face in reporting. Without a cohesive community-focused campaign to create awareness of, and comfort with the process of reporting racism, it is unlikely that any data set will accurately approximate the extent of racism in Australia.

Individual examples of community engagement programs were provided by federal participants in this research, almost exclusively focused on NSW and Victorian government efforts to counter violent extremism. These included:

- • Multicultural NSW COMPACT (Community Partnership Action) Program, a state wide network of over 60 community organisations, peak bodies, community sector organisations, private sector partners, schools, universities, government agencies and police established in 2015 as a response to the 2014 Martin Place siege in Sydney. COMPACT aims to build community resilience to counter violent extremism and has funded partnership programs between 2021 and 2024 with more than 70 partner organisations. The majority of these are CALD organisations given the focus on countering extremism has until recently been on CALD communities in Australia. Partnership project examples not led by CALD specific organisations include the following:
  - All Together Now's Agent C project (see footnote below)
  - PCYC Better Together project in Armidale with NSW Police Force, NSW STARTTS and University of New England Oorala Aboriginal Centre
  - NRL Harmony Project with National Rugby League (NRL) with Moving Forward Together Association, PCYC, and NSW Police Force
  - Advocacy and Victim Support led by Islamophobia Register Australia with Charles Sturt University (Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation), and

  - Communities Inspiring and Teaching Youth (CITY) led by Youth Off The Streets with Community Minds and DLA Piper[45]

- NSW Department of Education Anti-Racism Contact Officer program in schools.[46]
- Multicultural NSW funding for All Together Now to run the Agent C project to develop training with and for young people in order to challenge divisive and hateful conspiracy theories and fake news.[47]
- The CAPE project run by All Together Now to increase community resilience against the threat of far-right hate and extremism by training and supporting a state-wide network of frontline workers working with young people.
- Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety's two schemes to address the root causes of violent extremism:
  - The Voluntary Case Management Scheme providing support for people who are at risk of or are radicalising towards violent extremism to connect them with the services and identify ways to reconnect them with the community, and
  - Support and Engagement Order Scheme which allows a court to order that a person radicalising towards violent extremism must follow a tailored support and engagement plan which includes addressing their broader needs as well including health, housing, employment and connection to community.[48]
- The Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies funded by the Victorian Government and hosted by Deakin University with a range of tertiary institution and community sector partners, including: Reconciliation Australia, All Together Now, University of Huddersfield in England, Queensland University of Technology, Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Victorian Multicultural Commission and the South Australian Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.[49]

Monitoring and evaluation

Non-government stakeholders strongly linked the inability to accurately quantify the extent of racism with the lack of funding for meaningful community-facing anti-racism work. This is further complicated by an inability to secure appropriate funding to monitor and evaluate existing policies and programs at a state and territory level. Without the data and supporting resources to understand the need for anti-racism work or conduct impact analysis of existing policies and programs, anti-racism work occurs at the state and territory level as the result of reactive government action, limited by the

[45] NSW Government | Multicultural NSW (2024) The COMPACT Story, accessed 12 February 2024

[46] NSW Government | Education (2024) ACROs, accessed 12 February 2024

[47] All Together Now (2024) Conspiracy theories and fake new: Agent C, accessed 12 February 2024

[48] Victorian Government | Justice and Community Safety (2024) Countering violent extremism, accessed 12 February 2024

[49] Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (2024) accessed 12 February 2024

extent to which a government prioritises such work. Consequently, there is a lack of conversation about building, strengthening or scaling up programs addressing racism and discrimination as stakeholders face uncertainty in the sustainability of their funding in the medium to long term.

Understanding the landscape

Stakeholders shared that their knowledge of other work addressing anti-racism and discrimination within their jurisdictions was dependent on their own networks and ability to build partnerships, rather than any formal mechanism that brings together organisations and government to collaborate and cohesively focus on priority issues. As a result, it is difficult, despite best efforts, to ensure that work conducted by any one organisation or department does not contradict or compete with the work of another within the same jurisdiction. Without the establishment of a lead party or joint forum where organisations, community and government can collaborate on priorities and delegate areas of work, there is a risk that the small amount of available funding is consumed by duplicative or competitive efforts to address racism and discrimination.

4.2.3 Identified opportunities in the Framework

Key opportunities in the Framework identified by state and territory stakeholders included:

- Strengthening the federal *Online Safety Act*, specifically to clarify roles and responsibilities across jurisdictions
- A community awareness campaign at the state/territory level to improve understandings of rights and remedies available to communities and individuals experiencing racism, and
- Establishment of a collaborative forum to develop a cohesive approach to addressing racism and discrimination in different jurisdictions.

4.2.4 Limitations

The 60 identified policies and programs were not evenly distributed across all states and territories, with some having few to no programs identified and others, such as South Australia, having as many as 17. This finding is not representative of the actual level of investment or quantum of work taking place in any one jurisdiction, and instead demonstrates significant inconsistency between jurisdictions regarding what information they make publicly available and what is contained in internal documentation.

4.3 Local government

Local governments and their peak bodies were identified as key stakeholders for identifying challenges and opportunities to inform the National Anti-Racism Framework. Efforts were made to secure participation from councils in every state and territory across the country, with limited success.

Overall, local government stakeholders varied in the extent to which they embraced anti-racism as a priority for action among their constituents and this was reflected in their responses to and engagement with this research. It should be noted that local government experience a range of issues, including current levels of Financial Assistance Grants as the major source of federal funding;[50] constraints in addressing rate peg systems (in NSW for example); cost shifting from other levels of government, and impacts of inflation. As a result, local government is generally reluctant to commit to work not funded by additional federal or state/territory government grants and is reluctant to add to its core responsibilities to its constituencies and extend commitments beyond what is already funded in services and community grants.

There are clear pockets of anti-racism activity in some local government areas but most of the work happening in or around this space is taking place under broader 'social cohesion', 'inclusion' or 'multicultural' initiatives. This is consistent with current federal, state and territory approaches.

Partnering with other stakeholders such as CALD and First Nations communities, tertiary institutions or state and federal human rights bodies seems to comprise a significant component of relevant work at the local government level. This is important but also highlights what efforts are missing where racism is not considered a priority and signals the reliance on these other stakeholders to address racism more generally.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) emphasised that while they take a human rights-based approach to their work as the national peak body, the 537 councils within their federation differed in how they approach anti-racism issues. How racism is addressed is a matter for each council. Broadly there have been efforts to improve the cultural diversity within councils, use of Reconciliation Action Plans, and focus on working with multicultural, asylum seeker and refugee communities. Welcoming Cities was nominated as a standout initiative in which 84 councils are involved, representing 47 per cent of the Australian population.[51] However ALGA also stated that resource constraints mean that councils are limited in what they can address and further noted the pressure to ensure that councils are financially able to address the growing impact

[50] Until 1989 local government was funded by the Commonwealth Government through a tax sharing arrangement aligned with growth in the Australian economy. This was changed to only increase by population growth and consumer price index and has reduced to around 0.5 percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue local governments nationally have been campaigning since for an increase to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue. ALGA (2022) Financial Assistance Grants, accessed 19 February 2024

[51] Welcoming Cities (2024) Our Members, accessed 12 February 2024

of climate change and natural disasters; as a result, they may not prioritise anti-racism work.

4.3.1 Challenges

The overwhelming impression conveyed by local government stakeholders who took part in this research was that there are far more challenges than strengths in the anti-racism space. This contributed to a view that a 'seismic shift' is required to address issues in this area. Not doing so means that the burden of addressing racism is primarily left with those communities who experience it or those few stakeholders who attempt to address it, mirroring current approaches at both the federal and state/territory level.

This is not helped by a lack of acknowledgment by local government that racism is a pressing issue in affected communities, or by what stakeholders described as a general lack of awareness, funding and targeted strategies.

Diversity and inclusion but not anti-racism focused

Where relevant work did occur at the local government level, and as with other tiers of government, it was often framed using the language of social cohesion or diversity and inclusion with a focus on community events or employment strategies.

