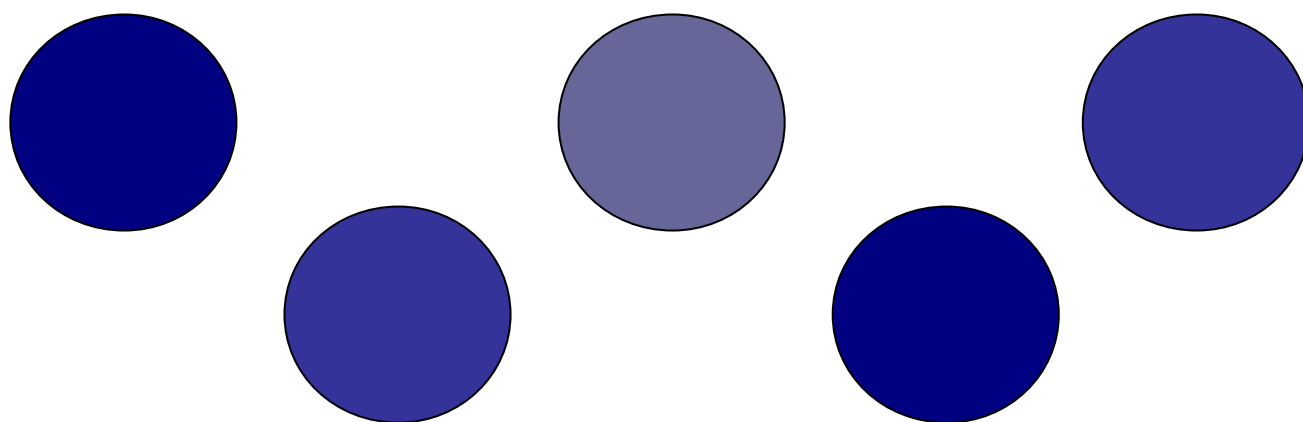


A Fair Go

A Community Kit for Action Against Racism

**Produced by the
National NGO Coalition Against Racism**



Publishing details

Copyright notice

This action kit has been prepared with the aim of catering to the needs of many different groups of Australians who share a commitment to addressing and eradicating racism. Community groups or organizations are encouraged to adapt materials from this kit for their own local networks. Please acknowledge any source materials from this action kit that you use. Copying is also permissible provided that acknowledgement is made to the National NGO Coalition Against Racism.

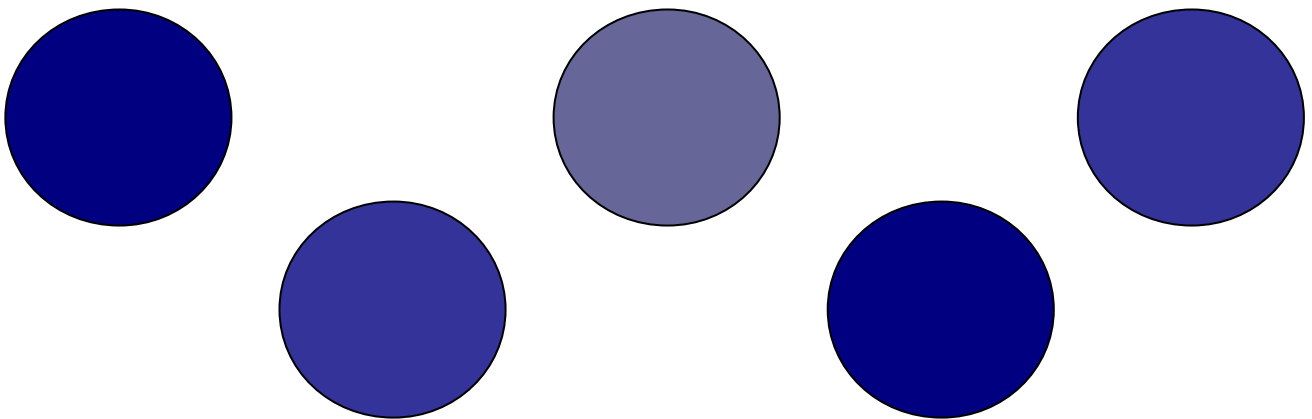
First published July 2002

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National NGO Coalition Against Racism



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Introduction

Australia's vibrant multicultural society has an egalitarian tradition often expressed as a belief in "a fair go for all". Australians are generally proud of our cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and opposed to racism. It is a sad reality however, that racism has always existed in Australia, and it continues to this day.

