



Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015

1- Mayor's foreword

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are entitled to the same rights and freedoms whatever their race, colour, language, religion or national origin. These simple truths are sometimes too easily forgotten. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims them, might seem remote from our everyday lives. But it actually speaks to some very basic principles that we can all instinctively relate to: that we are equal before the law and should be protected against any discrimination. Race-based discrimination is one such type of discrimination, and, especially in a multicultural nation such as Australia, we should all agree that it is unacceptable.

In Darebin itself, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is closely linked to our municipal identity, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the second largest in metropolitan Melbourne, through to the newly arrived communities that have made Darebin their home. So when national research hinted at issues here, Council decided to take a proactive approach. We launched a local Racism Inquiry to investigate and hear from the community about their experiences of racism in our municipality and their ideas to tackle it.

The Racism Inquiry contained positive findings such as the very strong support for cultural diversity in Darebin, and this should be celebrated. But it also pointed how too many individuals and communities in Darebin still experience prejudice, discrimination and racism in employment, education, or simply when walking down the street. This should incite us all to action, because racism has a significant impact not only on the individuals who experience it, but also on the wider community, as it undermines social cohesion and works against our commitment to a diverse and inclusive community.

So Council has decided to take preventive measures: building on the knowledge acquired through our Inquiry and on the work under way at the federal level to develop the National Anti-Racism Strategy, we have created a local response to address race-based discrimination, strengthen community relations and continue to foster harmony and dialogue.

Through this local Anti-Racism Strategy, Council intends to stand up against racism and encourage people to speak out and say racism is unacceptable in Darebin. We are counting on everyone interested and committed to building an inclusive and respectful community where we all feel valued as a citizen regardless of our race, ethnicity, faith, skin colour or accent.

I hope all in Darebin can join in helping Council tackle race-based discrimination and protect our shared values of equality, diversity and a fair go for all.

Mayor Cr Steven Tsitas

2- Background – Key findings from the Darebin City Council Racism Inquiry

Early in 2011 Council was alerted to the findings of a national research project which suggested that the levels of racism in Darebin were higher than the State average, while paradoxically, residents' views of multiculturalism were also more positive than average. It responded by launching a local Racism Inquiry to understand and unpack these findings, investigate race-based discrimination in Darebin and hear from the community about their experiences of racism in our municipality and their ideas to tackle it. The aim was to document experiences in Darebin and gather evidence from citizens (understood as anyone who lives, works, studies or recreates in Darebin), with a view to building a response.

The Inquiry focused on race-based discrimination (whether direct or indirect, interpersonal or institutional¹) i.e. "those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion", with a view of racism as "these behaviours and practices, along with the beliefs and prejudices that underlie them"². This broad definition, inclusive of religion and distinct from a strictly legal definition, was thought to be more reflective of people's understanding and experiences.

The views of the community and results of the Inquiry are presented in the Darebin City Council Racism Inquiry Report 2012.

The report contains positive findings such as the **community's very strong support for cultural diversity** in Australia in general and in Darebin in particular. But it also points to elements of concern. The strong commitment to cultural diversity in principle is at times more uncertain in practice. Some citizens express reservations about aspects of multiculturalism based on perceptions of divergent values and practices amongst and between some groups in the community. Above all, **too many individuals and communities in Darebin still experience prejudice, discrimination and racism** in a number of settings.

In that regard, while the vast majority of Darebin citizens (eight in ten or more) have not personally been victims of racism within the last five years, two in ten have experienced some form of racism or race-based discrimination (name-calling, racist jokes or teasing, but also threats or assault, as well as institutional racism). This is across the whole population, so **for some groups, the proportion is much higher**. The most common experience is being confronted with racist material in the media (almost one in two residents).

The places (settings) **where race-based discrimination occurs most often in Darebin** are:

- the workplace and employment (9% of residents have experienced it there);
- educational settings (8% of residents);
- the public space:
 - o 7% of residents experienced racism in a shop or restaurant;
 - o 7% experienced racism at a sporting or public event;
- at lower levels,
 - o in dealings with agencies or government service providers (4%);
 - o with police (2%);
 - o in the housing market (2%).