Several local councils noted that they had Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP), First Nations staff or worked with members of local First Nations communities, but there was little to no detail on what work was being done in partnership with the community. Advice was provided that Broome Shire Council is leading strong work in the Kimberley area through efforts running or supporting cultural festivals that celebrate and provide space for 'social cohesion.' The local government peak body in West Australia, WALGA, supports the employment of a First Nations young person and their RAP reference group has been working on their Reflect level RAP currently in development. Their 2019 RAP emphasised the importance of WALGA and local government staff attending First Nations events, as well as considering employment and supplier diversity in their work.[52]

Language, mentoring and training courses were among other key activities identified by stakeholders. WALGA noted that local councils in Canningham and Kwinana work closely with their communities which include large numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse peoples and migrants, to support language and employment opportunities. These efforts are focused on supporting skilled migrants preparing to transfer to West Australia to use their skills in the local employment market. There was

[52] WALGA (2018) Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan March 2018-March 2019, p10

limited work being done specifically on anti-racism, with the work of councils generally falling into the much broader category of 'multiculturalism.'[53]

Cultural load and incidence of racism

A common challenge raised by local government stakeholders was the extent to which community members who experience racism must carry the overwhelming responsibility of the work involved in addressing it. One stakeholder said:

> *'Multicultural communities do so much in this space and absorb the brunt of the work even though they get the brunt of racism in their communities. They experience a high cultural and moral load.'*[54]

This was reflected in broader stakeholder feedback which identified that most anti-racism activity involves those individuals and communities who experience racism themselves, with some input from councils, human rights bodies, and the tertiary sector. There was little if any mention of cohesive, systemic efforts to address racism across local or indeed with any tiers of government - apart from efforts taking place within Victoria.

Several stakeholders identified the ongoing occurrence of racism as a key barrier to change. Examples were provided of regular racist verbal abuse sometimes escalating into property damage, as well as racism occurring in the community, on public transport, in schools, online and at sporting grounds. These incidents were often relayed at local council anti-racism events or to anti-racism workers who are charged with assisting community members to navigate their way through options for addressing them.

Awareness

Research participants highlighted that a lack of awareness and understanding as a major barrier to addressing and responding to racism at the local government level, with respondents suggesting that current awareness levels are very poor. Some stakeholders believe this is further complicated by different types of racism, such as interpersonal and systemic racism. One interview participant told us that a 'broad national education' effort was urgently needed to address this challenge.

Victorian participants stressed that a lack of awareness could be further exacerbated by cultural and language barriers requiring explanation of what racism is, how to make a complaint and await a potential response. They went on to explain some of these barriers to understanding and reporting racism:

[53] WALGA Interview.

[54] NSW Stakeholder.

> *'So not knowing about it, not knowing their rights, not having the language skills, not trusting the system, not trusting that anything will be done about it, not knowing who to go to, and also a lot of the communities also said you know, we've come from war, so yes, this is bad, but it's not that bad, you know.'*[55]

This reluctance combined with a lack of understanding of how to report racism also has an intergenerational impact on the children of those affected by racism. Participants spoke of children from targeted communities minimising such experiences as simply 'name calling' within the school environment and not wanting to bother their parents with what they were experiencing at school. This supports the advice of the national peak body MYAN.

Another stakeholder stressed that it was important for awareness-raising activities to help to inform the public about their rights, as 'community members might be experiencing racism but don't know they are or how to address it.' Various participants advised that 'upskilling' and raising awareness about racism among community members and leaders in targeted communities is a significant task and that this is made much harder by the 'complicated process' of reporting. In some instances, those leading anti-racism work conveyed the difficulties in communicating available options for those experiencing racism and that if these complaints were met with little or inadequate responses, this led to a feeling of hopelessness:

> *'It may be a police matter, but often it isn't. It might be something that the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission can help mediate, but sometimes it isn't. It might need some legal information, but it might not. The person may want to do something about it, but they might not. It might be to do with schools' system, in which case it should go through the you know, Department of Education. It could be the health system; in which case it should go somewhere else. It could be, public transport in which you know it, it can be, you know, reported somehow else. Some people might be happy just with reporting and not expecting any other support, but other people go what's the point in reporting?'*[56]

One stakeholder described ongoing racial abuse which culminated in property damage that was reported to police but was 'not taken seriously.' After making a report to police and attending the police station, the victim ended up having to fix the property themselves due to a lack of police action. After attending a community information session with local police who apologised for the poor police response, the police explained that making a direct report via the Community Reporting Tool, an online system provided by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) would have been better. This stakeholder explained that this could further

[55] Various Victorian and other interviews

[56] Victorian stakeholder

confuse community members but that it helped to inform the advice they now provide on addressing racism:

> *'It's actually more effective to go to.... In Victoria, we've got the online reporting tool, or you can ring up, but it's the call centre. They write down everything that you say, and it triggers an official report. (Once) an official report (is) triggered, they have to respond to it. They can't ignore it. And so, you know, so my advice now to everybody is if it's not lights and sirens, if you're not in (a), you know, emergency, this is more effective than you're going down to the police station, or you are ringing your local police station because you don't know who you're gonna get."*[57]

Acknowledgment

Local government stakeholders stressed that it is hard to combat racism in an environment where racism is openly treated as a non-issue by high profile figures, particularly political leaders. Participants emphasised that it is critical that political leaders take a formal stance on addressing racism but instead that some often fuel racial divisions within society. One interviewee said it is hard to influence community perceptions about the existence and impact of racism when leaders such as former Prime Minister Scott Morrison commented on their views on the lack of racism in Australia.[58] Several participants referenced the racial tensions and debates that occurred throughout the lead up to and aftermath of the 2023 Voice Referendum, while others talked about such issues in the context of the unfolding situation in Gaza as well as the treatment of diverse population groups by governments in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Feedback from ALGA identified that a rise in anti-authority and extremist behaviour by members of the public was being reported by member councils and that this had increasingly been on display at council events and locations. This has had an impact on council activities across the country, including in some instances requiring a police response. They went on to say:

> *'One of the issues that has come up nationally for us is the disruption to Council operations and meetings, particularly in some states. It's not everywhere, but it that has come up in discussion on our board... So basically, and we do believe some of these protest groups are networked or getting networked and also have links. So, they do things like disrupt Council meetings, belittle Council staff."*[59]

[57] Victorian engagement

[58] SBS | NITV (2022) Five times Scott Morrison has been called out for comments on racial issues, accessed 112 February 2024 [59] ALGA engagement, 2023.

4.3.2 Strengths

Representation

ALGA stressed that there has been an improvement in the number of culturally diverse people elected to the position of mayor and as councillors in local councils across the country. They noted the existence of CALD and First Nations mayors and councillors in locations such as Western Sydney and the Torres Strait, as well as the 17 Aboriginal shire councils in Queensland.

These are important developments and support other council commitments such as RAPs and multicultural frameworks and, in some cases, the development of anti-racism strategies. Further, there were clear efforts by some councils to employ CALD and First Nations staff to drive this work and in some instances to ensure that these perspectives were included in RAPs and similar areas of work.

Community awareness events

Community events were among the key initiatives raised by local government stakeholders for promoting diversity and inclusion in their communities. Considering local governments across the country it appears that most of these activities are more focused on concepts of inclusion and embracing diversity rather than specifically addressing racism.

Community awareness was raised by almost every local government stakeholder interviewed as a priority that needs considerably more attention to improve understanding and awareness of racism and anti-racism strategies at the local level. Several stakeholders identified that community awareness already forms a key part of their efforts to counter racism in their areas. These activities primarily occur in the general community but there was an indication that while limited, there were some local government-led anti-racism efforts in schools in Victoria. For example, the Darebin Schools NAIDOC Yarning Conference is regularly run by the City of Darebin council to promote interaction among students from diverse backgrounds as a means of promoting and embracing diversity and addressing racism and exclusion.[59] In 2023, 450 students participated a range of cultural activities representing significant efforts from teachers across 20 local schools and members of the local First Nations community.[61]

Stakeholder collaboration

Local councils consistently identified the importance of engaging with other stakeholders in promoting anti-racism. Multicultural, refugee and First Nations groups were frequently referenced as key partners in anti-racism initiatives. This also extends

[59] City of Darebin (2012) Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015, accessed 12 February 2024 [61] City of Darebin interview

to working with non-government bodies such as community centres, human rights organisations, local schools and tertiary education providers.