While governments have important responsibilities in the fight against racism, individuals, small groups, and local communities also have roles to play. Combating racism is everyone's responsibility.

The National NGO Coalition Against Racism (NNCAR) brings together a broad range of community and non-governmental organizations that are working to promote equality, respect and non-discrimination, and to oppose racism. An important emphasis of NNCAR is fostering constructive action by non governmental organizations working collectively at the local and national levels to make sure that the issue of racism remains on the public agenda, that governments honour the commitments that they made at the World Conference Against Racism held in South Africa in 2001, and that Australian society as a whole confronts racism.

This action kit provides some information about racism, ideas on where to find further information, and a series of action sheets. The action sheets provide some simple, concrete ways in which individuals and groups can take action against racism in Australia. We hope that it will help you to take up the challenge of fighting racism.

Contacts for the NNCAR Steering Group

To find out more about NNCAR, contact any of the following people:

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2. Racism

2.1 *What is meant by Racism?*

Racism takes many different forms. It can range from abusive language or discriminatory treatment to genocide, simply on the basis of someone's 'race' or colour. Yet race has no scientific basis; it is in fact a harmful social myth. Every day, science proves more clearly that humanity, although diverse, is one family and one people. Sadly our common experience also shows that racism, hatred or dislike of others simply because of their origin or culture is a common human failing. Eradicating racism is a task we all share.

It is important to recognize that racial discrimination does not always affect men and women equally, or in the same way. Race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religious beliefs, ethnicity, colour, nationality, citizenship status, socio-economic status, cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, can all overlap and result in very specific types of discrimination. We must always examine those connecting factors when considering racial discrimination.

The definition of racial discrimination used in Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* is the one contained in Article 1 of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. It defines racism as:

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

The Australian Government ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1975 and made it part of Australian law through the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)*. The Convention is monitored by the United Nations' *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. The Committee examines the report cards of states which have signed and ratified the Convention every four years. This important function strengthens the effectiveness of the Convention in practical ways. The Committee's recommendations on how countries are implementing the Convention's provisions aim to encourage countries to do more.

In 2000, the Committee examined Australia's latest reports. Despite Australia's ratification of the Convention, the enactment of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)*, and the fact that successive governments have publicly committed to stamping out racism, it is a sad reality that racism is still at large in Australia.

2.2 *What is Institutional Racism?*

Racism is not only reflected in personal attitudes and behaviours, it can be expressed in the values, presumptions, structures and processes of social, economic, cultural and political institutions. Such institutional racism is less direct and harder to identify for what it is than personal attitudes and behaviour. Structures and processes may appear to be non-discriminatory but in fact operate to systematically advantage or value some groups over others.

For example, in the modern globalized market economy, the poor and the marginalized are frequently members of racial or ethnic groups whose position has been determined by generations of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. Racism then reinforces the inequalities -- people from ethnic minorities impoverished and disenfranchised by historical developments are viewed as somehow

inferior and then blamed for their own deprivation. Such racist attitudes then act to further block their access to education, land, jobs and positions of influence. This is particularly the case in relation to Indigenous peoples, historically forced from their traditional lands and society, who find themselves excluded from contemporary society, while their culture is increasingly threatened in an era of globalisation.

2.3 *What is Xenophobia?*

Racism and xenophobia are closely related and often overlap. Xenophobia is generally understood as a fear of, or hostility towards foreigners, or people who are considered outsiders to the community or nation. At its heart it includes attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that exclude and vilify and reject individuals by drawing a boundary between those who are accepted and those who are outsiders or foreigners to community, society or national identity.

Around the world, racism is being nourished by increasingly xenophobic responses to forced and voluntary migration. Immigrants, migrant workers and asylum-seekers, who have left their homes in search of a life with basic dignity and security, are often met with ill-treatment and denial of their rights. Often, increasing harshness of treatment is accompanied by a general increase in racist or xenophobic sentiment in the general community and the mass media. This is happening everywhere - in the northern and southern hemispheres, in the East and West, and in developing as well as industrialized countries. Australia is no exception.

Harsh treatment of migrants appears to be increasingly integral to official immigration policies around the world, both reflecting and contributing to inflamed xenophobic fears among populations at large. Underlying these developments is a failure to see our shared humanity. All of us share a responsibility of caring for every human person, irrespective of where they come from. Racism is both a contributing factor in and a symptom of such policies.