Anyone may be a victim of racism and racism might be coming from any group.

¹See definitions in part 3 below

²Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), *Building on our strengths: A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria - Summary report*, Melbourne, 2009

However, the Racism Inquiry found, in keeping with previous studies at the national or state levels, that **those most likely to experience race-based discrimination** are:

- **Indigenous Australians** and;
- those from **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities**.

This is particularly true for:

- Aboriginal members of the community in Darebin;
- refugees or migrants from newly-arrived communities (notably from Africa).

For both these groups, the experience of race-based discrimination is constant and relentless racism: racism is part of everyday life.

In addition to these two particularly affected groups, the citizens more likely to be confronted with race-based discrimination in Darebin are:

- from non-English speaking backgrounds (whether speaking a language other than English at home or born in a non-native English speaking country),
- from a “minority” religious background, notably Muslims,
- younger people and,
- in some cases, women.

“Visible difference” (skin colour / headwear / accent / name...) often acts as a trigger in race-based incidents and how ‘foreign’ a person looks or sounds has an impact on the type and degree of race-based discrimination.

The Racism Inquiry documented how racism often leaves people in Darebin disempowered and not knowing how to react. Citizens conveyed how **racism affects their health as well as their social life**. This is in keeping with the now well-established body of research on the links between race-based discrimination and poor health. Racism also prevents Darebin citizens from fully participating in community and infringes on their human rights.

But **racism does not only have a significant impact on the individuals who experience it**. Research³ has shown that the impact of racism and racial discrimination is multifaceted. In addition to the impact on individuals, there is also a negative impact and cost implication on health services, legal services, community support services, law enforcement agencies and government departments. There is also **an impact at the community level** on community relations and on workplaces with diminished productivity and increased litigation. Racism undermines positive inter-group relations, social inclusion and the attainment of human rights, and destroys community cohesion. Similarly, the Racism Inquiry showed how race-based discrimination also has an impact on the wider community, as it undermines social cohesion and works against Darebin City Council’s commitment to, and Darebin community’s support for, a diverse and inclusive community.

The Darebin Racism Inquiry gives Council **an in-depth understanding of areas where efforts should be increased**, such as the settings where work is most needed and some of the groups that are most affected. It validates Council’s investment in community relations. It also identifies emerging issues. This is why Council is willing to act and **take preventive measures** through this strategy: complementing the work done for the National Anti-Racism Strategy, there is room and a need for **a local response to address race-based discrimination, strengthen community relations and continue to foster harmony and dialogue**.

³See notably VicHealth 2009 (mentioned above) and VicHealth, *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health: Discrimination affecting migrant and refugee communities in Victoria, its health consequences, community attitudes and solutions – A summary report*, Melbourne, 2007.

3- Definitions

3A- Racism and race-based discrimination

Racism can be defined as a set of beliefs and attitudes that consider different races and ethnicities as possessing characteristics that render them either superior or inferior. It reflects, and is perpetuated by, deeply rooted historical, social, cultural and power inequalities in society. Racism asserts the 'natural' superiority of one group over another, used to justify differential treatment and social positions and legitimise their status as either privileged or disadvantaged⁴.

Racial (or race-based) discrimination is the action resulting from racist views, beliefs, policies and programs, i.e. behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion.⁵

3B- Types: direct / indirect / interpersonal / systemic-institutional

Direct (or overt) racial discrimination happens when one person or group of people receive less favourable treatment than another person or group in the same position would have received, on the grounds of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic⁶ origin⁷.

Direct racism can be defined as unequal treatment that results in unequal opportunity or outcome.

Indirect (or covert) racial discrimination includes practices or policies that appear to be 'neutral' or 'fair' because they treat everyone in the same way but adversely affect a higher proportion of people of one racial, cultural or ethnic group. It can occur even when there is no intention to discriminate.⁸

Indirect racism can be defined as equal treatment that results in unequal opportunity.