In some instances, these initiatives are funded by local government, such as the work of a community education centre in Melbourne. The Melbourne Community Centre advised that Wyndham City Council provided $40,000 funding to enable them to run anti-racism initiatives in 2023, which provides 1.5 days of activities per week. This enabled the centre to focus on upskilling non-English speaking community members around what racism is and how to address it.[60]

Several councils mentioned the importance of the Welcoming Cities program as providing a key resource and meeting point for local government in addressing racism. One stakeholder advised they were a part of a working group that helped to run anti-racism fora in the community. However, they also noted that while these were important conversations, they were an exercise in 'speaking to the converted.'

Designated anti-racism personnel, networks and activities

Some local government stakeholders identified the benefits of having designated strategies and personnel to address racism. Feedback from within the sector suggest that these strategies and personnel are not common but are effective where they are used. The City of Darebin has a dedicated Anti-Racism Officer position that sits within its Equity and Diversity division, as well as a current anti-racism strategy that builds on the original strategy that ran from 2010-2015.[61] This initial strategy was developed in response to findings of the University of Western Sydney Challenging Racism Project 2011 national survey which demonstrated that levels of racism in the Darebin community were higher than the state average.[62] This work is now integrated into the work of council generally to support broader initiatives around social cohesion and diversity.

Other Victorian councils such as the City of Greater Dandenong council have also taken a proactive stance on addressing racism following a vote to install a range of 'racism not welcome' signs in the local government area (LGA) as part of the #racismnotwelcome campaign. This initiative was also taken up by Georges River Council, which joined the campaign along with 16 other NSW and Victorian councils and installed the signs in key locations across various suburbs in its LGA.[63]

In terms of collaborative efforts concerning local government, the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Anti-Racism Working Group was identified as an important asset, formed in the aftermath of the international Black Lives Matter movement and early responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2020. The Working Group is comprised of

[60] Melbourne Community Centre interview

[61] City of Darebin (2012) op cit

[62] City of Darebin (2012) Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy, Foreword, accessed 12 February 2024

[63] RacismNOTWelcome (2024) Articles and Media Mentions, accessed 12 February 2024

representatives of non-government organisations, local government and the state government working together to participate in research and make submissions on racism.[64] Among its key priorities is addressing gaps and opportunities to address racism and to identify the role of government in this process. One Victorian stakeholder mentioned they were a part of a newly formed anti-racism alliance which had primarily met online to date and are still considering 'what we can do together to help support each other.'[65] They shared that while important, the work is unfunded, but that Wyndham City Council had announced it would also run an anti-racism campaign in mid-2024 and as part of this would provide funding to community members and organisations.

Lastly in the inner west of Sydney, efforts to devise new strategies to tackle racism are awaiting the outcome of community consultation activities before progressing further. It is anticipated that the Inner West Council will vote on whether to endorse its newly released anti-racism strategy around June 2024.[66]

4.3.3 Opportunities

Stakeholders identified a range of opportunities to address gaps in the anti-racism space. These include work that remains to be undertaken at the local government level, and broader reforms that would benefit the community at large.

Data

Local government stakeholders stressed the importance of data collection to better understand the nature, extent and impact of racism. Stakeholders nominated the importance of previous national research efforts that provide location-based data about the incidence of racism as a baseline to devising appropriate local anti-racism strategies.

Stakeholders specifically mentioned the work undertaken by Deakin University in partnership with the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies which is due for release in June 2024. One stakeholder advised that this work would be key to drive future efforts on anti-racism in their area:

> *'We are one of the local governments involved in this survey and we will also have data …to better understand racism and to inform a future anti racism strategy that we will start working on.'*[67]

Another stakeholder highlighted the Race Disparity Audit in the United Kingdom, which provides an overview of the treatment of diverse communities across various sectors

[64] LGNSW (2020) NSW Anti-Racism Working Group, accessed 12 February 2024

[65] Victorian stakeholder interview

[66] Inner West Council (2024) Anti-Racism Strategy, accessed 12 February 2024

[67] Darebin Council stakeholder

such as health, employment, criminal justice, and education as a key source of international information on the impact of racism.[68] While the tool has now been discontinued, it was identified as important in providing insights on racism and particularly the role of different arms of government in addressing racism.

Despite some efforts, there is a sizeable gap in data collection on the incidence of racism at the local level in Australia. This presents a significant barrier to monitoring, evaluation and developing appropriate local solutions. The absence of even basic data on the nature and extent of racism at the local level makes addressing racism very challenging.

Technology

While social media and other online platforms were frequently identified as sites where significant racism occurs, some stakeholders also highlighted the importance of technology as an underdeveloped resource for addressing racism. One person noted that there is a 'need to harness technology to drive anti-racism and bring people together but to also address the abuse that can happen on these platforms.'[69] Some online tools and applications were identified as examples of resources promoting awareness around racism and how to address it. The Racism It Stops With Me campaign website, Call it Out App and the websites of the AHRC and state human rights commissions were all identified as useful to local government in navigating, understanding and addressing racism. One stakeholder emphasised that the proliferation of apps for reporting racism could be confusing to community members and that there would be benefit in streamlining these. They said:

> *'There are so many apps – the Call It Out racism app for First Nations people, an Islamic one, a Victorian one, a national one and so then it becomes which one do you report to?'*[70]

Improved funding

Local government stakeholders identified a clear need for increased funding to enable councils to run anti-racism activities themselves or through community grants programs, as well as via the employment of designated personnel. This was seen by multiple stakeholders as having an important impact at the local level, including by extending the efforts of community organisations and human rights bodies which cannot always be responsive across all locations.

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[68] United Kingdom Government | Cabinet Office (2017) Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, accessed 12 February 2024

[69] NSW stakeholder.

[70] Victorian stakeholder.

One stakeholder lamented the amount of in-kind support required to sustain anti-racism work, noting that they were reliant on such support and very minimal ad hoc funding. They went on to say:

> *'It would be great to have some, umm, people who were good community leaders in this area who were very knowledgeable about this space, who are actually funded, you know, to go out and talk to schools, sporting groups, community groups, council and just have that work funded. And so, this is, you know, constant engagement and storytelling and sharing and building the capacity to know what to do and being able to connect with police and community lawyers and others like the preventive space, but also then the action of what to do the response as well.'*[71]

Another stakeholder emphasised that greater government funding is needed beyond existing efforts which cover one off events, project work and engagement but do not include resources for public advertising campaigns and other initiatives that are needed to drive real change. They said that a lack of adequate funding for public awareness campaigns in particular means that these rely on work 'done on [by] communities, (public) service announcements and freebies and social media.'[72]

The need for greater funding was also closely associated with need for greater involvement in anti-racism efforts by governments at all levels. One participant believed that the level of investment required needs to be on par with some of the other major national policy priorities such as child protection and family violence to begin to adequately address racism in Australia. They felt there was a sense that the Federal Government puts the onus for addressing racism onto other stakeholders that that they could just pay to deliver ad-hoc initiatives instead of developing a comprehensive, whole of government led process:

> *'Governments need to say, here are five things we need to do to prevent racism and deal with racism and we are going to need to fund it. I don't think that's in their mindset.'*[73]

Better protections from racism

There was strong feedback from local government participants about the need for better protections to address racism, beyond simply increasing funding.

[71] Victorian stakeholder

[72] National stakeholder

[73] National stakeholder

One Victorian participant stressed that while existing online reporting tools were important there is room for improvement - for example, the VEOHRC community reporting tool:

> *'...needs to be much stronger so that there are better partnerships with community groups and local government to host and to own the reporting tools in a way that is decentralised.'*[74]

A further suggestion was that greater investment in this area could serve to enable local councils and other bodies to also host such tools and use them to enter information themselves.

Other identified opportunities included:

- addressing racism that occurs on public transport, and
- the introduction of legislation at the local government level to create a 'mandate for change.'[75]

There was a general view across all interview participants that there should be consistency across local government on the responsibility of councils to address racism, and that this should be compulsory.