3. Racism is a Human Rights Issue

Racism is an attack on the very notion of human rights. It systematically denies certain people their full human rights just because of their race, colour, descent, ethnicity, caste or national origin. It is an assault on the fundamental principle underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - that human rights are everyone's birthright and apply to all without distinction.

The right not to suffer racial discrimination is one of the most fundamental principles of international human rights law. The principle appears in virtually every major human rights instrument as well as in the UN Charter. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the UN is to *achieve international co-operation...in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion* (UN Charter, Article 1, para 3).

And yet racial discrimination persists in every society. Around the world, people continue to suffer human rights violations simply because of their racial identity.

There are many steps that can be taken. First, laws should clearly prohibit all forms of discrimination, and such laws should be rigorously enforced. Secondly, all governments should send a clear message that racism will not be tolerated - in society in general and in all agencies of the state. All crimes with a racist nature should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Here it is important to ensure that racism does not taint, or inhibit, the administration of justice, since a fair and impartial judicial system is one of the main means by which societies ensure that human rights are enjoyed equally by all members of that society.

Institutional racism, discriminatory patterns of recruitment into the agencies that administer justice, and disparities in sentencing practices between different racial groups, all are examples of the issues that must be addressed. Mechanisms must be put in place to uncover patterns of racism in the administration of justice - and to institute remedies that tackle the causes of the discrimination. Among such remedies would be race-awareness training for those working in the justice system, whether they are law enforcement or custodial agents, lawyers or judges, or asylum determination officials; recruitment drives among ethnic minorities; and reviews of laws and practices that have a disparate impact on particular communities.

At a broader level, human rights education, as called for in the *Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1994 – 2004)*, is essential if a universal culture of human rights, which includes the eradication of racism, is to be built. The United Nations' *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* seeks to encourage, by all means possible, the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, and to make the twenty-first century 'an era of genuine fulfilment and peace'.

4. Racism in Australia

Australia prides itself on giving all its citizens 'a fair go' and on rejecting racism. Although Australia generally has a reputation of being a successful example of an integrated and tolerant multicultural society, racism still lives in our society in both conscious and unconscious ways. Many in Australia find themselves the victims of racism or xenophobia, but it is undoubtedly Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who face racism or misunderstanding far more often than other Australians.

4.1 *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People & Communities*

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy a unique place in Australian society as the first peoples of this land. Unfortunately their unique status and identity have not always been recognized adequately nor their rights fully respected. Despite the dispossession and disadvantage suffered by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they have continued to nurture and care for the land, and to make an important, and increasingly widely appreciated, contribution to the life of Australia, especially in the cultural and spiritual spheres.

While the process of reconciliation has helped many non-Indigenous Australians to be more aware of the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, much remains to be done. As the *United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* has pointed out in March 2000, institutional factors such as some processes, laws and administrative practices still operate to the systematic disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

The economic disadvantage of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today cannot be understood in isolation from the history of dispossession of lands and the disruption of kinship, culture, language and ceremony.

4.2 *Asylum Seekers, Refugees & Migrants*

Many immigrants to Australia have also experienced racial discrimination. Our migration policy has only relatively recently, and perhaps not completely, shaken off the racist attitudes of the nineteenth century, which led to the White Australia policy. Even today, there are those in Australian society who disparage and abuse those who have immigrated here or have fled their homeland seeking protection from persecution.

4.3 *Overlapping Forms of Discrimination*

In Australia, as elsewhere, racism and sexism can combine to affect women in particular ways. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, as well as asylum seeker, refugee and immigrant women are most affected by this.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experience of racism can be different from that of men in their communities, and their experience of sexism is often different from that of non-Indigenous women. For example, Aboriginal women have often been excluded from negotiations concerning land, even though they may be the relevant traditional owners. Another example is the impact of the policy, which ended only in relatively recent times, of separating children of mixed descent from their Indigenous families, usually from their Aboriginal mothers.

Asylum seeker, immigrant and refugee women, too, experience multiple forms of discrimination based on racism, xenophobia and sexism, albeit from a different historical basis. For example, migrant

women workers are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace as they may find it difficult to effectively address issues such as sexual harassment or below award pay and conditions due to poor English language skills and/or low socio-economic status. Women asylum seekers are often vulnerable to sexual or physical abuse during flight, and sometimes even in Australian immigration detention centres.

