

# Commit to eliminating and preventing racism and discrimination in your school:

## Develop a Policy to Address Racism



### Why create a policy addressing racism?

Policies and procedures to address racism or race-based discrimination within schools are often located within broader anti-bullying policies. Research into the prevalence of racism within schools suggests that this approach is not adequate as it positions race-based discrimination as simply an interpersonal incident, but does not consider the institutional and systemic nature of racism, and therefore risks the inadvertent continuation of racism.<sup>1</sup>

The impacts of racism are often pervasive, affecting not only the person who is disadvantaged or targeted by the act of racism, but also the family and community vicariously.<sup>2</sup> Thus racism is distinguished from bullying not only in its capacity to originate from multiple sources, but the accumulated trauma of the reverberating impact throughout communities. A specific policy outlining the school's commitment to addressing racism, including a consistent and strategic action plan and response, is a positive way for schools to act pro-actively in this regard. This short guide is designed to assist schools to identify some preliminary considerations in developing or reviewing specific policies using an anti-racism framework.

*Please see back of page for references*

## THE FACTS: Cultural diversity of Victorian students<sup>3</sup>

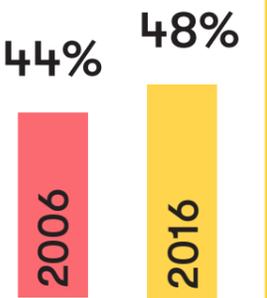
### Youth Population

**48%**

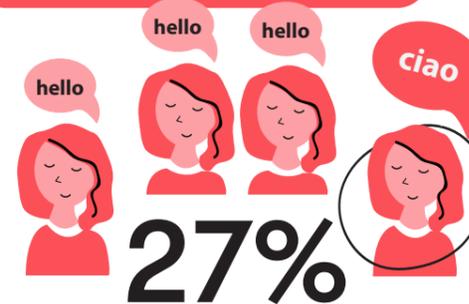
of Victoria's young people aged 12 to 24 years were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas



The number of young people born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas has increased by 4% between 2006 - 2016



### Language

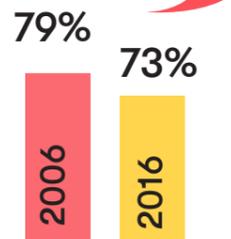


of young people or over 1 in 4 speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE) at home.

### Top 4 Languages other than English spoken by young people at home

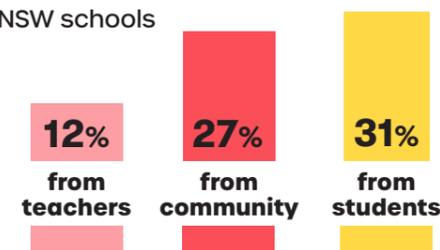


### Young people speaking a language other than English at home



### Racism in Schools<sup>4</sup>

**1/3** Students experience racism and discrimination in Victorian and NSW schools



Students from European backgrounds are 1.5 times more likely and students from any other background are at least 2 times more likely to experience racial discrimination than students from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.

**23%** of student participants identified as being at risk of clinically significant socio-emotional difficulty.

**38%** of Students from ATSI backgrounds were at the risk of socio-emotional difficulties. (The highest prevalence recorded).

Students born overseas are **2 times** more likely to experience racial discrimination than students born in Australia.

More than **60%** of students reported seeing peers being racially discriminated by other peers

**43%** reported seeing incidents of racial discrimination directed at students by teachers

### Further Resources:

**Case Studies:** [www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Policies-In-Practice-Case-Studies.pdf](http://www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Policies-In-Practice-Case-Studies.pdf)

**Policy Template:** [www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Racism-Prevention-Policy\\_Template-Example.pdf](http://www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Racism-Prevention-Policy_Template-Example.pdf)



# Develop a Policy to Address Racism

1



## Clearly define racism and associated terms to develop a shared understanding in your school community

A useful starting place is to become familiar with relevant legislation regarding racism and discrimination such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, or the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

It is important to choose a definition that is simple and concise, represents a complete understanding of the concept, and is easily relatable to relevant legislation. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Equal Rights Commission identifies racial discrimination as: **“any act where a person is treated unfavourably because of their race, nationality, colour, descent or ethnic origin”**. It adds:

- The degrees and forms it can take, from name calling and stereotyping to vilification, abuse and violence.
- The fact that it can involve direct and indirect exclusion from services, employment, education and opportunities.
- That it occurs systemically as a result of policies, conditions and practices that affect a broad group of people.<sup>5</sup>

2



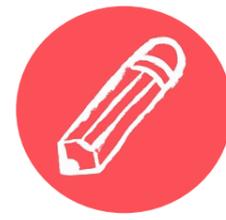
## Complete a review of the “culture of diversity and inclusion” in your school to inform the intentions and purposes of your school’s racism policy

Policies reflect the values, principles and commitments of the school, and set out the overarching goal the school aims to achieve. Policies are most effective when they detail practical steps for moving forward. A commitment to complete a review regarding the issue of racism within the school is a great way of grounding the policies, procedures and future actions in the realities of the particular school.

**VicHealth’s LEAD school-based audit** is a comprehensive tool that can help schools explore the factors that contribute to a school’s attitude and culture towards racism. Whilst very thorough, the school-based audit is not intended to be a prescriptive checklist, but rather a way for schools to think about how their school systems and structures may interact with racism, in order to prioritise pathways towards change.<sup>6</sup>

**A whole-of-school approach** is essential to addressing the widespread nature of racism, therefore the policy should speak to the individual roles and responsibilities of staff, students, teachers, parents and caregivers.<sup>7</sup> Involving the broader school community in revising or developing a policy for addressing racism can be a useful way to incorporate the voices of students, staff, parents and caregivers, and engage them in taking ownership in addressing racism within the school.

3



## Develop and document a new process to address incidents of racism

Success in addressing racism within schools is contingent on clear and consistent messaging across the full range of school activities.<sup>8</sup> This includes not only clear messaging on the school’s stance towards racism and commitment to addressing it, but also clear procedures for responding to incidents of racism. As with all responses to inappropriate student behaviour, a uniform approach is essential.

Being accused of racism, or even being identified as benefiting from racist systems, can be confronting, confusing and often distressing. It is natural for the alleged offender to want to defend themselves and to explain their intention and perspective of the incident. Yet it is crucially important to attend to the perception of racism and subsequent impact to the person who experienced it, irrespective of the circumstances of the incident.<sup>9</sup> This may include:

- Listening to the complaint from an open and curious standpoint in order to understand the offence.
- Acknowledging and validating the person’s experience, regardless of the intention.
- Exploring with the person about how such an incident may have been avoided and setting a commitment to act differently in the future.
- Being open to the fact that you may have participated in racism due to implicit bias, participation in an inequitable system, or carelessness - admitting this can go a long way to creating trust and initiating repair.
- Taking the time to reflect and participate in professional development opportunities such as cultural responsiveness training.

It is important in responding to an accusation of racism to ensure that there is a **trusted third party** to facilitate the discussion and that the person has the opportunity to bring a support person.

As discussed, inclusion of parents, caregivers and community in addressing racism is essential. Implicit in this is creating genuine avenues for input, feedback, complaints and grievances.<sup>10</sup>

Fortunately many frameworks and programs already adopted by schools can be adapted to include a particular focus on racism.

Some examples of Department of Education and Training (DET) resources include:

- [School-wide Positive Behaviour Support](#)
- [Respectful Relationships](#)
- [Bully-stoppers](#)

Some examples of additional resources include:

- [Cultural Responsiveness Training \(CMY\)](#)
- [Restorative Practices Australia](#)
- [Strengthening Community Harmony \(NSW Government\)](#)

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## Evaluate and review



School culture, like community and societal culture, is dynamic and evolving.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, expressions and understandings of racism will continue to shift and manifest in different ways. As such, reflection and review of policy and policy action is fundamental to ensuring that schools are responsive to their unique student and school community context. As illustrated through the Department of Education and Training Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO), regular review of policies and procedures pertaining to addressing racism can ensure that school efforts are effective, flexible and relevant.<sup>12</sup>

### IMPROVEMENT CYCLE



## References

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