4.4 First Nations

It was very difficult engaging First Nations people, who were unwilling to participate in government research in the weeks and months following the Voice Referendum on 14 October 2023. This limited the research team's ability to gain insights from a broad group of key stakeholders. The team was able to gather insights from a small group of First Nations stakeholders about what is being done and what is needed in the anti-racism space.

The most recent 2022 Australian Reconciliation Barometer reports that 60 percent of First Nations people have experienced at least one form of racial prejudice in the previous six months compared to 50 percent in 2020 and 43 percent in 2018.[76] The general impression provided by those interviewed is that there is little action being undertaken specifically to assist First Nations people experiencing racism. Where examples do exist, they are the result of the work of First Nations community-controlled organisations. The 2019 National Agreement on Closing the Gap was identified as an important instrument that has the potential to help drive future reform in the space. In

[74] Victorian stakeholder

[75] NSW stakeholder.

[76] Reconciliation Australia (2023) 2022 Australian Reconciliation Barometer, page 5

particular, Priority Reform 3 *Transforming Government Organisations* holds all tiers of governments to account to identify and eliminate racism.[77]

4.4.1 Challenges

The topic of immediate importance for all First Nations stakeholders who participated in this research was the process and outcome of the 2023 Voice Referendum. Participants expressed deep concern that the national discourse leading up to and during the Referendum, including the contribution of some federal and other politicians gave a 'green light'[78] to overt racist behaviour towards First Nations people. One interviewee told us:

> *'I think that our political leaders have a lot to answer for…because they've ran this instead of being bipartisan and getting on board, what is actually a really, really important issue, they chose to divide and then the country followed that division and … Australia basically just showed themselves to be ignorant.'*[79]

There was a view that while the Referendum outcome could not be fully attributed to racism, the Referendum process nonetheless unleashed a 'whole lot of racism, clearly on the fringes, with some of it coming [from] within the mainstream of the debate.'[80]

First Nations stakeholders interviewed also described the 'flow-on effect' this has had on attitudes towards First Nations people, including backlash against activities such as formal Welcome To Country procedures which were voted down by two South Australian councils, for example, following the Referendum.[81] One stakeholder stated that the referendum process 'caused a lot of harm'[84] and not much good and that there is an urgent need for reforms to address racism.

Interviewees shared a belief that these discussions further jeopardised other policy work in the First Nations space, including efforts under Closing the Gap and treaty considerations.

Although addressing racism is now part of Priority Reform Three in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, stakeholders lamented the lack of detail on how this should be enacted. They believed that articulating an antiracism approach is necessary if the Agreement is to drive the changes needed in the lives of First Nations peoples:

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[77] Australian Government | Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2019) National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform Three – Transforming Government Organisations, accessed 12 February 2024

[78] First Nations stakeholder.

[79] First Nations stakeholder.

[80] Federal stakeholder.

[81] ABC News (2023) City of Playford council removes Acknowledgement of Country from meetings, accessed

12 February 2024 [84] First Nations stakeholder.

> *'And the right reality is if governments are truly trying to close the gap, you know, like, close the gap has been on the agenda for years now. And if they were serious about doing that, any of that work should be complemented by an anti-racism (approach) or underpinned by anti-racist ways of working.'*[82]

However, First Nations stakeholders felt that it is unclear how including a specific anti-racism requirement in the National Agreement would work in practice, and that there was 'no guidance or detail on how to operationalise it'.[83]

A key barrier identified to achieving change was the lack of accountability across policy frameworks, including the National Agreement. Stakeholders maintained that this requires significant attention to address existing targets and enhance existing provisions concerning racism:

> *'…we just see so many times, you have these beautiful frameworks and plans and what have you, especially the national ones, and you start to see state and the jurisdictions cherry pick little bits and pieces because no one is holding them to account.'*[84]

As noted elsewhere in this report, First Nations stakeholders raised the need for monitoring and evaluation approaches to be embedded in government anti-racism work at all levels of government to ensure greater commitment.

4.4.2 Strengths

The ongoing resilience and capacity of First Nations people and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector were identified as clear strengths in addressing racism and its effects.

The progress made by the First Nations health sector was raised as noteworthy, with stakeholders emphasising that the introduction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020-2025 by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) with the aim of eliminating racism from health settings had been impactful. This Strategy is now part of AHPRA's core business and, since the introduction of legislation in December 2023, has led to action being taken to address racist behaviour by health practitioners.[85] Offering an avenue for complaints provides a level of protection for First Nations health practitioners and patients. Given what is known about the extent of racism experienced by First Nations people in health settings, this reform has the potential to lead to genuine systemic change in the health system.

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[82] First Nations stakeholder.

[83] First Nations stakeholder.

[84] First Nations stakeholder.

[85] First Nations Stakeholder and AHPRA (2023) Doctor banned for discriminatory and offensive behaviour, accessed 12 February 2024

First Nations stakeholders point towards this development as an important case study illustrating the possibilities for addressing racism in Australia and noted that AHPRA is now looking to build on this work to focus on antiracism approaches more closely.[86]

4.4.3 Other insights

The recently released *Study Report on the Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap* largely supports the key findings of this report as they relate to First Nations peoples. Findings of a lack of funding to conduct monitoring and evaluation; lack of clarity on how to operationalise anti-racism in the public sector, and inadequate processes of accountability for addressing racism and discrimination work are echoed across work in First Nations policy more broadly.[87]

4.5 Government grant funding to community sector

Governments at all levels provide funding through grants programs to non-government organisations and other tiers of government. This ranges from multi-year grants funding to ad hoc funding for shorter periods of time. Based on advice from the Race Discrimination team and participants who took part in the interviews for this research and using the Australian Government's Grant Connect website, the focus here is on community grants programs provided by the following federal departments:

- Australian Sports Commission
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, and
- Attorney General's Department.

No central option for researching state and territory or local government grants funding into the community sector was available, limiting the ability to identify relevant community grants at those levels.

The Australian Sports Commission and departments of Home Affairs, Social Services and Education appear to provide the most directly relevant community grants aimed at addressing racism in Australia. However, it must be noted that the focus remains on

[86] First Nations stakeholder.

[87] Australian Government | Productivity Commission (2024) Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap report, accessed 28 January 2024

asking communities who experience racism to address the issue and no community grants funding was apparent that focused on role of the broader Australian community. As with much of the government work supporting First Nations communities, community grants programs focused almost exclusively *into* those communities but did not appear to address racism experienced *by* those communities and reach out *beyond* those communities to address it.

While there is some joint provision of grant funding by departments, generally there is an absence of any cohesive, strategic direction to the grants provided. Relevant grant programs tend to focus on social cohesion and deliver into CALD communities and there appears to be little specific grant funding provision for community organisations to address racism and the perpetration of racist behaviour.

4.5.1 Australian Sports Commission

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) is the federal agency responsible for supporting and investing in sport at all levels. The ASC was established in 1985 under the Australian Sports Commission Act 1989 (Cth) and its role is to increase involvement in sport; enable continued international sporting success through leadership and development of the sports sector and tackle the big challenges and opportunities with and for the sector. The ASC leads, supports and provides opportunities for all communities to be involved in sport.[1] More recently its focus has returned to working with First Nations and CALD communities, women and people living with disability.

The ASC is currently running the Share a Yarn program which is in its third year, having commenced in 2020. Initially designed after a review of the National Sports Plan, the Australian Sports Commission Reconciliation Action Plan, and additional relevant research carried out over the past decade, Share a Yarn supports First Nation elite athletes and provides non-Indigenous elite athletes and coaches with opportunities to learn about First Nations communities, culture and histories. The aim is to provide access to learning and knowledge about the differing First Nations cultures, lands, histories, and peoples. Through this learning, the program leverages elite athletes and coaches to engage wider sporting and Australian communities in reconciliation. Through Share a Yarn the ASC endeavours to encourage increased cultural competency within the sector, enhancing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences within high-performance sport.

Since commencing in 2020, $425,000 has been committed to the program with the (approximate) annual breakdown as follows:

- $100,000 (2020)
- $80,000 (2021)
- $120,000 (2022)
- $125,000 (2023)

The current Share a Yarn iteration is being delivered in two 12-month cycle formats outlined below.

Share a Yarn Cultural Connection Program

The program creates safe affirming environments which support cultural connectedness and improve wellbeing for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high performance athletes.

