



**Victorian Equal Opportunity  
& Human Rights Commission**

**Reducing**

**Racism**

**Phase 2**

**IMPACT REPORT 2020-2021**

Published by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission,  
Level 3, 204 Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria, 3053. January 2022.

### Contact us

Enquiry Line	1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583
Fax	1300 891 858
NRS Voice Relay	1300 555 727 then quote 1300 292 153
Interpreters	1300 152 494
Email	<a href="mailto:enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au">enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au">www.humanrights.vic.gov.au</a>

### Reducing Racism Phase 2 Impact Report 2020-2021

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Copyright © State of Victoria, January 2022

This publication is copyright. No part of it may be reproduced by any process except with permission from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) or in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

On request the Commission may give permission for this material to be reproduced provided it is for a purpose consistent with the objectives of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 or the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 and the Commission is acknowledged as the source.

Contact [communications@veohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:communications@veohrc.vic.gov.au) for permission to reproduce material from the publication.

### Privacy

The Commission complies with Victorian privacy laws and the confidentiality provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act. Our privacy policy is available online at [humanrightscscommission.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://humanrightscscommission.vic.gov.au/privacy) or by contacting us.

### Disclaimer

This information is intended as a guide only. It is not a substitute for legal advice.



# **Reducing Racism Phase 2**





# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Deliverable 1: Empowering communities to understand and exercise their rights</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) Actions	12
(b) Outcomes and impact	15
<b>Deliverable 2: Partnering with councils and identified service providers working with multicultural and multifaith communities</b>	<b>18</b>
(a) Actions	20
(b) Outcomes and impact	21
<b>Deliverable 3: Adopting digital strategies to encourage increased reporting of racism</b>	<b>24</b>
(a) Actions	26
(b) Outcomes and impact	29
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Enquires and Complaints Data 2020-2021</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix 2: CRT Data 2020-2021</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Program Logic</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates Course Survey Results</b>	<b>38</b>

# Executive Summary

**// Regardless of where you're from, what you look like, what you believe or what language you speak, no one should have to endure racism in the place they call home.**

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) was funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet) to deliver a significant project known as the Reducing Racism project (the project).

To support the Victorian Government's overarching *Multicultural policy statement* – Victorian. And proud of it – the project seeks to empower multicultural and multifaith communities to respond to racism in Victoria. Specifically, the Reducing Racism project deliverables contribute to:

- **cultural connection** – ensuring people can identify with their culture and be proud of their identity
- **genuine equality** – helping people understand and exercise their equal rights under the law and live free from discrimination.<sup>1</sup>

The project is also aligned to the Commission's *Strategic priority: Reduce racism* in its five-year Strategic Plan 2017–22 and constitutes a core part of the Commission's four-year Multicultural and Multifaith Engagement Action Plan 2018–22, under which we have committed to increasing understanding within the broader Victorian community of the harm caused by racism and of the need to stand up to racism. The Multicultural and Multifaith Engagement Action Plan has three objectives:

- Deepening our partnerships and engagement with multicultural and multifaith organisations
- Empowering multicultural and multifaith individuals to understand and exercise their rights
- Adopting digital strategies to encourage increased reporting of racism

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2020-21

Over four years, the Commission has worked to make it easier for communities to report racism and exercise their rights. In Phase 1 of the project (2018–2019), the Commission collaborated with African and Muslim communities in understanding and exercising their rights and developed the *community reporting tool (CRT)* to increase reporting of racism to the Commission.

Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project commenced in late May 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. While racism and experiences of unfair treatment because of race are persistent issues reported to the Commission, the increased prevalence of racism and xenophobia has been a worrying trend throughout the pandemic. To respond to immediate community needs related to the pandemic, the Commission engaged deeply with multicultural and multifaith communities across Victoria to understand the impacts of COVID-19 related racism and to support individuals who have been discriminated against based on their race.

A key concern raised across consultations and engagement was the significant barriers to reporting racism. Obstacles to reporting include:

- Lack of knowledge about where and how to make a report
- Limited understanding of Victoria’s anti-discrimination and anti-vilification laws
- Reduced confidence in public authorities to provide an adequate response (inclusive of institutional race discrimination)
- Mental health impacts of racism resulting in trauma and fear of victimisation

The Commission was uniquely positioned to respond to the issue and recalibrated the Reducing Racism project to focus efforts to support communities with the greatest need by investing in the creation of digital engagement initiatives during a period of mandated social-distancing and self-isolation practices.

As such, the objectives and deliverables under the project were redefined to empower multicultural and multifaith communities to engage readily with online resources, support and reporting mechanisms in an ongoing context of social distancing so as to respond to racism.

The project deliverables for Phase 2 are:

**1. Empower identified, vulnerable communities experiencing racism, religious discrimination, and racial and religious vilification to understand and exercise their rights, including reporting instances of racism, discrimination and vilification, through:**

- increased engagement of multicultural communities with the Commission’s services
- greater access to reliable information on racism
- wider reach through online and after-hours delivery.

#### ✓ **ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE**

- The Commission worked closely with local governments and cultural and religious organisations to deliver virtual information sessions to community members across Victoria.
- 1249 participants across 52 racism information sessions were reached.
- 98 per cent of participants in Commission and Victorian Multicultural Commission sessions increased their understanding of their rights and ability to report instances of racism, discrimination and vilification.

**2. Partner with councils and identified service providers working with multicultural communities to build organisational capacity in using human rights and equality law to respond to racism under the Equal Opportunity Act and the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act through:**

- increased engagement with rights holders and duty bearers
- increased awareness of strategies to combat racism
- increased requests for education on racism
- deeper understanding and dialogue on racism.

✓ **ACHIEVEMENTS  
AT A GLANCE**

- The Commission used a place-based approach to implement strategies to respond to locally identified drivers of racism in four local government areas.
- The Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates course was delivered to 144 participants across 11 courses.
- 98 per cent of participants increased their confidence to identify racism and their knowledge of the Commission's functions, services and laws.
- 92 per cent of participants would report racism (up from 58%) following completion of the course.

**3. Increase reporting of racism, discrimination and vilification to the Commission through the development of digital strategies to encourage reporting via the CRT through:**

- production of innovative and engaging content
- broader reach of authoritative key messages
- stronger evidence base of prevalence and harm of racism.

✓ **ACHIEVEMENTS  
AT A GLANCE**

- The CRT was improved and broadly promoted.
- Over 59,000 individuals were reached through the racism social media awareness campaign and content was shared 297 times.
- Twenty-five organisations now host the CRT on their websites.
- A racism information chatbot prototype has been created.
- The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council has collaborated with the Commission to create 24 in-language podcasts.