Other factors that can intersect with racism include: sexuality; disability; age; religious beliefs; ethnicity; colour; nationality; citizenship status; socio-economic status; and cultural and/or linguistic background.

This overlapping of multiple bases of discrimination is sometimes referred to as *intersectionality*.

Racism in Australia: A Potted History

Knowing some of the history of racism in Australia is important in working constructively to deal with its modern manifestations. These are some very brief historical facts that illustrate the influence of racist ideas in Australian history:

- Australia in the 19th century was a multiracial and multicultural country including people and communities of many different racial and cultural origins, including many nations of Aboriginal people.
- The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of movements to reserve Australia to the “white race” and the adoption of laws against Chinese miners to exclude them from goldfields and force them out of the colonies.
- The nineteenth century was marked by the widespread forcible dispossession of Aboriginal people from their lands across Australia.
- In 1901 the first policy measures pursued by the new federal parliament were the adoption of the Immigration Restriction Act and the Pacific Island Labourers Act to prevent non-white immigration. The broad assumption of legislators was the notion of white racial superiority. Most Pacific Islanders were deported shortly after as a result. Numbers of individuals of other non-European races dropped dramatically in the first half of the century as the White Australia policy was implemented.
- The 1902 Commonwealth Franchise Act, which enfranchised women, excluded Aboriginal Natives of Australia, Asia, and Africa subject to the Constitution. This was interpreted by administrators in a way which disenfranchised Aborigines who had previously had the right to vote in four of the states (NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania). In parliamentary debate on the Bill a parliamentarian described it as “repugnant and atrocious” that a Bill which gave the vote to white women could give the same vote to an Aboriginal woman.
- The Maternity Allowance Act 1912 barred the allowance to ‘women who are Asiatics, or are Aboriginal Natives of Australia, Papua or the Pacific’.
- The first half of the century saw the widespread confinement of aborigines under “Protection” legislation.
- The Aborigines Act 1911 (SA) provided that a Chief Protector could send any Aboriginal to a reserve.
- In 1935 the Chief Protector in Queensland could summarise aboriginal policy as consisting of:
 - i. Checking the breeding of half castes
 - ii. Encouraging marriage among their own race
 - iii. Segregating aboriginals and lower types of crossbreeds in settlements and missions or control them in supervised employment
 - iv. Grant exemption to superior types of Crossbreeds found after careful inquiry to be able to look after themselves
 - v. Place light coloured children in European environment for ultimate absorption into the white community
 - vi. Raise the standard of living of the aboriginal communities
- The Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act 1944 (WA) allowed citizenship rights to Aborigines who could demonstrate, among other things that they had sufficiently adopted white ways and dissolved tribal association.
- The only state not adopting restrictive policies regarding Aborigines was Tasmania, which believed it had no Aborigines. It did adopt legislation in regard of half-castes.
- In the late 1930s, at national level, policy classified Aborigines according to their racial and cultural background ‘fully detribalized’, ‘semi-detribalized’, ‘half-castes’.
- The second half of the twentieth century began to see the gradual dismantling of racial mechanisms embodied in federal and state legislation. In 1975 the Federal Government adopted the Racial Discrimination Act implementing provisions of the International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- The 1970s saw the end of the White Australia policy and the re-emergence of the multicultural character of Australia that had been suppressed for a century or more.
- Racism, xenophobia and intolerance continue to be forces operating in modern Australia.

Sources: J. Chesterman and B Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, 1997; AT Yarwood and MJ Knowing, *Race Relations in Australia: A History*, Methuen Australia, 1981

5. Community Action Against Racism in Australia

Eradicating racism demands concerted action over the long term. Apart from the moral obligation that all civilized societies have to treat all members equally, they are also obliged by international human rights instruments to work to ensure that the state does not in any way promote or foster racism, and instead should actively combat racism.

While governments have a very important role to play in combating racism, we must not leave everything to them. Combating racism is too urgent and important - individuals, communities, businesses and other organizations must also take action.

Around the world campaigns to raise awareness about racism, to expose miscarriages of justice or to defend the rights of persecuted minorities and asylum-seekers have brought huge success. In Australia, communities and ordinary citizens are now getting together to foster understanding of and respect for the rights of everyone in the community. In the last few years, we have seen a large number of groups and individuals committing to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From the Sea of Hands, to the Reconciliation Council's work, to the marches over the bridges in Australia's major cities, people are increasingly saying no to racism and bigotry.