The program aims to:

- Increase First Nation's athletes' sense of belonging to the Australian sporting system.
- Safeguard them from the burden of cultural fatigue within the high-performance system
- Increase their connection to their cultural identity, and
- Create connections with other First Nations athletes across Australia.

Share a Yarn Ally Program

This program increases cultural competency within the high-performance sector, enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences within high performance sport.

The program aims to:

- Increase knowledge of the Traditional Owners of Australia, their land, their history, and their culture
- Increase knowledge of the cultural needs of First Nations athletes
- Amplify the voices of First Nations communities, and
- Increase cultural competency.

A consultative approach was taken to develop the program with numerous stakeholders as part of the recent Share a Yarn program redevelopment to gain a better understanding about how the program can achieve its goals, be sustainable, and grow with time. Those consulted include:

- Share a Yarn Ambassadors
- Australian Institute of Sport staff including those from the Coach Development and Community Engagement teams
- the Australian Sports Commission's Indigenous Liaison Officer
- Barkly Region Council in the Northern Territory, and
- Three Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement Managers (Athletics, Beach Volleyball, Gymnastics).

The key themes identified from these consultations were:

- Share a Yarn should provide greater opportunities for ambassadors to connect with First Nations people of their local areas, and
- Share a Yarn should provide greater opportunities for ambassadors to communicate their learnings to their National Sporting Organisations.

The ASC also works closely with virtually every sporting code in Australia. Each is unique in terms of its level of maturity for anti-racism work and the initiatives they have in place. After intensive work on the part of the ASC, most codes have adopted the following (or similar) policies that mention or reference anti-racism:

- Member Protection Policies
- inclusion/DEI frameworks, and
- codes of conduct/respectful behaviours policies.[88]

Funding for sporting organisations

The ASC Play Well Participation Grant Program (Play Well) invests in innovative new or expanded programs that address the barriers to participation and increase involvement in sport and physical activity. A total of $10.3 million has been allocated over 2023-24 to support the program.

The objectives of the program are to support organisations to contribute to the following priorities:

- increase involvement in sport and physical activity through the provision of inclusive and quality sport and physical activity experiences, and
- address the barriers to sport and physical activity and provide more opportunities to be involved in sport and physical activity programs for those in the community who face the most barriers.[89]

Grants range from $10,000 to $300,000 to support eligible organisations. National sporting organisations, national sporting organisations for people with disability, national physical activity providers and local councils are eligible

to apply. Sporting clubs are not eligible to apply as primary grant applicants but are encouraged to talk to their state and/or national bodies to express their interest in the program. There are two funding streams as follows:

- Stream 1 supports national sport and peak physical activity organisations to deliver programs across at least three Australian states or territories focussing on driving lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. Funding for Stream

[88] Information provided by the Australian Sports Commission

[89] Australian Government | Australian Sports Commission (2024) Play Well Participation Grants Program, accessed 12 February 2024

1 projects ranges from $50,000 to $100,000 for National Pilot projects to between $100,000 and $30,000 for National Expansion projects, and

- Stream 2: supports local councils to form partnerships to deliver projects that address local barriers to involvement in sport. Community programs are funded between $10,000 and $40,000 per project.[90]

The level of funding that contributes to anti-racism or equity work with First Nations and CALD communities is unknown.

4.5.2 Department of Home Affairs

Over the five-year timeframe of this research, the Department of Home Affairs has funded a range of grants programs within the scope of anti-racism, First Nations and CALD communities and equity, focused on the following areas:

- national security and criminal justice
- multicultural affairs and citizenship, and
- humanitarian and refugee settlement services and migrant services more broadly.

The central aim of Home Affairs grants funding for the community sector over the past five years has been around social cohesion through integration into mainstream Australian society and ways of life. Funding has been focused on newly arrived migrants, humanitarian and refugee entrants through community sector projects that support individuals, families and communities to become self-reliant, settle into and participate in Australian society as quickly as possible, and address what is seen as 'divisive' behaviour in target communities (e.g. Islamic youth).

Table 1: Department of Home Affairs relevant funding programs 2018–2024

Year/s	Program	Aim	Total $ Amount
2016–2023/24	Safer Communities	To support the Australian Government's commitment to deliver safer communities through crime prevention initiatives including protecting education centres, places of religious worship, organisations, schools, pre-schools and children from racial and/or religious intolerance, attack, harassment, or violence.	$265.1M between 2016 and 2023-24
2018/19 – ongoing 2020–2021 2021–2022 2022–2023	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support – Client Services (SETS)	To deliver services which assist eligible clients to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival.	Total grant funding of $175,941,297 (GST exclusive) is currently available for SETS program over 3 years from 2024–25 to 2026–27

[90] Ibid

2018–19 2020–2021 2021–2022	Settlement Services Youth Transition Support - SACS	As above.	$9.1M allocated in 2023-24 to extend services for 12 months to 30 June 2024
2018–2019 2020	DIGI Engage 2019 Event	Deliver a third Engage event held on 27-28 June 2019 to build young people's understanding of the root causes of divisive narratives, and their capacity to effectively engage with and counter those narratives. The purpose of the grant is to provide enhanced community engagement to help young people counter online hate.	$425,700 (one off/ad-hoc funding)
2018–2019 2019–2020 2020–2021 2021–2022 2022–2023	Fostering Integration Grants	Supports local organisations to assist migrants to integrate into Australian economic, social and civil life, while promoting Australian values.	Total of $7.5 million allocated for the 2021–22 financial year Total of $5.6 million allocated to 83 projects across Australia for 2022 round

Year/s	Program	Aim	Total $ Amount
2018–2019	Multicultural Engagement Program	A Closed Non-Competitive grant awarded to the Federal Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA). The Multicultural Engagement grant program supports an integrated and cohesive Australia by supporting inclusive and respectful communities; strengthening the public's understanding of Australian values and civic responsibilities; promoting the value of immigration, multiculturalism and Australian citizenship; and representing the views of and issues facing migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse Australians to Government.	$1,860,100.00
2018–2019 2020 2020–2021 2021–2022	Mutual Understanding, Support, Tolerance, Engagement and Respect (MUSTER)	MUSTER helps to build cohesion and create a sense of commonality around everyday issues (i.e. issues that are tangible and meaningful in day-to-day-life) to further understanding and acceptance of diversity.	$204,600.00 awarded in 2021 representing a decrease in funding from the original value of $329,450.00 in 2019-2021
2019–2020 to 2022–2023	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support	To deliver services which assist eligible clients to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival.	$2,351,227.32

	Community Capacity Building		
2019–2020 2020–2021	Settlement Services Youth Hubs	To deliver the Youth Hubs trial.	$1,306,250 $3,918,750
2019–2020 2020–2021	Fostering Integration Grants 2021 One-off	Fostering Integration Grants Scheme Ad-Hoc.	$368,338
2019–2020 2020–2021 2023/24 to 2025/26	Settlement Grants National Community Hubs Program	To deliver services which assist eligible clients to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival.	A total of $14,693,274 from 2023–24 to 2025–26
2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023	Community Languages Multicultural Grants Round 1	Funding to eligible community languages schools to help students learn and use another language and connect young Australians to languages and cultures of their community to build strong communities and strengthen social cohesion.	A total of up to $15 million over 2 years from 2023

Year/s	Program	Aim	Total $ Amount
2020–2021 2021–2022 2022–2023	Mutual Understanding, Support, Tolerance, Engagement and Respect (MUSTER) - Multicultural Community Amenities Grants in the Northern Territory	MUSTER helps to build cohesion and create a sense of commonality around everyday issues (i.e. issues that are tangible and meaningful in day-to-day-life) to further understanding and acceptance of diversity.	A total of up to $2 million over 2020–21
2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Innovation Fund	The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Innovation grant opportunity funds innovative projects that support and or enhance employment for migrants and refugees. The purpose of the grant is to support the agreed MyAus App Initiative (the Initiative).	$9,650,005 in 2021-2022 $9,650,005 in 2022-2023
2022 -	Safe and Together Community Grants Program	The aim of the Program is to support communities and organisations to deliver activities and programs to support, at the earliest possible stage, individuals who may be vulnerable to developing violent extremist views and behaviours.	$10.7 million $2.5 million in Round 1
2022-2023	Local Community Projects	The objective of the grant opportunity is to facilitate the participation, integration and social cohesion of both newly arrived migrants and multicultural communities in Australia.	Unknown