Using a participatory and culturally informed approach, the Commission has worked with multicultural and multifaith communities to educate, understand and support communities and individuals affected by racism to take action and access support.

## **Next Steps**

The Commission has a significant role to play in protecting the rights of multicultural and multifaith communities in Victoria. Phase 2 of the project has reinforced sustained community engagement with and access to culturally safe services to support communities and individuals affected by racism to take action. Based on the key impacts and outcomes of the project, the Commission makes five priority recommendations for the next phase the project:

### **Recommendation 1**

Build on support to multicultural rights holders, and expand to First Nations peoples, to have a contemporary understanding of racism and vilification, and empower them to take action against racism and vilification, including reporting, through information programs to communities experiencing racism.

### **Recommendation 2**

Continue partnerships with organisations to expand the reach of information programs and fund the development of digital and translated information products.

### **Recommendation 3**

Facilitate a community of practice with key government and non-government agencies to create opportunities for coordination, learning, building capability and sharing of knowledge on how to combat racism.

### **Recommendation 4**

Extend the capacity development programs for local government and selected public authorities to take action to build inclusion and eliminate racism and vilification so as to drive leading change and advocacy, and to develop digital education and information products for duty holders.

### **Recommendation 5**

Consult with the Victorian community and build awareness of race discrimination as part of Victoria's anti-racism strategy.

# Background

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) was funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet) to deliver Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project (the project) from mid-2020 to the end of 2021.

The project is a multiyear program of work commencing in 2018 to support multicultural communities in understanding and exercising their rights and to make it easier to report racism. Under Phase 1 of the project, which concluded in December 2019, the Commission collaborated with African and Muslim communities on initiatives designed to help them better understand and exercise their rights. Phase 1 also developed the community reporting tool (CRT) to provide a simple and accessible way for people to report incidents of racism to the Commission without having to submit a formal complaint.

Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project commenced in late May 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this period, racism remained among the most common issues reported to the Commission.<sup>2</sup> To ensure the Commission has been responsive to the needs of multicultural and multifaith communities as the public health emergency has evolved, the project adapted the mode of delivery to online and recalibrated objective 3 of the program to engage more with online resources, support and reporting mechanisms.

The overarching objectives of Phase 2 are:

Initial Project Objectives	Adjusted Project Objectives
<b>1</b> Empower identified, vulnerable communities experiencing racism, religious discrimination, and racial and religious vilification to understand and exercise their rights, including reporting instances of racism, discrimination and vilification	Unchanged
<b>2</b> Support councils and employers in identified regions to meet their positive duty and other legal obligations under the Equal Opportunity Act and the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act.	Partner with councils and identified service providers working with multicultural communities to build organisational capacity in using human rights and equality law to respond to racism under the Equal Opportunity Act and the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act.
<b>3</b> Increase people's reporting of racism, discrimination and vilification to the Commission through the enhancement and expansion of the CRT.	Increase reporting of racism, discrimination and vilification to the Commission through the development of digital strategies to encourage reporting via the CRT.

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2020-21

The Commission designed these deliverables to generate impacts and outcomes that contribute directly to the Victorian Government's overarching *Multicultural policy statement* – Victorian. And proud of it. Specifically, the project deliverables contribute to:

- **cultural connection** – ensuring people can identify with their culture and be proud of their identity
- **genuine equality** – helping people understand and exercise their equal rights under the law and live free from discrimination.

The project has enabled the Commission to exercise its education and information functions under the:

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter).

The project is also aligned to the Commission's *Strategic priority: Reduce racism* in its five-year Strategic Plan 2017–22 and constitutes a core part of the Commission's four-year Multicultural and Multifaith Engagement Action Plan 2018–22.

This report provides an overview of the impact achieved through Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project deliverables and an outline of the project's alignment with the Victorian Government's multicultural policy instruments.



# **Deliverable 1**

**Empowering  
communities  
to understand  
and exercise  
their rights**





## ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

- The Commission worked closely with local governments and cultural and religious organisations to deliver virtual information sessions to community members across Victoria.
- 1249 participants across 52 racism information sessions were reached.
- 98 per cent of participants in Commission and Victorian Multicultural Commission sessions increased their understanding of their rights and their ability to report instances of racism, discrimination and vilification.

### Strategic outcomes

Under this deliverable, the Commission empowered targeted communities experiencing racism, religious discrimination, and racial and religious vilification to exercise their rights and report racism and to access the services of the Commission.

This outcome contributes directly to the Victorian Government's forthcoming anti-racism strategy under the *Multicultural policy statement* for **genuine equality**, whereby people understand and exercise their equal rights under the law and live free from discrimination.

**A key objective of the Reducing Racism project is to empower targeted communities experiencing racism, religious discrimination, and racial and religious vilification to exercise their rights and report racism. Building upon the co-design and delivery approach begun in Phase 1 of the project, the Commission has provided multicultural communities across Victoria with information to understand their rights, navigate Victoria's anti-discrimination laws and make a complaint if they experience racism.**

### **(a) Actions**

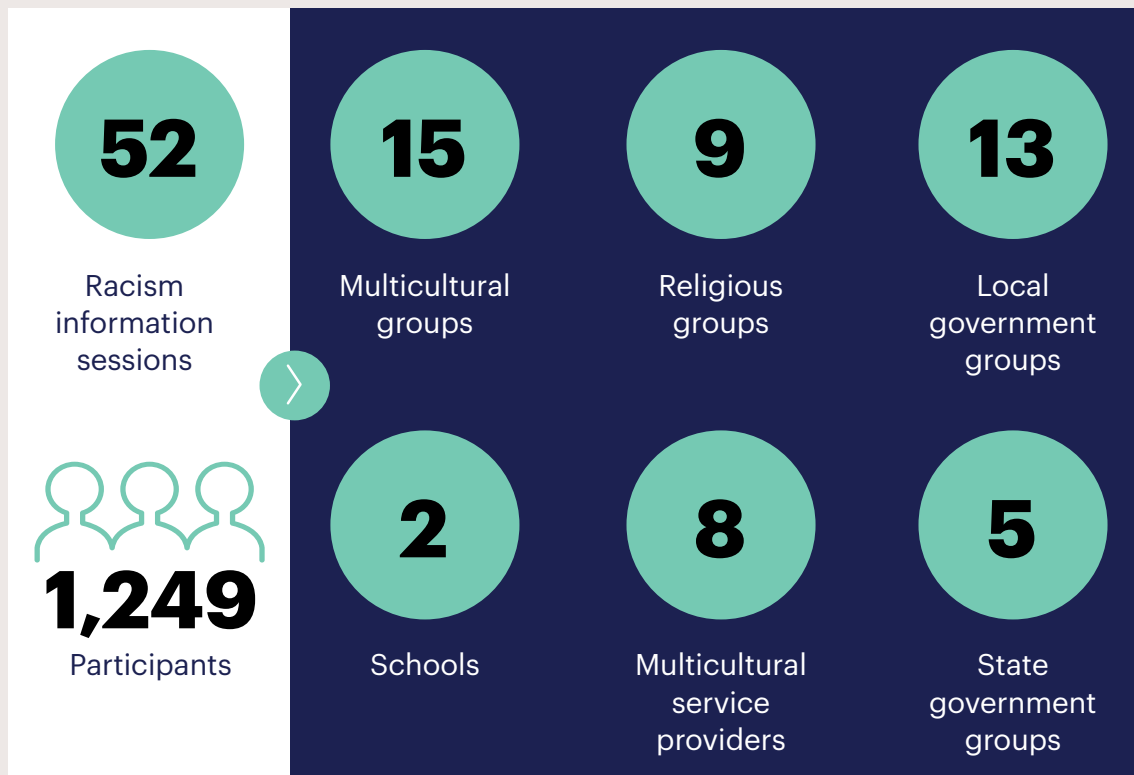
As a result of increased experiences of racism during the pandemic, the Commission ran a series of consultations with community groups and peak multicultural and multifaith organisations so as to understand the need in the community to respond to racism. Feedback in early 2020 identified that community groups lacked awareness of their legal protections in relation to prohibiting racism and their reporting options.