Interpersonal racism or discrimination occurs when interactions between people result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups. Examples of interpersonal discrimination include bullying, harassment, rudeness, name-calling, over-checking, frequent stopping, verbal or physical abuse, providing bad service, following around in shops, hiring/firing biases in employment and jokes and teasing. As blatantly discriminatory behaviour has become less socially acceptable, discrimination may be expressed in more subtle or passive ways.⁹

Institutional (or systemic) racism refers to forms of racism that are structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when organisations, institutions or governments discriminate, regardless of intention, against certain groups of people (and individuals within these groups). This form of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, so that the practices of that group are seen as the norm to which other cultural practices should conform. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and marginalises others.¹⁰

⁴Adapted from definition from the former Human Rights and Equal opportunity Commission (1998) – now Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

⁵Adapted from VicHealth's work on race-based discrimination (cf. VicHealth 2009 and 2007 above)

⁶This definition, adapted from the legal one, does not explicitly encompass religion, as religious discrimination is usually treated as a separate form of discrimination in legislation and international conventions. However, following VicHealth's practice, in this Strategy, religion is included in race-based discrimination, given the increasing tendency for it to be conflated with ethnicity and culture in popular beliefs and culture.

⁷Adapted from AHRC 1998

⁸Adapted from AHRC 1998

⁹Adapted from VicHealth's work on race-based discrimination (cf. VicHealth 2009 and 2007 above)

¹⁰Adapted from the literature review done for Darebin City Council in preparation for the Racism Inquiry.

4- Darebin City Council Anti-Racism Strategy

4A- Vision / aspiration¹¹

We will work towards becoming a municipality free of racism, where our community's diversity is valued, celebrated, embraced and leveraged.

4B- Principles

The following principles, informed by Darebin citizens' views in the Racism Inquiry and reflecting their expectations, support the Anti-Racism Strategy.

- Take a stand against racism and as a Council, promote zero tolerance towards racism.
- Acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land and respect and recognise their values, culture and practices, including Aboriginal communities' continuing spiritual connection to the land and their right to self-determination.
- Celebrate all of Darebin's diverse cultures; value diversity at all levels of the community and institutions and promote dialogue between different cultures through interculturalism.
- Work from a human rights perspective.
- Work in partnership with the community to address racism:
 - o Council should be accountable to the community and committed to tackling racism;
 - o anti-racism initiatives should be developed ideally within a collaborative approach (as defined in Council's Community Engagement Framework).
- Base all activities and initiatives on evidence and best practice, which implies keeping up-to-date with research and the growing evidence-base and reviewing our actions in that light.
- Empower the community and build its capacity to respond to racism.
- Recognise that "integration is a two-way street" and work with both established communities to be more welcoming and new arrivals to assist with integration.
- Build a Council reflective of its community diversity.

4C- Legal and policy framework

The Anti-Racism Strategy is underpinned by the Australian value of "a fair go" for all and by the work conducted at all levels of government. It is worth recalling that, in 1975, Australia ratified the *International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, which commits its members to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among all.

At the national level, the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy builds on Commonwealth legislative requirements and protections, notably the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*¹², which aims to ensure that people of all backgrounds are treated equally and have the same opportunities and makes discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful; the *Racial Hatred Act 1995*; and section 351 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*. The Strategy also aims to complement at a local level the work undertaken as part of the new national

¹¹This vision stems from community voices in the Racism Inquiry.

¹²For more information on your rights under this Act, see the Australian Human Rights Commission – <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>

multicultural policy *The People of Australia*, notably the National Anti-Racism Strategy.

At the state level, the Strategy builds on the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* and its commitment to recognise the social, cultural and economic contributions of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to Victoria, and on the legislative framework provided by the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (amended 2006)*, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*¹³.

- The *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* makes it against the law to vilify (i.e. incite hatred of, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of) a person or group of people because of their race or religion.
- The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* not only prohibits discrimination on the basis of race (including colour, descent or ancestry, nationality or ethnic background) in areas of public life (accommodation, clubs, education, employment, goods and services, land sales and transfers, local government, sport...), but also places a positive duty on organisations to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination (as well as sexual harassment and victimisation). This is about **addressing the systemic causes of discrimination**: just like occupational health and safety laws require employers to take appropriate steps to improve their systems, policies and practices so injuries don't occur, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* gives organisations an obligation to be proactive about discrimination and take steps to prevent discrimination from occurring.
- The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It aims to build a fairer, more inclusive community by requiring that public authorities consider human rights when they develop policies or provide services. Human rights are basic entitlements that belong to every one of us, regardless of our background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or believe. Based on the values of freedom, equality, respect and dignity, human rights acknowledge the fundamental worth of each person. They are the cornerstone of strong, healthy communities where everyone can participate and be included.