2022-2023	Economic Pathways to Integration Grants	The Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration program will fund evidence-based initiatives to create opportunities for employment, including self-employment, for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Social enterprises are encouraged to apply.	$15 million available over 3 years to 30 June 2025
2023 -	Securing Faith Based Places grant program	Grants to improve security at religious schools and pre-schools, places of worship and faith-based community centres.	$50 million
2023 -	Support for communities affected by the Israel-Hamas conflict	Funding to support Australian Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim and other communities affected by the Israel-Hamas conflict.	$59 million

Source: Australian Government | Grant Connect

4.5.3 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Between 2018 and 2023, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) under its Culture and Capability Program, awarded National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) grants funding with the purpose of supporting First Nations Australians to 'maintain their culture, participate equally in the economic and social life of the nation and that Indigenous organisations are capable of delivering quality services to their clients'.[18] In 2023, $1.6M was provided to support local communities and organisations celebrate NAIDOC Week.[91]

4.5.4 National Indigenous Australians Agency

While the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) provides extensive policy and programs on equity-based initiatives for First Nations people and communities, it is almost exclusively focused into those communities and does not appear to have any explicit emphasis on, addressing those communities' experiences of racism nor changing the perceptions of those who perpetrate such behaviours.

The one example to highlight is NIAA's funding of Reconciliation Australia, the national peak body for reconciliation in Australia. In 2020, the agency funded Reconciliation Australia to the amount of $10.8 million over three years.[92] However it must be stated that this funding commitment was inherited from PMC when the responsibilities for Indigenous affairs shifted to the standalone NIAA, and again, situates the responsibility of addressing racism with the victimised communities.

4.5.5 Department of Social Services

The main contribution made by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to community grants funding supporting anti-racism work is the Strong and Resilient Communities

[91] Australian Government | Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2023) 2023 NAIDOC Week Local Grants, accessed 13 February 2024

[92] Australian Government | National Indigenous Australians Agency (2020) Reconciliation Australia funding confirmed for three years, accessed 13 February 2024

(SARC) Activity program. This program aims to support the building of strong, resilient, cohesive and harmonious communities to ensure culturally diverse individuals, families and communities have opportunities to thrive, be free from intolerance and discrimination, and have capacity to respond to emerging needs and challenges.[93]

The SARC is delivered in three streams:

- Community Resilience grants: increase social and economic participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged people through one-off time limited projects
- Inclusive Communities grants: build strong, resilient and cohesive communities by funding projects addressing issues in communities that show early signs of low social cohesion, and
- National Research grants: builds the Government's understanding of emerging and existing social cohesion issues and increase the evidence base for informing government policies and programs.[94]

SARC Activity has broad scope and flexibility, and the funded work delivered by community organisations is directly with vulnerable communities

The SARC is a component of DSS's Families and Communities Program and commenced in 2018, replacing the previous Strengthening Communities Activity. The 2021 program evaluation found that SARC positively contributed to community cohesion, economic participation, engagement with services, and positive community attitudes.[95] However, the evaluation also noted that a limited number of projects were funded that targeted cohorts demonstrating intolerance on racial, religious or cultural grounds.[96]

In 2021 $63 million was announced for the SARC Inclusive Communities Grants over five rounds for projects running from 2022–2028.[97]

The following table sets out SARC funding levels for the remaining two components from 2018–2023.

Table 2: DSS SARC funding 2018-19 to 2022-23

SARC Component	Year	Total Amount $ provided
Community Resilience Grants	2018-19	$1,792,914
	2019-20	$23,346,615
	2020-21	$22,836,327

[93] Australian Government |Department of Social Services (2024) Strong and Resilient Communities, accessed 13 February 2024

[94] Australian Government |Department of Social Services (2024) Strong and Resilient Communities, accessed 13 February 2024

[95] Social Research Centre for Department of Social Services (2021) Strong and Resilient Communities Evaluation Report, accessed 13 February 2024

[96] Social Research Centre for Department of Social Services (2021) Strong and Resilient Communities Evaluation Report, page vii

[97] Australian Government |Department of Social Services (2024) Strong and Resilient Communities, accessed 13 February 2024

SARC Component	Year	Total Amount $ provided
	2021-22	$21,918,877
	2022-23	$6,354,254
National Research Grants	2018-19	$628,302
	2019-20	$140,000
	2020-21	$457,213
	2021-22	$140,000
	2022-23	

Source: Australian Government | Grant Connect & Departmental websites

Under Families and Communities funding, DSS also partners with Home Affairs to provide the MUSTER grants program, as well as the provision of peak bodies funding for settlement services peaks in their Refugee Humanitarian Settlement and Migrant Services stream.

4.5.6 Department of Education

Similar to other federal departments, the majority of Department of Education grants programs focus on broader equity aims than anti-racism. For example, Connected Beginnings, a joint program with the Department of Health, is a place-based initiative working with local First Nations communities to support integration of early childhood, maternal and child health, and family support services with schools in communities experiencing disadvantage so that children are well prepared for school.

The Innovative Solutions Support program provides grants to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services to develop their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs including First Nations children and children from CALD communities.[98] The Department provided over $213 million in Innovative Solutions Support grants from 2019-20 to 2020-2021.[99]

Support overtly linked to racism and social cohesion comes in the form of individual funding, with examples as follows:

- Almost $9 million provided to the Together for Humanity Foundation from 2021-22 to 2022-23 to enable Together For Humanity to increase the scope and impact

[98] Australian Government | Department of Education (2024) Early Childhood, Inclusion Support Program Innovative Solutions Support, accessed 14 February 2024

[99] Bray, J. R, Carroll, M., Baxter, J., Budinski, M., Gray, M., (2021). Evaluation of the Inclusion Support Program. (Research Report). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies., page 9

of its activities and equip students, teachers and parents for diversity, and foster greater inter-cultural understanding and a sense of belonging

- $104,601 provided under Regional Employment Trials grants to Townsville's Language Boost for New Migrants project in 2019-20 to improve the functioning of the Townsville skills and labour market by significantly addressing the bilingual and bicultural barriers affecting employment
- $3,300,000 in 2019-20 under the Department's Respectful Interfaith School Education program to fund the Anti-Defamation Commission to support expansion of their Click Against Hate program
- $33,000 in 2020-21 under the Early Learning and Schools Support program to support the Australian Education Working Group within the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance to promote Holocaust education during Holocaust Memorial Week (and to meet Australia's international obligation as an IHRA member), and
- Also in 2020-21, $330,000 funding under the same program to the Islamic Museum of Australia to support the expansion of education programs and facilities, and the same amount for a Holocaust Digital Platform. [100]

4.5.7 Attorney-General's Department

The Attorney-General's Department (AGD) is a member of the National Security and Criminal Justice Group. The Safer Communities Fund administered by Home Affairs and included above at Table l in 4.5.2 Department of Home Affairs sits under the Attorney-General's Department's National Security and Criminal Justice program.

AGD's First Nations Justice and Policy Division is responsible for implementing the Australian Government's National Justice Reinvestment Program. While it does not have a specific focus on racism, there may be some alignment with a policy focus on institutional racism affecting First Nations peoples.