Drawing on the Commission's expertise in human rights education, the project designed and delivered tailored interactive legal education sessions for community groups. Each session covered the following topics:

- What do discrimination, vilification and victimisation mean?
- Where to get help and advice
- How to report racism
- Why reporting racism is important
- How to take action against racism

To ensure that targeted communities had a clear understanding of the distinct roles of the Commission and Victoria Police in responding to reports of racism, the project implemented a co-delivery approach with local police and representatives from the Priority Communities Division of Victoria Police to explain how police respond to crime motivated by prejudice or hatred towards a person or a group because of their race or religion. The Commission also partnered with the Islamic Council of Victoria to co-deliver tailored racial discrimination and Islamophobia information sessions to Muslim groups.

As of 31 December 2021, the project delivered a total of 52 racism information sessions to 1249 participants across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Sessions were delivered to the following groups:



A vital component of the information sessions was facilitating two-way dialogue between the Commission and the community. Each session had a question-and-answer component to allow the Commission to gather contemporary experiences of racism and prevailing barriers to reporting in Victoria. Issues consistently identified across the sessions were:

<p><b>COVID-19 inspired racial discrimination and vilification are not confined to people of Asian appearance.</b></p>	<p>Racism during the pandemic has impacted on a range of multicultural communities across Victoria. Many people felt that the media's reporting of the pandemic blamed multicultural and multifaith communities for spreading the virus. This type of reporting had the potential to incite racist behaviour towards Asian, South Asian, Muslim and African communities.</p>
<p><b>There are multiple barriers to multicultural and multifaith communities reporting racism and navigating complaints systems.</b></p>	<p>Across all the sessions, attendees expressed that many multicultural and multifaith communities did not clearly understand Victoria's anti-discrimination and anti-vilification laws and complaints frameworks. People also expressed reluctance to make a complaint or report for several reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low awareness of where and how to make a complaint or report</li> <li>• A lack of confidence in public authorities to provide an adequate response</li> <li>• Limited in-language and culturally appropriate complaint and reporting resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Racism in schools is experienced by many communities.</b></p>	<p>Participants in several sessions outlined the harmful impact of racist bullying in schools. While there was an acknowledgement that bullying in all forms is detrimental for young people, racism is a key challenge to accessing education safely that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face. To foster greater respect and cohesion in student populations, participants consistently called for the delivery of anti-racism curriculum in primary and secondary schools and for more robust responses from school staff to address and prevent racism.</p>
<p><b>There is a need for culturally appropriate and in-language resources.</b></p>	<p>Participants in all sessions expressed a need for more in-language and culturally appropriate resources in order to understand their rights and take action against racism. Beyond the development of translated print material, communities require innovative and accessible materials to expand reach and access community members who are harder to engage.</p>

<p><b>There is a need for better understanding of the negative effects of racism on mental health.</b></p>	<p>The physiological and psychological impacts of racism and discrimination were raised at several sessions. The impacts of discrimination at interpersonal and structural levels based on race and religion are experiences felt by many multicultural community members in Victoria. Participants expressed the need for specialised counselling and support for people experiencing direct and indirect racism, including when people access complaint processes that are available to them.</p>
<p><b>There is a need for a systemic response against racism.</b></p>	<p>Participants across all sessions expressed fatigue, frustration and trauma at the onus on individuals to report acts of discrimination and vilification so as to access justice or make these acts stop. They explained the compounded impact of experiencing harmful racist behaviours every day and they appealed for a more systemic approach so as to increase their confidence and trust in public authorities. In particular, people seek increased protections under the law, more community information sessions to raise awareness about rights, improved engagement and relationships with Victoria Police and greater understanding of obligations to prevent and eliminate race and religious discrimination among duty holders under the Equal Opportunity Act.</p>

## **(b) Outcomes and impact**

Strong community engagement is an essential foundation for this project. The delivery of community legal education has had a significant impact on the multicultural and multifaith communities who have participated in the project and helped targeted individuals learn how navigate Victoria's anti-discrimination laws and the available complaints processes.

### ***Increased engagement of multi-cultural communities with the Commission's services***

Following the information sessions, **there was a significant increase** in race-related enquiries to the Commission. For many participants, the sessions provided an opportunity to learn about Victoria's human rights laws for the first time and many also sought individual advice after the sessions. Over September 2020–October 2021, the Commission received 105 enquiries about discrimination, harassment and vilification from individuals who had attended the project education and information sessions. Compared to the total number of enquiries to the Commission, this represents 30 per cent of the number of people making race-related enquiries.

In co-designing and tailoring the information sessions, the Commission sought to ensure community participants not only understood and had the opportunity to exercise their rights but also gained a greater understanding of the Commission and its services to respond to racism. On numerous occasions, community leaders who attended the sessions later referred members of their community to the Commission for support.

This increased understanding of the Commission has led to:

- increased requests from multicultural and multifaith organisations for the Commission to deliver community engagement sessions and to partner on forums dedicated to increasing awareness of rights and celebrating multiculturalism
- increased lodgement of complaints, including a representative complaint pertaining to racial discrimination in the area of education
- increased advocacy on anti-discrimination and vilification laws by information session participants.

