

Bystander Anti-Racism Training fact sheet.

"The first step to solving any problem is to understand it exists. When people keep denying racism exists, a climate develops where racist behaviours become normalised".¹

Racism can appear at all levels of society. We should take collective responsibility in challenging racism whether it be systemic, interpersonal, or internalised.

How do we define and understand racism?

Racism maintains and exacerbates avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources, and opportunities across racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious groups in society.²

Racism can be expressed overtly or covertly through:

- Beliefs (i.e., negative, and inaccurate stereotypes).
- Emotions (i.e., fear, hatred, or contempt towards another group).
- Behaviours/practices (i.e., unfair treatment, exclusion, or abuse).³

Racism can operate in multiple ways, including:

- Systemic racism: the formal practices, policies, processes, and conditions that serve to differentiate power between racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious groups within organisations and institutions.⁴
- Interpersonal racism: where prejudiced and discriminatory interactions occur between people.
- Internalised racism: where stigmatised groups accept and internalise negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth.

What are the impacts of racism?

The impacts of racism are far-reaching and can have the following negative impacts on a person's:

- Health and well-being.
- Feelings of safety and mobility.
- Educational and employment outcomes.
- Accessibility to housing, healthcare, and other essential services.

On a broader level, racism also has far-reaching impacts on inter-group relations, social cohesion, multicultural agendas, and international relationship.



Obstacles that stop us from challenging racism

Bystanders who witness racism may be faced with several obstacles, whether their instinct is to act or not.

These obstacles include:

- Lack of confidence and skills in knowing how to intervene.
- Feeling unsafe and thinking the perpetrator will act aggressively.
- Feeling that it's none of their business to get involved.⁵
- Denial of racism.

Denial of racism is seen to be a key feature of modern racism. It occurs in the individual, institutional and political spheres. When we refuse to acknowledge racism or when we refuse to take responsibility for racism, it is referred to as denial. Denial of racism is just as damaging as direct racism.⁶

What is Bystander Anti-Racism?

Bystander anti-racism is when a person or persons witness racism and take action in response to the racist incident.

Actions can include speaking to the perpetrator(s), speaking against racism, and/or supporting others in responding (either directly or indirectly, immediately or later) against interpersonal or systemic racism.⁷

The purpose of performing a bystander anti-racism action is to:

- Stop the perpetuation of racism.
- Prevent physical, psychological, and social harms that may result from racism.
- Strengthen broader social norms promoting intolerance of racism and offer help to those affected by racism.

Bystander anti-racism intervention works to support the victim of racism and reduce the burden of responding away from the victims to witnesses or bystanders to the incident.

How can I support someone who has experienced racism?

There is always a way of intervening to disrupt racism. Remember to consider the situation you are in and the people you are with to guide you in responding most effectively.

You can respond immediately or later, depending on the situation.

Here are some options you can consider:

- **Reach out to the target of racism.** Check how they are and what kind of support they need.



- **Call it out** – if it is safe to do so. Let the perpetrator of the racist incident know that what they said made you feel uncomfortable and offended. Appeal to their better sense of self and let them know you didn't expect such narrow or prejudiced views from them.
- **Report it** – collect and document evidence of the racist incident and ensure it is reported to the appropriate authority. Make sure you have the consent of the target where possible to ensure they are ready to deal with the complaints process.
- **Raise awareness** – have important conversations with colleagues, family, and community to raise awareness of the damaging impacts of racism and talk about different ways racism can be stopped.⁸
- **Make changes** – you can influence policy and procedure within the organisation(s) you work and volunteer in. Ensure the organisation you are involved in offers a safe place for all to be treated with dignity, respect, and justice.

The Law and Racism

The Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin, or immigrant status. The RDA protects people from racial discrimination in many areas of public life, including employment, education, getting or using services, renting, or buying property and accessing public places.⁹

Under the RDA, it is unlawful to do or say something in public that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate a person or group because of their race, colour, or national or ethnic origin. This behaviour is called racial hatred. A person who subjects another person to racially offensive behaviour is primarily responsible for their behaviour. Employers can also be held responsible – or vicariously liable – for acts of racial hatred by their employees or agents.¹⁰

We are always Better Together

This document was prepared by Zarlisht Sarwari (Challenging Racism Project, Western Sydney University) in November 2022.

For more information:

- Visit the Challenging Racism Project [website](#).
- Contact the Georges River Council, to find out how you can support the [Better Together initiative](#):
 - Via email: communitycapacitybuilding@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au
 - Via phone: (02) 9330 6400.

If you witness or experience racism, you may want to report it, seek support, or support those who have been negatively impacted.

1. Call 000 in an emergency
2. Call Crime Stoppers: 1800 333 000
3. Report in person to any police station.



Lodging a complaint about racism or discrimination with the Australian Human Rights Commission:

Phone	Info line: 1300 656 419 (local call) TTY: 1800 620 241 (toll free)
Email	complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au
Post	Australian Human Rights Commission GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001
Online	Complaints Australian Human Rights Commission

You can also report racism in the following ways:

Office of the eSafety Commissioner	For an incident that takes place online.
Anti-Discrimination NSW	If you believe that you have experienced discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification or victimisation, you can make a complaint. You must put your complaint in writing.
Call It Out / The First Nations Racism Register	The First Nations Racism Register is a simple and secure way for people to report incidents of racism and discrimination towards First Nations Peoples.
Islamophobia Register	Making a report to the Islamophobia Register does not involve a formal investigation, however it is a secure reporting mechanism to build knowledge around incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments that are occurring across Australia.
Asian Australian Alliance Register	You can complete the COVID-19 Racism Incident Report to help collect data around incidents of racism for Australians who are of Asian background.

References

- ¹ Quote from documentary, *'Is Australia Racist'*, SBS, 2016.
- ² Gabrielle Berman & Yin Paradies (2010) "Racism, disadvantage and multiculturalism: towards effective anti-racist praxis", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:2, 214-232.
- ³ Berman & Paradise (2010), op. cit.
- ⁴ Berman & Paradies (2010), op. cit.
- ⁵ Jacqueline K. Nelson, Kevin M. Dunn & Yin Paradies, 2011, "Bystander Anti-Racism: A Review of the Literature", *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 263—284.
- ⁶ Teun A. van Dijk, 1992, "Discourse and the denial of racism", *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1992), pp. 87-118.
- ⁷ Jacqueline K. Nelson, Kevin M. Dunn & Yin Paradies, 2011, "Bystander Anti-Racism: A Review of the Literature", *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 263—284.
- ⁸ Nelson, Dunn & Paradies, 2011, op. cit.
- ⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Website, <https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12083>, accessed October 2022.
- ¹⁰ AHRC Website, op. cit.