The Program includes:

- Funding of $69 million from 2022-2026 then $20 million per year from 2026-27 for up to 30 community led initiatives aimed at shifting First Nations' people's interactions away from the justice system
- An additional $10 million over four years for the Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia Program in Alice Springs and Halls Creek (the Halls Creek commitment is implemented through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy via an existing agreement with the National Indigenous Australians Agency), and

[100] Australian Government | Grant Connect, accessed January 2024

- $12.5 million over four years for a National Justice Reinvestment Unit to coordinate and support justice reinvestment initiatives at a national level.[101]

4.5.8 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Communications and the Arts within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DIRTDCA) provide community grants for activities through its Arts and Cultural Development program. While none have a specific focus on racism, some appear to have some relevance. These include the following grants programs:

- Arts and Cultural Development
- Festivals Australia
- Visions of Australia, and
- Australian Music Industry Package.[102]

Communications and the Arts also funded the Gujaga Foundation a one off/ad hoc grant of $70,629 in 2019-20 to support two First Nations cultural events to commemorate the arrival of James Cook at Kamay Botany Bay, one of which was a Meeting of Two Cultures event.[103]

4.6 Australian Research Council grants

The Australian Research Council (ARC) sits under the Department of Education and is the Commonwealth agency responsible for facilitating the National Competitive Grant Program for university research.[104]

The ARC has two funding schemes:

- Discovery Program, comprising:
  - Discovery Projects: supporting basic and applied research by individuals and teams
  - Discovery Indigenous: supporting basic and applied research by First Nations researchers
  - Discovery Early Career Researcher Award: supporting early-career researchers
  - Future Fellowships: supporting mid-career researchers, and

[101] Australian Government | Grant Connect, accessed January 2024

[102] Australian Government | Grant Connect, accessed January 2024

[103] Australian Government | Grant Connect, accessed January 2024

[104] Australian Government Australian Research Council (2024) website accessed 13 February 2024

  - Australian Laureate Fellowships: to support international researchers to conduct research in Australia.
- Linkage Program, including:
  - Linkage Projects: supporting strategic research alliances between higher education institutions and industry, and
  - ARC Centres of Excellence: facilitating collaborations between universities, publicly funded research organisations, governments and businesses.[105]

For this project a desktop search was undertaken of ARC grants commencing or finishing between 2019 and 2023, and those announced in 2023 commencing in 2024, using the search terms:

- racism
- social cohesion
- multicultural
- equity
- extremist/extremism, and
- Indigenous (due to the large number of results this search was further limited to projects with a focus on racism, equity, cohesion and justice).

The following table is a snapshot of key relevant ARC grants.[106]

Table 3: Australian Research Council relevant grants 2019–2024

Name	Type	Current funding	Overview	Implement-ation date	Relevant partners/ investigators
DP230103079 Western Sydney University	Discovery Project	$409,598	Online anti-racism for Australia. This project analyses a subset of online anti-racism campaigns to identify the ingredients for effective, safe and efficient online anti-racism interventions.	2023 - 2025	
DP220100584 University of Sydney	Discovery Project	$378,490	The ideologies and practices of anti-racism in Australia. The project aims to advance understanding of what anti-racism	2022 – 2025	Prof Thinethavone (Tim) Soutphommasane

[105] Ibid

[106] Ibid, ARC Data Portal (2024)

Name	Type	Current funding	Overview	Implement-ation date	Relevant partners/ investigators
			work looks like in Australia and identify best practices in anti-racism policies and approaches.		
DP220102606 University of Queensland	Discovery Project	$209,661	The social psychology of minority experiences of interracial contact. The project aims to benefit those who suffer from discrimination and prejudice by improving techniques for targeting racism.	2022 - 2025	
DE220100329 Deakin University	Discovery Early Career Researcher Award	$479,160	No place like home? A phenomenology of racialised non-belonging. The project aims to help guide more robust models of anti-racism in public life.	2022 - 2028	
FT210100263 Queensland University of Technology	ARC Future Fellowships	$1,066,529	Regulating and countering structural inequality on digital platforms. This project aims to find opportunities to counter inequality online to tackle misogyny, racism and other forms of structural discrimination.	2021 - 2026	
IN210100051 Murdoch University	Discovery Indigenous	$615,303	Testing a new model for addressing covert racism faced by Indigenous youth. This project will focus on the impacts of racism on targets and the roles of non-Indigenous peoples in either sustaining or ameliorating racism.	2021 - 2024	
DE230101209 University of Melbourne	Discovery Early Career	$443,812	Linguistic discrimination and migrant youth in	2023 - 2025	

Name	Type	Current funding	Overview	Implement-ation date	Relevant partners/ investigators
	Researcher Award		regional Australia. Expected outcomes include policy recommendations for supporting migrant youth to counter discrimination and empower them as citizens.		
DP220101621 Western Sydney University	Discovery Projects	$564,133	Investigating voluntary and involuntary intergroup contact. This project has the potential to inform interventions and policies that deliver harmonious, healthy and productive communities.	2022 - 2025	
LP190100459 Deakin University	Linkage Projects	$402,078	Mapping social services provision for diverse communities. Outcomes will include robust evidence to improve social inclusion of migrant communities through the effective provision of services.	2020 - 2023	Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights Victorian Multicultural Commission Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
CE230100027 University of Wollongong	ARC Centres of Excellence	$35,753,654	ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures. The Centre will be entirely led by Indigenous researchers working with communities, government agencies and practitioners to strengthen the delivery of outcomes and linkages intentionally focused on all four of the National Agreement Close The Gap - 2020's Priority Reform areas.	2023	

Source: Australian Government | Australian Research Council ARC Portal Grants Search

5. Key findings

This section summarises the high-level key findings of the research.

Key Finding 1: Avoiding 'racism'

Overall, there is a reluctance on the part of government to use the term 'racism'. Government preference over the past decade for the use of 'social cohesion' has weakened approaches to anti-racism work. There is a current lack of a systemic government-led strengths-based, inter-sectional and coordinated approach to addressing racism in Australian society.

Key Finding 2: Failure to measure impact

Work that is being done is failing to enter public awareness in any meaningful way. Limited or no monitoring and evaluation means there is little or no impact assessment of work already being undertaken, including government funded programs run by community organisations.

Key Finding 3: Blaming the victim

There remains a focus on victims and/or those communities experiencing racism or racist behaviours to 'fix the problem' with little or no focus on the broader community to address the issue.

Key Finding 4: Ad hoc, disjointed, disconnected and reactive

Government work at all levels appears to be ad-hoc, disjointed, often disconnected from other similar approaches, and frequently reactive to situations arising domestically or internationally. Such work is heavily siloed and there is a lack of whole of government approaches that are not reliant on the Australian Human Rights Commission, as a small authority, to lead and drive. Lack of coherence and direction *across* government agencies and *between* governments is apparent. This is also the case across sectors considered in this research – government, nongovernment organisations and academia. Victoria is an example of where cross-sectoral approaches can work – when academic experts, government agencies and local councils are aware of and leverage each other's experience and expertise.

Key Finding 5: Focus on internal staffing strategies

The most common work across agencies and tiers of government is internally focused in the form of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies and programs aimed at First Nations and CALD staff, alongside people living with disability and women. However, some of this work has been in place for more than a decade and little to no focus is directly on addressing racism in the workplace - rather, racism is part of an overall 'basket' of issues to be considered. Reconciliation Action Plans have the capacity to shift

this for those government agencies that have them in place, with a commitment to review internal policies for anti-racism approaches now a requirement introduced by Reconciliation Australia and not government itself. At the local level, the City of Darebin in Victoria is the only example of a council identified by this research with a dedicated anti-racism staff position.

Key Finding 6: Disconnect between expert research outcomes and government work

There is a disconnect between emerging academic research and government practice. Significant federal funding has supported excellent academic and other research, but it is not clear if or where research findings are driving policy and program development or informing practice by government to achieve outcomes for communities.

Key Finding 7: Competing communities

The current policy approach in this space contributes to an 'either/or' situation between First Nations and CALD communities, leading to victimised communities competing with each other for funding.

Key Finding 8: Limited focus on racism and First Nations communities

The equity work undertaken by government focused on First Nations communities is focused *into* those communities aimed at addressing disadvantage and does not include a focus on addressing the racism experienced by those communities from external forces. No evidence could be found to support work being undertaken aimed at those who perpetrate racism towards First Nations communities. Post-Voice Referendum, there is a need for government to reaffirm support for addressing racism towards First Nations peoples.

Key Finding 9: Racism not a consideration for local government

While there are excellent individual examples of local government work, generally local government does not see anti-racism work as a consideration, either at local council or their state/national peak body levels.

Key Finding 10: Good practice examples are available

The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) provides an example of legislation addressing online racism and the funding of Reconciliation Australia a good example of funding to the community sector leading to practical and useful outcomes addressing racism in the community. Projects led by All Together Now and the Scanlon Institute, and the University of Western Sydney Challenging Racism project, as well as the *Australian*

Reconciliation Barometer, provide examples of evidence-based research work undertaken in the community sector.