#### ***Greater access to reliable information on racism***

Recognising that English is not the first language for many of the individuals most at risk of experiencing racism during COVID-19, the Commission increased the use of interpreters and translated materials in various community languages including Mandarin, Arabic, Dinka and Chin. By providing more accessible material, the project received positive feedback from communities regarding the benefits of targeted messaging and materials in language which acknowledged the various forms of racism each community experiences:

**“The translation of human rights information during the pandemic has been crucial for multicultural communities. The fact that the Commission can deliver information sessions and produce fact sheets in language increased the confidence and likelihood of community members to contact the Commission when they experience racism or any other form of discrimination**

*– Multicultural Community Leader*

#### ***Wider reach through online and after-hours delivery***

The pandemic public health measures restricted our ability to run face-to-face sessions, resulting in all sessions being delivered on live online conferencing platforms. A positive effect of the online delivery model was that the Commission was not geographically confined. During this time, the project was able to reach a broader cross-section of the multicultural communities who would not ordinarily attend face-to-face sessions owing to barriers relating to travel and personal commitments. We also facilitated sessions to respond to immediate community needs outside of conventional working hours.

## Information sessions – Racism: Understanding your rights and taking action – September 2020

In response to increased incidents of racism experienced by communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Commission worked collaboratively with the Victorian Multicultural Commission to provide support and education for Victorians from multicultural and multifaith communities to respond to racism.

The Commission and Victorian Multicultural Commission worked with eight community leaders and multicultural networks to co-design and deliver customised information sessions. Community groups and individuals were:

- African Australian Legal Network
- Asian Australian Lawyers Association
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Muslim Legal Network
- Nyadol Nyuon
- United Pasifika Council of Victoria
- Various leaders from Myanmar communities

Our partners provided cultural advice around the specific barriers to reporting racism for diverse communities, allowing a total of nine sessions to be tailored to the learning needs and particular experiences of racism of each group.

In addition to the community sessions, a racism information webinar for the broader multicultural and multifaith community was co-hosted by Commissioner Kristen Hilton and Viv Nguyen from the Victorian Multicultural Commission, with an address by the Hon. Ros Spence, Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Following the session, the Commission provided participants with its [There's no place for racism in Victoria Stakeholder kit](#), presentation slide deck and translated *Your rights* factsheets.

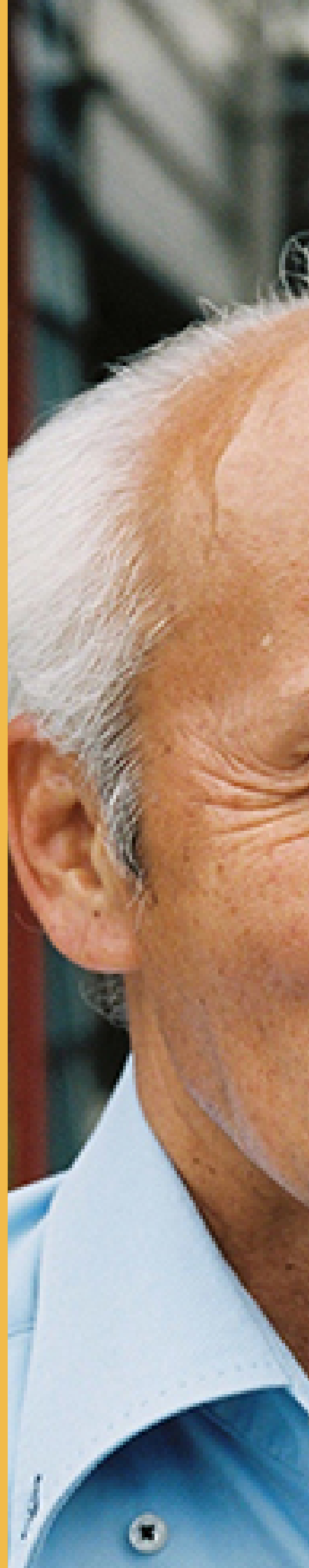
A total of 246 participants attended the sessions. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 98 per cent of participants having increased their understanding of their rights and their ability to report instances of racism, discrimination and vilification:

**“ It is interesting to learn how racism manifests in different communities and their response to it. Thanks to you for inviting our network to be part of organising these important sessions**

*– Partner organisation*

## **Deliverable 2**

**Partnering  
with councils  
and identified  
service  
providers  
working with  
multicultural  
and multifaith  
communities**





## ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

- The Commission used a place-based approach to implement strategies to respond to locally identified drivers of racism in four local government areas.
- The Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates course was delivered to 144 participants across 11 courses.
- 98 per cent of participants increased their confidence to identify racism and their knowledge of the Commission's functions, services and laws.
- 92 per cent of participants would report racism (up from 58%) following completion of the course.

### Strategic outcomes

The Commission established deeper dialogue with key groups who represent targeted, at-risk and impacted communities so as to increase knowledge sharing and more effectively address racism.

This outcome contributes directly to the Victorian Government's intended outcome under the *Multicultural policy statement for **genuine equality*** whereby people understand and exercise their equal rights under the law and live free from discrimination.

**In Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project, a key focus has been to support local councils and providers who service multicultural communities so as to drive leading change and advocacy to support vulnerable multicultural and multifaith communities experiencing racism.**

### **(a) Actions**

An environmental scan completed in October 2020 identified the City of Wyndham, City of Greater Shepparton, City of Melton and City of Greater Geelong as relevant locations to target our program. All four local government areas are culturally diverse regions where there have been publicised incidents of racial discrimination and vilification towards multicultural communities and where there is significant under-reporting of racism. During 2021, the Commission partnered with local government and providers who service multicultural communities to develop and test solutions for reducing race-based discrimination and increasing reporting of racism, discrimination and vilification to the Commission.

At each site, the Commission worked with local partners to implement multiple and reinforcing strategies to respond to locally identified drivers of racism. Key activities specifically tailored for each locality included:

- Reducing Racism project planning workshops
- Racism information sessions
- Digital engagement strategy

Across all sites, the Commission piloted the Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates Course to build advocates' skills in using human rights and equal opportunity laws to take action against racism. The course was developed in response to community concerns that service providers do not have sufficient knowledge to respond to racism adequately and it was designed to empower staff from councils and providers who service multicultural communities to develop rights awareness and advocacy skills to support multicultural and multifaith communities experiencing racism.

Using a human rights education framework, the course supported participants to:

- build their knowledge of Victoria's human rights and anti-discrimination laws, and their legal obligations to prevent and respond to race discrimination and vilification
- identify race-related unlawful behaviour under the Equal Opportunity Act and Racial and Religious Tolerance Act
- navigate options for reporting racism in the context of the importance of bystander action.