Individuals around Australia now increasingly accept that mandatory sentencing should end. People are increasingly saying that basic human rights should be afforded to those who arrive on our shores fleeing persecution. People are now increasingly saying that women and children should not be arbitrarily detained in Australia's immigration detention centres.

In sporting life, perhaps the one area of leisure in which we all believe in giving everyone a 'fair go' and rewarding excellence, players and codes are introducing ways of ending racism in sport. Codes of Conduct relating to racism and racial vilification are being introduced to various sports. For example, the AFL introduced the racial and religious vilification code in 1995 in response to the increasing protests of prominent Indigenous footballers at the abuse they were facing. It has led to real change.

There are many steps that we can take to fight against bigotry, discrimination and injustice, whether we act as individuals, through our social, political, cultural, religious or sporting groups, or with organizations that focus on human rights. This action kit provides a range of resources for taking action.

6. Using This Action Kit

This action kit provides information about groups that are working to eliminate racism, ideas about resources that may help individuals and groups to take action against racism, and a series of action sheets.

The action kit has been prepared with the aim of catering to the needs of many different groups of Australians who share a commitment to addressing and eradicating racism. Obviously it will not necessarily be possible for your organization or group to undertake every suggested activity. Also it is acknowledged that community groups or organizations may find it useful to *adapt* materials from this kit for their own local networks. We encourage you to do so, if this will assist in facilitating your action against racism, and have made this kit available via the Web sites below. We would be grateful if source materials from this action kit could be acknowledged.

Our hope in producing the kit is that as many groups as possible will try to undertake at least one or two of these activities that they find most appropriate to their situation and opportunities.

Where to Find this Kit on the Web:

www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

This kit has been endorsed by the following organizations:

Australian Bahai Community
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
Australian Council for Overseas Aid
Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission (Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide)
Diocesan Social Justice Action Group (Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton)
Diocesan Social Justice Commission (Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba)
Tasmanian Catholic Justice & Peace Commission (Catholic Archdiocese of Hobart)
Ethnic Communities Council NSW
Multicultural Development Association Inc (Queensland)
National Social Responsibility and Justice, Uniting Church in Australia
Social Justice Commission, Uniting Church in Australia, WA Synod
United Nations Association of Australia
West Australians for Racial Equality

7. Resource List

7.1 Australian Laws

For the texts of relevant Australian anti discrimination legislation, visit the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission's website www.humanrights.gov.au and go to the race discrimination pages or try <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au>

7.2 International Treaties & Monitoring

For the texts of relevant international instruments visit the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/treaties.htm> or the Human Rights Internet site at www.hri.ca/uninfo/treaties/index.shtml or the Office of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/intlnst.htm>

To read the reports of the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, visit www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cerd.htm

7.3 The World Conference Against Racism Outcomes

For the text of the Declaration and Program of Action that resulted from the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance, visit www.un.org/WCAR/

7.4 Facts & Figures

FACE THE FACTS ONLINE OR IN PRINT

Face the Facts answers some of the most common questions on issues of immigration, refugees and Indigenous peoples. This updated edition (2001) has been fully revised taking into account new research and the latest statistics. It includes a list of sources and human rights websites for those who wish to obtain further information. It can be downloaded from www.humanrights.gov.au or ordered from phone (02) 9284 9600 or email: publications@humanrights.gov.au

AS A MATTER OF FACT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs have in the past been a potent target for myths - many grounded in ignorance, fear or resentment of Indigenous culture or of government programs which assist Indigenous people. ATSIC has developed a number of publications to present the facts and views from an Indigenous perspective; and to help banish the myths.

[As A Matter of Fact](#) is a 72-page publication that examines myths over a range of topics: history, funding, ATSIC, specific programs, land, and community attitudes. You can download it or order a printed copy for \$9.95 from www.atsic.gov.au

ATSIC has also developed a series of [Fact Sheets](#) and Issues Sheets to present information in a simple, accessible form on ATSIC's principal programs, budget and [accountability](#), and other topics of significance to ATSIC and Indigenous people.

7.5 Some Useful Websites

HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission includes a Race Discrimination Commissioner whose responsibilities include: promoting research and educational programs that combat racism; fostering awareness of and compliance with the federal [Racial Discrimination Act](#) and the [Racial Hatred Act](#); assisting the Federal Court or Federal Magistrates Service in court cases relating to race discrimination where appropriate.