At a local level, the Anti-Racism Strategy is aligned with the explicit support for diversity expressed in *Darebin City Council Plan 2009-2013* and with the *Equity and Inclusion Policy*, which provides a longer term framework for delivery of Council's policies and actions aimed at improving the inclusion of all residents within Council workforce, within Council services and programs, and within our community.

4D- Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy goals¹⁴ and related objectives

1- To build an inclusive and reflective organisation within Council¹⁵

Aligned Anti-Racism Strategy **high-level objective**: to build an organisation that promotes freedom from racism and race-based discrimination and harnesses its staff's diversity.

2- To build equitable and inclusive services and programs¹⁶

¹³For more information on your rights under these two important Acts, see the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – <http://www.humanrightscmission.vic.gov.au>

¹⁴These goals are linked to Council's Equity and Inclusion policy.

¹⁵Equity and Inclusion Policy: To build an organisation that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin's diverse communities, where social justice, accountability, participation, empowerment, human rights and diversity are core principles which inform all of our internal and external policies, practices and business.

¹⁶Equity and Inclusion Policy: To build services and programs that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable, which respond to the diversity of needs, rights and priorities in our communities.

Aligned Anti-Racism Strategy **high-level objective**: to deliver services and programs that are free from racism and race-based discrimination and accessible and appropriate to all.

3- To contribute to an inclusive and empowered Darebin community¹⁷

Aligned Anti-Racism Strategy **high-level objective**: to contribute to a community where racism and race-based discrimination are not accepted and where there is a shared vision that citizens should be free from racism and race-based discrimination.

To achieve these goals and high-level objectives, the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy will focus and act on the following large areas of work¹⁸, which were identified through the Racism Inquiry as areas of concern but also of opportunities.

Inclusive and reflective organisation	Inclusive and equitable services and programs	Inclusive and empowered community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o recruitment o retention o career development o flexible work arrangements - Training - Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o internally o externally o reflective of diversity o informative about race-based discrimination, its impact, the law and potential responses - Data-collection and research - Consistent application of the EIPAT¹⁹ to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o assess impact of policies and practices on race-based discrimination and cultural diversity o audit Council practices and policies o evaluate outcomes of services and programs - Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o join the Coalition of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible and welcoming services and programs - Culturally-appropriate services and programs - Targeted and tailored services and programs - Inclusive services and programs through the application of EIPAT for service planning, development and implementation - Community engagement (consistent with Council's Community Engagement Framework) in development of services and programs - Audit of services through the application of EIPAT - Explore resource distribution to address race-based discrimination (use of funding, notably community grants, as a tool to address and redress race-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge and celebrate the traditional owners of the land - Community celebration and community building through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o events and festivals o arts and culture o sports - Interculturalism - Empower the community to respond to racism, notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o women o bystander o youth - Education – work with schools on issues of race-based discrimination - Public education and awareness-raising about racism and race-based discrimination - Partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o with relevant agencies and community organisations across the municipality o regionally and at the state level

¹⁷Equity and Inclusion policy: To contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities by facilitating equitable opportunities for all people to be heard, connected, respected and supported to participate in community life and in decisions important to their lives.

¹⁸In VicHealth's *Building on our strengths framework* (2009 – above), areas for action include: organisational development / communication and social marketing / research, evaluation and monitoring /legislative and policy reform /direct participation programs / community strengthening / advocacy.

Apart from legislative reform (which falls outside of Council's role), all these areas are covered in the Anti-Racism Strategy.

¹⁹EIPAT: Equity and Inclusion Planning and Audit Tool linked to the Equity and Inclusion policy.