The reach and impact of the course exceeded expectations. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated societal inequalities and highlighted deep-seated racial disparities, demand for anti-racism knowledge and capability improvement was sought by many organisations.

Commencing in June 2021, the Commission engaged 144 participants across 11 courses from the following organisations:

▶ Diversitat	▶ Melton Intercultural Committee
▶ Wyndham CEC	▶ Youth Activating Youth
▶ Wyndham Anti-racism Support Network	▶ Uniting Vic/Tas
▶ Greater Shepparton Council	▶ Shepparton Youth Network
▶ Melton City Council	▶ Brotherhood of St Lawrence
▶ Greater Geelong Council	▶ Switchboard Victoria
▶ Melton Interfaith Network	▶ Western Health (formerly Djerriwarrh Health Services )

## (b) Outcomes and impact

### *Increased engagement with rights holders and duty bearers*

Partnerships under the project have resulted in measurable increases in education and engagement between the Commission and targeted communities in place-based localities. The Commission identified at the outset of the project that building meaningful relationships with local government and service providers who work with multicultural and multifaith communities was imperative so as to maximise the impact of the Reducing Racism program of work.

### *Increased awareness of strategies to combat racism*

The Commission collaborated with councils to develop and adopt locally identified anti-racism strategies. All councils expressed a keen interest in working with the Commission as anti-discrimination work is prioritised in each locality:

**“ The Council’s involvement in the project was part of the Council’s multicultural strategy. As part of that strategy, we have lots of actions we need to achieve over a three-year period, including a specific action around racism: to support and promote anti-racism initiatives, campaigns and workshops**

*– Staff member, Shepparton City Council*

### **Increased requests for education on racism**

As a result of developing strong partnerships in the project, the Commission received increased requests from organisations to deliver community engagement sessions and partner on forums dedicated to increasing awareness about racism. Specifically, our partnership with the Islamic Council of Victoria has been of significant importance. Building upon our engagement from Phase 1, under the project the Commission and Islamic Council of Victoria expanded collaborative education and engagement for vulnerable Muslims who experienced increased Islamophobia during the pandemic. The dialogue generated in our engagement with the Islamic Council of Victoria increased understanding of the types and degrees of inequality experienced by the community:

**“ We’ve been working with the Commission since 2018. What motivates us to engage in projects like the Reducing Racism project is that we see an ongoing community need. Our cooperation with the Commission and Victoria Police allows us to effectively deliver holistic care to support individuals experiencing Islamophobia and racism ... We consider the service that the Commission can provide as really meaningful and a way for people to achieve outcomes**

*– Staff member, Islamophobia Support Service, Islamic Council of Victoria*



### *Deeper understanding and dialog on racism*

In relation to the Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates course, the Commission used a participatory learning framework, which resulted in a measurable increase in knowledge for the participants. From a 60 per cent pre-session understanding of their rights, in post-session feedback 98 per cent of participants reported increased confidence to identify racism and increased knowledge of the Commission's functions, services and laws.

Other outcomes following the course include:

- 92% of participants would report racism (from 58%) following completion of the course
- 81% of participants felt more confident to apply human rights laws to respond to racism (from 24%).
- 100% of participants would know where to get more information.
- 93% of participants would contact the Commission to report racism from 51% pre-session

Post-session participant surveys provided positive insights:

**“ Really appreciate the opportunity to learn and develop knowledge within safe space. I also enjoyed the activity and the chance to discuss. I feel more confident to use and actively promote relevant services in my day-to-day practice. Thank you. Monica’s facilitation was brilliant. I could have stayed on further.**

**“ Thank you. I had no idea on some of the topics presented but now do. Very well run with lightness and darkness all very informative. A mixed group of people and I was surprised to hear some of the communication brought forward. I hope this can be worked on.**

**“ As a result of the program, participants now know how to report incidents of racism, and they also have a greater awareness of human rights frameworks and racism.**

**“ The sessions were informative, interactive and kept my attention.**

## Partnering with Melton City Council to adopt anti-racism strategies

The City of Melton is one of the fast-growing municipalities in Australia. It has become a home to diverse Victorians from over 130 nations in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Melton City Council has actively promoted and celebrated its community's cultural diversity for many years and continually strives to improve awareness of the benefits of diversity and to mitigate the effects of discrimination and cultural isolation.

A tangible indication of the benefits of the partnership in the Reducing Racism project was the Commission's engagement in Melton. The Commission used the project as a mechanism to support the Council to enhance organisational responsiveness to combatting racism.

The Commission worked collaboratively with the Council via the Intercultural Advisory Committee to adopt anti-racism strategies. Over 12 months, the Commission and Council facilitated numerous information sessions to community and service provider networks. The Council also actively encouraged organisations to participate in the Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates course.

A significant outcome demonstrating the importance of our work was when a councillor submitted a motion for councillors and senior staff to complete the course, making Melton City Council

the only site in the project to commit to workforce anti-racism education. The Council also facilitated and encouraged a diverse cross-section of the community, including allied health professionals, settlement services staff and community and faith leaders, to participate in the program.

As a result of our collaboration with the Council, the Commission was invited to its Global Learning Festival to present the learnings from the delivery of our anti-racism course. It also led to other councils asking for a similar project and to the Commission being invited to speak at the Victorian Interfaith Network conference:

**// The human rights emphasis of the program (and its connection to human rights legislation) was a brilliant thing, particularly as it brought that conversation to the level of community, staff and councillors. The training was also structured and facilitated in a manner that was very accessible ... the fact that one of the Councillors put a notice of motion in tells you a lot – that this training is worthwhile**

*– Melton City Council employee*

<sup>3</sup> Melton City Council Intercultural Plan 2017-2021

# **Deliverable 3**

## **Adopting digital strategies to encourage increased reporting of racism**





## ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

- The Community Reporting Tool (CRT) was improved and broadly promoted
- Over 59,000 individuals through the racism social media awareness campaign, were reached who shared content 297 times.
- Twenty-five organisations host the CRT on their website.
- Racism information chatbot prototype has been created
- National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) have collaborated with the Commission to create 24 in-language podcasts.

### Strategic outcomes

The Commission created evergreen digital content beyond the lifetime of the project; educated the community, increased reporting of racist incidents to the Commission, and increased the evidence base regarding the prevalence and harm of racism.

This outcome contributes directly to the Victorian Government's intended outcome under the *Multicultural Policy Statement* for **genuine equality**, whereby people understand and exercise their equal rights under the law and live free from discrimination.

