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'Council should use resources to build bridges and help people find commonalities; fund projects that focus on similarities and underline our shared "humanness"."
Foreword

The work that Darebin City Council has done in producing an Anti-Racism Strategy is critical. It meets the requirements of the National Anti-Racism Strategy which is to identify a problem, name it and then work out what is going to be done about it. I congratulate and commend the Council on taking on this task and for the important initiatives that are identified in the Darebin City Council plan.

I confess to a bit of a soft spot about Darebin City Council. I was privileged to be a Preston City Councillor back in the 1980’s and I can attest to the proud tradition and history of the Council being a truly multicultural area. This richness and diversity has been a part of the council’s history and no doubt leads to the strength of leadership that it currently shows.

The development of this strategy is important—it builds on a strong evidence base where people from across the council have been consulted, it identifies the extent of the challenges and also the public places where these events occur, it draws authority from the elected representatives of the council taking on the challenge and it draws on partnerships to build a strong and cohesive community in the Darebin area.

Congratulations to all involved in the development of this plan and I look forward to hearing of its progress.

Dr Helen Szoke—Race Discrimination Commissioner

Darebin has a rich cultural, religious and linguistic heritage, stemming from the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people, the contributions of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the various communities that have made Darebin their home.

In early 2011, national research suggested that levels of racism in Darebin were higher than the State average. Council reacted by launching a local Racism Inquiry.

The Racism Inquiry contained positive findings such as the very strong support for cultural diversity in Darebin, which should be celebrated. But it also pointed out that too many individuals and communities in Darebin still experience prejudice, discrimination and racism in employment, education or when simply walking down the street.

Through its Anti-Racism Strategy, Council intends to counter racism and implement a number of actions in partnership with the community to ensure that the Darebin diversity heritage continues to be valued, cherished, celebrated, respected and leveraged as Darebin’s major asset.

Rasiah Dev—Chief Executive
Background

Key Findings from Darebin 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.

Council 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 with a view to building a response.
The Inquiry focused on race-based discrimination (whether direct or indirect, interpersonal or institutional) 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”. 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);
- educational settings (8% of residents);
- the public space:
  - 7% of residents experienced racism in a shop or restaurant;
  - 7% experienced racism at a sporting or public event;
- at lower levels,
  - in dealings with agencies or government service providers (4%);
  - with police (2%);
  - in the housing market (2%).

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

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. Research\(^3\) 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 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.

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Definitions

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 disadvantaged.\(^4\)

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.\(^5\)

Types of Racism

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 ethnic\(^6\) origin.\(^7\)

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.\(^10\)

\(^4\) Adapted from definition from the former Human Rights and Equal opportunity Commission (1998) – now Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
\(^5\) Adapted from VicHealth’s work on race-based discrimination (cf. VicHealth 2009 and 2007 above)
\(^6\) This 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.
\(^7\) Adapted from AHRC 1998
\(^8\) Adapted from AHRC 1998
\(^9\) Adapted from VicHealth’s work on race-based discrimination (cf. VicHealth 2009 and 2007 above)
\(^10\) Adapted from the literature review done for Darebin City Council in preparation for the Racism Inquiry.
Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy

VISION

We will work towards a racism-free Darebin, where our community’s diversity is valued, celebrated, respected, embraced and leveraged.

This vision stems from community voices in the Racism Inquiry.

‘Council’s arts funding, and not just the Community grants, should focus on addressing racism and fostering understanding.’

Darebin Community Member
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 Aboriginal communities’ values, culture and practices, including their 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:
  » Council should be accountable to the community and committed to tackling racism;
  » anti-racism initiatives should be developed ideally within a collaborative approach (as defined in Council’s Community Engagement Framework 2012–2017).

• **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 and new arrivals, to be more welcoming and to assist with integration.

• **BUILD** a Council reflective of its community’s diversity.
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.

National Level
At the national level, the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy builds on Commonwealth legislative requirements and protections, notably the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, 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 multicultural policy The People of Australia, notably the National Anti-Racism Strategy.

State Level
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.

Local Level
At a local level, the Anti-Racism Strategy is aligned with the explicit support for diversity expressed in the Darebin Equity and Inclusion Policy 2012–2015, which provides a longer term framework for delivery of Council’s policies and actions aimed at improving the inclusion of all residents within Council’s workforce, within Council’s services and programs, and within Darebin community.