<p>Cities against Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific²⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ take a stand against racism ○ work on symbolism, images, reputation, branding, marketing as well as welcoming physical environment ○ reward staff efforts in addressing racism / promote internal best practices <p>- Council advocacy to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State and federal levels ○ other institutions (police, transport companies, education institutions, hospitals) ○ businesses (including real estate) ○ media ○ on behalf of affected citizens 	<p>discrimination)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include a social inclusion clause when tendering out services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work on race-based discrimination in the public space, notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ safety issues ○ in venues - Reward projects and community efforts that address racism and race-based discrimination
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4E- Actions

The Anti-Racism Strategy will be implemented through multiple actions plans:

- Aboriginal Action Plan (AAP)
- Multicultural Action Plan (MAP)
- Human Rights Action Plan (HRAP)

and in articulation with:

- Community Safety Strategy
- Community Engagement Framework
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (to be developed)
- CALD Communication Strategy

The actions will reflect the community's expectations expressed in the Racism Inquiry and draw on Darebin's citizens suggestions and recommendations. They will also rely and build on the following themes, identified in VicHealth's framework for action:

- increasing empathy;
- raising awareness;
- providing accurate information;

²⁰Commitments when joining the Coalition include:

1. assessing racism and discrimination and monitoring municipal policies
2. providing political leadership at the city and community levels to address issues of discrimination and exclusion
3. promoting an inclusive society
4. strengthening support for the victims of racism and discrimination
5. facilitating greater participation and the empowerment of city dwellers through access to information
6. promoting the city as an equal opportunities employer and service provider
7. promoting the city as an active supporter of equal opportunities practices
8. challenging racism and discrimination through education
9. promoting cultural diversity
10. preventing and overcoming racist incitement and related violence

- breaking down barriers between groups;
- increasing personal and organisational accountability;
- promoting positive social norms.

They will also draw on some of the *Challenging Racism Project*²¹ “practical anti-racism initiatives and strategies that local governments and individuals can access and use to address cultural prejudices in their own backyards” that cut across the areas of work and principles defined for Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy:

- celebrate cultural diversity;²²
- engage local residents in conversations and consultations;²³
- identify positive commonalities and diversities;
- promote cross-cultural contacts, develop experiences of positive cross-cultural contact and work on religious beliefs;²⁴
- respect and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land;
- use social marketing and media;
- provide accurate information to dispel ‘false beliefs’;
- address racism structurally and institutionally;
- promote everyday anti-racism;²⁵
- take gender into account;²⁶
- take the local social and cultural context into account and tailor actions to the needs of the locality.²⁷

4F- Evaluation and monitoring

When implementing any anti-racism strategies or initiatives, it is important to conduct evaluations of their effectiveness, but also to conceive of the impacts of the initiatives in a broad way. For example, there could be changes in the levels of public awareness, or policy changes, or increases in the number of local activists²⁸.

To assess the success of this Anti-Racism Strategy, it is important we monitor and know whether we are making progress. In that regard, quantitative data might not be the best measure and it will be important to rely on qualitative data, notably collected through monitoring and evaluation of the action plans implementing the strategy, as well as close links with other agencies and organisations, allowing for second-hand feedback.

In any case, evaluation and monitoring of the Strategy will be undertaken through the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms included in each action plan, including an annual review of actions and priorities.

Monitoring will also be further supported through ongoing activities of the Anti-Racism Steering Committee which will continue to meet twice annually as a collaborative, multi-stakeholder group.

Maintaining a high level of activity around anti-racism will be paramount to achieve change and one indirect indicator of success in the medium term.

²¹University of Western Sydney, Challenging Racism Project, accessible on:

http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school_of_social_sciences_and_psychology/research/challenging_racism

²²Cf. community celebration in this Strategy

²³Cf. community engagement commitment in the Strategy, in line with the Darebin Community Engagement Framework

²⁴Cf. interculturalism, including the promotion of interfaith dialogue

²⁵Cf. bystander anti-racism

²⁶Cf. empowerment of women

²⁷Which is the very aim of this local Anti-Racism Strategy.

²⁸Cf. Challenging Racism Project – Types of Anti-Racism #8 - evaluation