Increased reports of racism, vilification and xenophobia have been a worrying trend throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. From the start of the pandemic, the Commission has heard about increasing public abuse, harassment and vilification against multicultural people ranging from offensive comments and verbal abuse to threats of physical violence.

### **(a) Actions**

In response to rising racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project incorporated an evidence-based digital communication and engagement strategy to increase reporting by multicultural and multifaith community members experiencing racism.

#### ***CRT accessibility and mobile optimisation and promotion***

Launched in Phase 1 of the Reducing Racism project, the Commission's CRT provides a quick, easy and secure way for people to report incidents of racism and other discrimination directly to the Commission. Built by Code for Victoria (Australia), who consulted impacted communities and used a human-centred approach to create a product that meets the needs of end-users, the CRT is a digital tool that prompts a user to input basic information about an incident of racism, discrimination or hate speech. The tool can also be embedded into another organisation's website, thus reducing potential barriers to reporting and enabling reaching an audience beyond those who specifically seek out the Commission.

Extending the reach of the CRT is fundamental to fulfilling the Victorian Government's objective to address the under-reporting of racism and increase its understanding of systemic discrimination and racism. In Phase 2 of the project, the Commission invested in enhancements to improve the functionality of the tool and the development of supporting material for host organisations. Based on user feedback, the Commission improved accessibility for users with low digital literacy, so it is easy for everyone to make a report. The optimisation of the tool means it now allows for anonymous reports, is easier to use on a mobile phone and has more readable large text and increased capture of data analytics.

To provide more significant support resources to our hosts, the Commission produced a stakeholder kit for host organisations and a Frequently Asked Questions factsheet for use by councils and service providers that were distributed to 250 stakeholders encouraging them to host the CRT on their websites.

The 25 organisations who have uploaded the CRT to their websites to date are:

AMES Australia	Glen Eira City Council	Monash City Council
Ballarat African Association	Greater Shepparton City Council	Moreland City Council
Ballarat City Council	Hepburn Shire Council	Port Phillip City Council
Benalla City Council	Hobsons Bay City Council	Religions for Peace Australia
Cardinia Shire Council	Hume City Council	Switchboard
Centre for Multicultural Youth	Loddon Shire Council	Whittlesea City Council
City of Greater Bendigo	Maribyrnong City Council	Yarra City Council
City of Greater Geelong Council	Melbourne City Council	
Darebin City Council	Melton City Council	

“One of the greatest achievements of the Reducing Racism project was raising awareness of laws and reporting – especially in relation to the community reporting tool. Many people from different cultural backgrounds would not report racism, or they wouldn’t report it because they wouldn’t know where to do it. The community reporting tool may have already been available locally, but it wasn’t something we knew about prior to the project

– Stakeholder

### Online racism resources hub

In 2020, recognising language barriers for those most at risk of experiencing racism during COVID-19, the Commission developed and promoted an online resource hub, [There’s no place for racism in Victoria](#). The hub contains a suite of resources to assist community members in accessing information and support to combat racism. Information on how to get help has been translated into ten commonly spoken languages in Victoria and an awareness campaign in five different languages implemented across ethnic radio, print and online platforms. The campaign attracted high engagement, with more than 4500 visits to the translated information pages on our website in just one month and a significant jump in contact from multicultural community members with our other online materials.

## **Social media awareness campaign**

In 2021 the Commission deepened our digital engagement with multicultural and multifaith communities by developing a social media awareness campaign. The purposes of the campaign were to:

- educate individuals and communities on their rights under the Equal Opportunity Act and Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, including the types of behaviour that constitute racial vilification and discrimination
- inform individuals and communities on how to access the Commission to enquire, report or complain about a racist incident
- raise awareness of the process and outcomes that people can expect when they access the Commission's services.

A key focus of the social media strategy was to engage with young people who experience multiple forms of discrimination and harm through the development of audience-relevant digital content.

## **Video and audio content on racism**

To encourage increased reporting of racism, the project has engaged Cinespace to create video content to be featured on social media and through education sessions about racism. To foster greater understanding within the Victorian community of the impact and harm caused by racism, the video will reflect actual de-identified reports of racism received via the CRT.

The project has also engaged the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council to produce audio content for radio that promotes the Commission's services to people who speak a language other than English. The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council is developing 24 in-language podcasts which will be broadcast by multilingual radio stations across Victoria.

The video and audio content was delayed owing to COVID-19 restrictions and will be completed in the first half of 2022.

## **Reporting racism chatbot**

Funding for the project has enabled the Commission to develop an educational chatbot to respond to racism. The chatbot was built using a human-centred approach to create a product which offers instant and accurate information to help users from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds understand their human rights, reporting options and how to engage with the Commission.

Across a wide range of sectors, chatbots are increasingly utilised as an efficiency-enhancing model for organisations in interacting with the community. The Commission's chatbot will enable users to communicate and interact with us via our website or social media messaging platforms such as WhatsApp.

The chatbot will be launched following the completion of the video and audio content.

## **(b) Outcomes and impact**

### ***Production of innovative and engaging content***

The Commission saw high levels of engagement across both the social media and online racism hub campaigns during the project. As noted, the online racism resources hub campaign resulted in more than 4500 visits to the translated information pages on our website in just one month and a significant jump in engagement by multicultural community members with our other online materials.

A further strong indicator of impact is noted in our data on sharing of content. In 2021, our social media campaign reached over 59,000 individuals, who shared our content 297 times across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. This points to our content resonating with our audience and the effectiveness of information sharing in amplifying awareness among communities about individual rights and how to access them. The Commission attributes the success of the campaign to developing engaging content which the audience could trust using youth-friendly infographics and diverse imagery and case studies to reflect the diversity of experiences of racism within the Victorian community.

The increased use of Instagram as a tool for engagement with young people led to a social media marketing partnership with the Immigration Museum for National Youth Day. Within one day our content reached 7500 people on the Immigration Museum platform who shared, liked and engaged with the content. As a result of this partnership, the Commission saw an increase in younger followers on our social media platforms.

### ***Broader reach of authoritative key messages***

To amplify the reach of our key messages, the Commission established an anti-racism group on the VMConnect platform. VMConnect is an online engagement platform hosted by the Victorian Multicultural Commission to connect with multicultural and multifaith communities. To date the platform has over 650 members from across Victoria who engage in our content, share their experiences of racism, and promote anti-racism resources and support services.

Working closely with our Strategic Communications branch, the project has been able to reach a broad audience. Tailoring messaging for specific groups has resulted in a greater number of contacts from the public to discuss their rights and experiences.