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12 For more information on your rights under this Act, see the Australian Human Rights Commission — www.hreoc.gov.au

13 For more information on your rights under these two important Acts, see the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission—www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au
Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy Goals and Objectives

Objective: To build an organisation that promotes freedom from racism and race-based discrimination and harnesses its staff’s diversity.

Objective: To develop and deliver services and programs that are free from racism and race-based discrimination and accessible and appropriate to all.

Objective: To foster a community where racism and race-based discrimination are not acceptable and where there is a shared vision that citizens should be free from racism.

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

15 Equity 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.

16 Equity 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.

17 Equity 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.
To achieve these goals and objectives, the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy will focus and act on the following strategic areas of work, which were identified through the Racism Inquiry as areas of concern but also of opportunities.

18 In VicHealth’s Building on our strengths framework (2009), 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.

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

20 Commitments 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

COUNCIL
To be inclusive and reflective of the community it serves.

OBJECTIVE:
To build an organisation that promotes freedom from racism and race-based discrimination and harnesses its staff’s diversity.

STRATEGIES:
- Employment
  » recruitment
  » retention
  » career development
  » flexible work arrangements
- Training
- Communication
  » internally
  » externally
  » reflective of diversity
  » informative about race-based discrimination, its impact, the law and potential responses
- Data-collection and research
- Consistent application of the EIPAT to:
  » assess impact of policies and practices on race-based discrimination and cultural diversity
  » audit Council practices and policies
  » evaluate outcomes of services and programs
- Leadership
  » join the Coalition of Cities against Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific
  » 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
- Council advocacy
  » to state and federal levels
  » to other institutions (police, transport companies, education institutions, hospitals)
  » to businesses (including real estate)
  » to media and
  » on behalf of affected citizens
OBJECTIVE:
To develop and deliver services and programs that are free from racism and race-based discrimination and accessible and appropriate to all.

STRATEGIES:
• 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 discrimination)
• Include a social inclusion clause when tendering out services

SERVICES
To provide inclusive, responsive and accessible services.

OBJECTIVE:
To foster a community where racism and race-based discrimination are not acceptable and where there is a shared vision that citizens should be free from racism.

STRATEGIES:
• Acknowledge and celebrate the traditional owners of the land
• Community celebration and community building through:
  » events and festivals
  » arts and culture
  » sports
• Interculturalism
• Empower the community to respond to racism, and especially empower:
  » women
  » bystander
  » youth
• Education – work with schools on issues of race-based discrimination
• Public education and awareness-raising about racism and race-based discrimination
• Partnerships
  » with relevant agencies and community organisations across the municipality
  » regionally and at the state level
• Work on race-based discrimination in the public space, notably
  » on safety issues and
  » in venues
• Reward projects and community efforts that address racism and race-based discrimination

OUR COMMUNITY
To foster an inclusive and empowered Community.
The Anti-Racism Strategy will be implemented through multiple actions plans:

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

as well as:

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

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;
- 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’s practical anti-racism initiatives and strategies that local governments and individuals can access and use to address cultural prejudices in their own backyards. They will also draw on some of the Challenging Racism Project’s practical anti-racism initiatives and strategies that local governments and individuals can access and use to address cultural prejudices in their own backyards. They will also draw on some of the Challenging Racism Project’s practical anti-racism initiatives and strategies that local governments and individuals can access and use to address cultural prejudices in their own backyards:

- celebrate cultural diversity;
- engage local residents in conversations and consultations;
- identify positive commonalities and diversities;
- promote cross-cultural contacts, develop experiences of positive cross-cultural contact and work on religious beliefs.
- 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;
- take gender into account;
- take the local social and cultural context into account and tailor actions to the needs of the locality.

“We might go to Council more if we were feeling comfortable walking in a local government.”

Aboriginal Community Member

21 University of Western Sydney, Challenging Racism Project, accessible on:
22 Cf. community celebration in this Strategy
23 Cf. community engagement commitment in the Strategy, in line with the Darebin Community Engagement Framework
24 Cf. interculturalism, including the promotion of interfaith dialogue
25 Cf. bystander anti-racism
26 Cf. empowerment of women
27 Which is the very aim of this local Anti-Racism Strategy.
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 advocates.\(^{28}\)

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 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.

\(^{28}\) Cf. Challenging Racism Project—Types of Anti-Racism #8, evaluation
Darebin City Council has developed a strategy to help reduce and eliminate racism and racial discrimination. If you would like to know more about the Strategy, call the Multilingual Line on 8470 8470 and ask to be connected to the Equity and Diversity Coordinator.

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