Key Finding 11: Failure of political bipartisanship

Unlike other policy areas, continuity in work on racism is heavily reliant on, and susceptible to, the attitudes of the government of the day. More recent conservative governments have stepped away from traditional bipartisan approaches in this space and, unlike their predecessors, can no longer be seen as drivers of anti-racism work. This has led to a gap in corporate knowledge in the public sector, and a current sense of 'reinventing of the wheel'.

Key Finding 12: Limitations due to lack of engagement with this research

There are limitations to the findings of this research due to a small sample of publicly available information made available by governments, and a lack of interest or engagement with the research project.

6 Recommendations

A set of key high-level recommendations have been included here for consideration by the Commission and other government bodies, based on the outcomes of this research. They are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Establishment of a National Anti-Racism Council that brings together First Nations and CALD leaders and experts for the first time to advise government on strategic directions for policy and programs

- Establishing a National Anti-Racism Council is an effective way to address all forms of racism at a national level. By establishing the Council, governments and organisations will be better able to promote effective social cohesion, social justice and equality.
- It is important for the Council to include experts and advocates as well as First Nations and CALD representatives to support development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Framework. The Council will work directly with government, corporates and other stakeholders to ensure anti-racism initiatives are integrated into broader policies and programs.
- Involving First Nations and CALD representatives is essential for the Council to promote diversity, inclusion, and equality. First Nations and CALD communities experience systemic racism and discrimination at exponentially higher rates than other communities.

Recommendation 2: Development of a nationally recognised definition of racism

- Developing a nationally recognised definition of racism is crucial to support efforts to combat racism. It would provide a baseline for individuals, organisations, and governments to identify and address instances of racism, and to develop effective strategies for prevention and intervention. This can help to generate more accurate and reliable data on the prevalence and impacts of racism, which would in turn inform government policy and decision-making.
- Defining racism is an important step in developing effective ways to address it. By understanding the forms that racism can take, targeted programs can be developed to address racism and promote greater equality, inclusion and social cohesion.
- Defining racism is an important step in creating consistency and shared understanding. Currently many initiatives in this area are framed in terms of social cohesion, diversity and inclusion. A clear and well supported definition will mean that more programs and policies will be able to confidently use the

language of 'racism' and those involved in anti-racism work will have a consistent understanding of what constitutes racism.

Recommendation 3: Development of a clear, whole of government strategic approach to addressing racism and racist behaviours in Australian society

- Developing a clear and strategic whole of government approach to addressing racism and racist behaviour is an important step in avoiding the current ad hoc approaches and more broadly to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. This would also strengthen work across and within agencies, avoid duplication and drive outcomes for government policy and programs.

Recommendation 4: Inclusion of a formal monitoring and evaluation approach in the Framework for tracking and reporting on progress and implementation of government work addressing racism

- Formal monitoring and evaluation is important to ensure accountability and transparency. Having a clear approach for monitoring and evaluation within the Framework ensures that the Commission can demonstrate the effectiveness of anti-racism initiatives and identify areas for improvement.
- A dedicated monitoring and evaluation approach will help ensure that anti-racism initiatives are evidence based, data-driven, sustainable, and effective so decision-makers can make informed decisions about funding for initiatives to address racism in Australia.

Recommendation 5: Addressing racism in schools to ensure victims do not leave education facing lifelong disadvantage, and perpetrators do not enter adulthood believing racist behaviours are acceptable and do not attract accountability

- People are not born with racist attitudes or beliefs, but rather learn them from the people around them, including parents, peers, and the media. Addressing racism in schools is crucial to ensure that victims do not leave education facing lifelong disadvantage, and perpetrators do not enter adulthood believing racist behaviours are acceptable and do not attract accountability.

Recommendation 6: Establishment of a national database or clearinghouse of antiracism work, policies and programs, research and outcomes

- Establishing a national database or clearinghouse of anti-racism work would be a valuable contribution of the Framework. It would provide a platform for sharing learnings and best practice, supporting efforts to create a more cohesive and less disjointed system than exists currently.
- A national anti-racism database or clearinghouse would align with the inclusion of a clear monitoring and evaluation approach within the Framework, contributing to a strengthened evidence base to inform government decision-making about anti-racism programs and policies.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Register

The stakeholder engagement register has been redacted from the report as it contained personal identifying information of participants.

Appendix B: Discovery Interview Questions

Below are the questions posed to identified stakeholders within the early discovery interviews prior to undertaking desktop research. The purpose of these interviews was to establish a baseline understanding and form further lines of inquiry for the research project.

Question 1:

Can you outline what has been happening in anti-racism strategy, policy or projects in your organisation/Department/State or Territory Government/Local Government in Australia/space over the past five years?

- What initiatives have been funded? What have they done? Are they still running? How are they going?
- What was/is the:
- Purpose?
- key groups targeted?
- stakeholders?
- partners involved?

Question 2:

How effective have these been? What have they achieved?

Question 3:

What's not happening? What have been the barriers or challenges to the work? [Prompt: Buy in/funding made available/resources allocated etc]

Question 4:

What have been the opportunities for the work?

Question 5:

Do you have any examples of good practice in anti-racism work

[Prompt: domestic or international?]

Question 6:

What would you/your organisation/Department/State or Territory Government/Local Government in Australia like to see in a new national framework?

Question 7:

What do you see as the key priority areas for anti-racism policies and programs undertaken by government in future?

Question 8:

Finally, do you have any suggestions of who we should speak to in our next round of interviews? Is there anything else you would like to share today?

Appendix C: In-Depth Interview Questions

Below are the questions posed to identified stakeholders within the in-depth interviews, during and after undertaking the desktop research.

The purpose of these in-depth interviews was to seek further information and guidance to help direct our research enquiries on work undertaken or funding provided for anti-racism, social cohesion, community harmony, equity or multicultural work by the three tiers of Australian government.

In-depth interviews were held with stakeholders from:

- **Federal and State/Territory Departments and Agencies**
- **Local Government**
- **State/Territory HREOC's**
- **Community Sector funded by government.**

(Awareness of government policies & programs) Question 1:

The scope of policies and programs we are investigating include as a minimum:

- anti-racism
- multiculturalism
- social cohesion, and
- equity, including special measures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, equality, and discrimination, with respect to race, ethnicity, cultural background, and religion.

Do you know of any such work undertaken by your Department/State/Territory/Local Government/Organization over the past five years?

- If yes, what type of work was it?
- If no, why do you think this is the case?

Who were the:

- Key stakeholders?
- Key targets or community cohorts?

(Awareness of similar work undertaken) Question 2:

Do you know of any similar work undertaken across Department/State/Territory/Local Government/Organization?

If yes, what type of work was it?

If yes, what type of work was it? If no, why do you think that is the case?

(Community Sector Partnerships) Question 3:

Were any of these examples in partnership with the community sector? Or was grant funding made available for community?

(First Nations) Question 4:

Do you know of any anti-racism work undertaken by your Department/State Territory/Local Government/Organization that was aimed at racism against First Nations peoples and communities?

Can you describe the work undertaken?

Was it in partnership with First Nations organisations?

Was funding provided by government?

Who were the target audiences?

What was the

outcomes?

(Funding) Question 5:

What government funded community sector work are you aware of in the past five years?

Which departments or agencies was the funding made available from?

Do you know what the total allocation of grant monies made available by government was/is?

(Outcomes) Question 6:

What were the outcomes of the work? How effective do you think the work was?

Did the outcomes align with the original aims and purpose for the work?

Was the work extended or continued beyond the original timeframe in any way? If yes, how?

(Barriers and opportunities) Question 7:

Were there any barriers or challenges to the work?

What were the opportunities for the work?

(Monitoring and evaluation) Question 8:

Was the work monitored and/or evaluated?

If yes, how was this undertaken? If not, why not?

(The Framework) Question 9:

What would you like to see in a new national anti-racism framework?

What do you see as key priorities areas for anti-racism policies and programs undertaken by government in the future

Mapping government anti-racism projects and policies

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