**“ I rode the 86 tram in the city with my children, and a white man in his 50s or 60s suddenly swore that there were too many Asians in Australia. Then he cursed at me and the children. Since then, we have been unable to ride the tram because of the trauma.**

**“ The woman who lives next door screamed ‘f\*\*\*ing go back to your country.’ As international students, we felt deeply humiliated in our own residence and scared as well.**

*– CRT excerpts*

Over the course of the project, the Commission has seen an increase in enquiries, reports and complaints of racial discrimination and vilification. During 2020, the Commission received more than double the number of reports of racial vilification than in 2019. It received a total of 406 enquiries specifically related to racism in 2020, of which 38 per cent concerned racial vilification. People who had experienced racism also made use of our complaints service. In 2020, we received 189 racial discrimination and 18 racial vilification complaints.

As the pandemic continued into 2021, reporting of racism remained steady with a monthly average of 45 race-related enquiries and complaints. In 2021, we received a total of 349 enquiries specifically related to racism, of which 84 per cent concerned racial discrimination. During the same period, we received 157 racial discrimination and 10 racial vilification complaints.

People from Chinese and East Asian backgrounds, in particular, have been targeted with racist abuse and threats of physical violence. People have reported being abused online, in supermarkets, on public transport, in workplaces, at school, in shops, in their local neighbourhoods and in interactions with their neighbours.

Since the CRT launched in mid-June 2019, the Commission has received a total of 341 reports (to 31 December 2021). These reports from the tool give a glimpse of the traumatic day-to-day experiences of multicultural Victorians. Promoting the CRT as an early response to COVID-19 related racism has resulted in significant increase in its use since the pandemic began. CRT reports almost quadrupled over March–June 2020 and in this time it was used almost exclusively to report racist incidents. Of these reports, 41 per cent were about racial or religious vilification and 38 per cent about race discrimination. CRT reports indicate a shift away from racial discrimination at work or in employment towards racial abuse and other unfair treatment on the street, on public transport or online.

## IN 2020-2021 WE SAW



**302**  
REPORTS



Incidents occur across metro and regional locations and reports on racism are experienced across day-to-day life:

**58%**

want an  
outcome

**44%**

reporting an  
issue of racism

**65%**

of racism reports  
pertaining to  
racial vilification

**54%**

reports  
from people  
identifying  
women

**38%**

(street harassment,  
shopping, between  
neighbours)

**13%**

Workplace

**6%**

(school,  
university, TAFE)

**8%**

Public  
transport

**15%**

(shops,  
restaurants, bars)

**7%**

Media and  
online platforms

The data gathered through the CRT has been vital to helping the Commission understand where and in what forms racism is being experienced, which in turns informs our advocacy work and approach to the promotion of our services.



# WeChat Advertorial

In response to reports from people of Chinese background about being racially abused, assaulted and harassed in public in Victoria, a WeChat advertorial in Mandarin was created as part of the Commission's *There's no place for racism in Victoria* awareness campaign.

Published on a very popular social media site, the advertorial sought to target Chinese international students in Victoria who prefer to use this in-language platform rather than

Facebook or other popular platforms. The advertorial utilised an inductive writing approach whereby imagery and video content were incorporated into the article to engage the reader.

The month-long campaign reached over 30,000 individuals who shared the article 415 times. The article's reach also translated into a significant increase in click-through visitation on the Commission's translated Get Help pages.

我们的默不作声，恰恰变成了种族主义者的筹码和得寸进尺的理由。



当我们遇到歧视、权利受到侵犯时，勇敢地发声，才能更好地捍卫自己的权利，当有更多的人愿意发声，便有更大的力量去改变现状。



如果您在维州不幸经历了种族歧视，

但不知道该如何应对，

可以拿出手机，通过：

**维州平等机会和人权委员会**

报告事件并寻求帮助。



什么是维州平等机会和人权委员会？

**Reach:** 30,694

**Shares:** 415

**Likes:** 59

# Conclusion

**Phase 2 of the Reducing Racism project has demonstrated the importance of a strategic, flexible, targeted and evidence-based approach to reducing race-based discrimination and vilification. Implementing a variety of strategies in multiple settings to work with individuals, organisations and the community in a specific locality has also been shown to achieve substantial change.**

The key learnings based on the outcomes and impacts of this project are:

- Extending the Commission's reach of authoritative messages on racism and reporting of unlawful conduct to targeted rights holders in multicultural communities has contributed to community empowerment, safety and justice.
- Community engagement strategies under the project have built confidence within targeted communities to access the Commission's services, including the reporting of racism.
- Multicultural communities have experiencing racism, discrimination and vilification have benefited from dedicated initiatives that address systemic and entrenched racism, and likewise, if the project were expanded, First Nations peoples would experience similar benefits with consideration of the unique effects of colonisation and dispossession.
- Partnering with duty bearers to engage with local multicultural communities is an effective means of educating local government on its duty to eliminate racism and foster relationships to combat unlawful and harmful conduct.
- Expanding the use of innovative and accessible digital, video and audio content increases the likelihood of engaging targeted rights holders and duty bearers on key messages.
- Working collaboratively across key government and non-government agencies is vital for consistent messaging to rights holders and builds their confidence for reporting.
- Having a dedicated, senior multicultural engagement officer is a critical component of success in building and maintaining the trust and confidence of targeted multicultural communities and in retaining expertise to drive sustained change.

Given the positive impacts of the project for both rights holders and duty bearers, the Commission is committed to continuation of the Reducing Racism project into a third phase. Recommendations flowing from this report are that a future focus of the project should consider the following:

### **Recommendation 1**

Build on support to multicultural rights holders, and expand to First Nations peoples, to have a contemporary understanding of racism and vilification, and empower them to take action against racism and vilification, including reporting, through information programs to communities experiencing racism.

### **Recommendation 2**

Continue partnerships with organisations to expand the reach of information programs and fund the development of digital and translated information products.

### **Recommendation 3**

Facilitate a community of practice with key government and non-government agencies to create opportunities for coordination, learning, building capability and sharing of knowledge on how to combat racism.

### **Recommendation 4**

Extend the capacity development programs for local government and selected public authorities to take action to build inclusion and eliminate racism and vilification so as to drive leading change and advocacy, and to develop digital education and information products for duty holders.

### **Recommendation 5**

Consult with the Victorian community and build awareness of race discrimination as part of Victoria's anti-racism strategy.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Enquires and Complaints Data 2020-2021

2020				
	Enquires		Complaints	
Month	Race	Race Vilification	Race	Race Vilification
January	22	3	14	-
February	20	5	11	3
March	23	14	11	1
April	13	32	8	3
May	12	14	16	1
June	25	30	21	1
July	20	15	18	-
August	19	7	18	-
September	26	20	18	3
October	18	11	8	2
November	25	4	12	1
December	27	1	34	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>18</b>

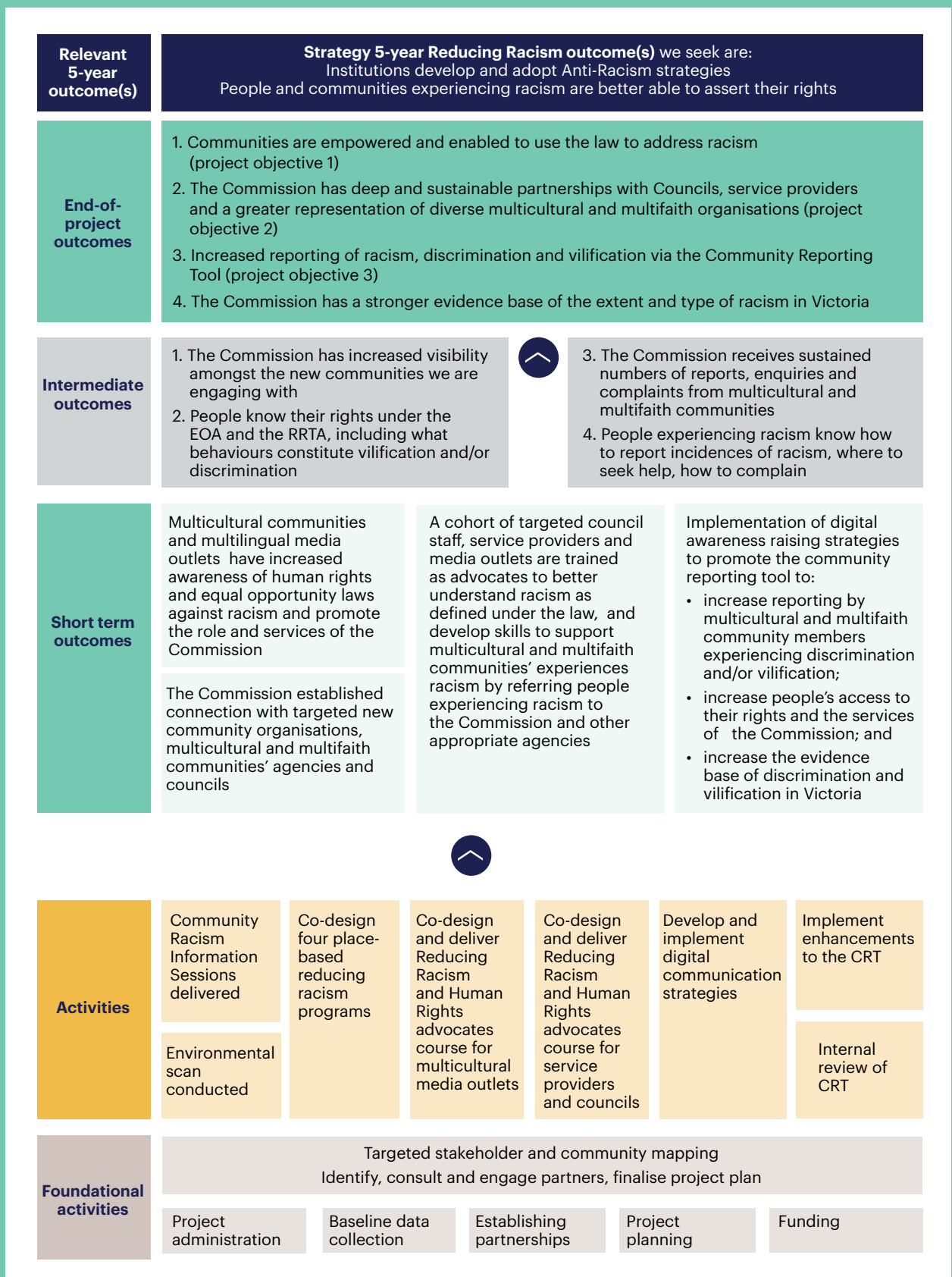
2021				
	Enquires		Complaints	
Month	Race	Race Vilification	Race	Race Vilification
January	23	4	12	-
February	23	4	17	2
March	31	12	12	2
April	24	6	8	-
May	28	5	20	3
June	31	5	25	-
July	25	5	12	1
August	28	8	8	1
September	17	3	9	1
October	25	2	11	-
November	15	3	13	-
December	22	1	10	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>10</b>

\*Note these figures represent the number of complaints of race discrimination and racial vilification made by each complainant against one or more respondents.

## Appendix 2: CRT Data 2020-2021

2020		Number of reports	2021		Number of reports
January		2	January		5
February		9	February		14
March		15	March		17
April		12	April		6
May		26	May		15
June		41	June		15
July		10	July		13
August		8	August		6
September		9	September		11
October		12	October		11
November		9	November		11
December		15	December		10
<b>Total</b>		<b>168</b>			<b>134</b>

## Appendix 3: Program Logic



## Appendix 4: Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates Course Survey Results

Impact Survey response RR and HR Course participants				
Question		Pre-course	Post-course	3-6 months after
How confident would you be to identify racism if you experienced it or witnessed it?	Very Confident	18%	28%	4.8%
	Confident	54%	70%	71.4%
	Unsure	25%	2%	23.8%
	Not confident	3%	0%	
	Not at all confident	0%	0%	
How likely are you to report racism?	Very Likely	18%	45%	14.3%
	Likely	40%	47%	66.7%
	Unsure	31%	9%	19%
	Unlikely	9%	0%	
	Very unlikely	0%	0%	
How likely are you encourage someone to contact the Commission or use the Community Reporting Tool (CRT) to report racial or religious discrimination or vilification?	Very Likely	19%	53%	
	Likely	32%	40%	
	Unsure	30%	7%	
	Unlikely	12%	0%	
	Very unlikely	7%	0%	
How confident are you in using and applying the human rights law to respond to racism?	Very Confident	4%	9%	4.8%
	Confident	20%	72%	52.4%
	Unsure	39%	19%	42.9%
	Not confident	31%	0%	0%
	Not at all confident	6%	0%	0%
Do you know where to get more information about how to report racism?	Yes	32%	100%	
	No	68%	0%	
How would you rate your knowledge of the Commission's functions, services and laws?	Extensive knowledge	5%	36%	
	Some knowledge	45%	62%	
	No knowledge	50%	2%	



# Contact us

Enquiry Line	1300 292 153
NRS Voice Relay	1300 555 727 then use 1300 292 153
Interpreters	1300 152 494
Email	<a href="mailto:enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au">enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au">www.humanrights.vic.gov.au</a>