For more information on HREOC's current activities to promote equality and respect for people of different cultures, visit their website www.humanrights.gov.au

AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

The following groups are just some of the non-governmental organizations that regularly deal with issues of racism and human rights. By following the links on their websites you will find many more.

Amnesty International Australia www.amnesty.org.au

Human Rights Council of Australia www.hrca.org.au

International Commission of Jurists www.icj.org

Refugee Council of Australia www.rcoa.org.au

RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander websites. One starting point is the site of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission www.atsic.gov.au another is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice section of the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission's website www.humanrights.gov.au - follow the links to find other sites.

To find out about the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils visit www.coombs.anu.edu/~cims/fecca.html

For the views and activities of the Arabic communities in Australia visit the Australian Arab Council at www.aac.org.au

For the views and activities of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, visit <http://www.join.org.au/ecaj/>

To learn about the Australian Baha'i Community's views on racism, visit www.bahai.org.au/racism.htm

For the views of the Catholic community, visit www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au and go to the issues page on racism.

SCHOOLS

The *Racism. No way!* project aims to assist school communities and education systems to recognise and address racism in the learning environment. The project is an initiative of the Chief Executive Officers of education systems across Australia. This project is managed and educational content has been developed by Government State and Territory education systems, the National Catholic Education Commission, the National Council of Independent Schools' Associations and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. To access the Racism. No way! resources visit www.racismnoway.com.au

You can now access a range of teaching materials on human rights from the Human Rights and equal Opportunities Commission' new Information for Teachers website section. The section will be regularly updated to provide teachers with the most recent and quality materials. See www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_teachers/index.html

The HREOC site also contains a comprehensive section on human rights for school students. It is a great starting point for students undertaking research for assignments, or who are just seeking a plain English explanation of human rights. It explores the history of human rights, information about the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and children's human rights. Visit www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_students/index.html

The UN CyberSchoolBus is the teachers' resource section of the United Nations' site. It contains a variety of modules easily adaptable to Australian curricula. Topics include: peace studies, poverty, human rights and women's rights. It includes briefing papers, quizzes and games for students. Visit at www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/index.html

YOUNG PEOPLE

Yoghurt is a forum for young Australian's of diverse cultures working for human rights and social justice. Visit the site www.yoghurt-lotsofculture.com

ACTION SHEET 1

Citizens Call for Action!

Calling For More Action And Resources From Government, Working With Your Local Parliamentarians

Everyone in the community can contribute to building a community free of racism, however government has the largest responsibility and the largest capacity to make a difference.

In a democracy, such as Australia, the expression of community views to elected leaders is an important way of influencing public policy and programs. This is especially true of your local elected representative in parliament.

Letters on issues of racism or xenophobia can be written to elected leaders such as:

- The Prime Minister
- The Leader of the Opposition
- Leaders of Minor Parties
- State Premiers and Opposition figures
- Your local Federal and State member of parliament
- Mayors and Local Councillors

The following are some suggestions for letter writing to politicians.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LETTERS TO POLITICIANS

Be clear about the purpose of your letter. Use the “R” word – make clear you are concerned about racism and want to see it end. If possible provide examples of racism or xenophobia you feel exists.

State on whose behalf you are writing, whether as an individual or on behalf of a community group.

Political leaders will respond most positively to letters which have a specific request for action. Keeping up to date with relevant developments will help in identifying specific action you feel ought to be taken.

Be polite and courteous. Avoid political partisanship. Being identified with one side of the political spectrum will reduce your effectiveness in achieving positive responses from other sides of political life.

When expressing concern about government policy, be clear as to what problems you see and how you think they should be addressed.

Following up any such letter is very important. A phone call to the parliamentarian’s office about two weeks after your letter will emphasise that the issue is important to you.

It is also useful to try to find out which part of a government agency is dealing with your letter. Speak directly to the people involved and explain in more detail what you would like to see happen. Seek their support for your proposals.

If the initial reply you receive doesn't address the issues you have raised, there is no reason why you shouldn't write back to reiterate the concerns that haven't been addressed. Follow up is very important. A single letter is not enough to put an issue on the agenda.

Seek support of your local MP. They can help to get your message through.

Give credit where credit is due. If you do get a positive response and action is taken make sure you express your thanks.

Letters are more effective if they come from a coalition of groups. Approach other groups to support your letter.

WORKING WITH LOCAL MPS

Speaking as a constituent to your local Federal or State Member of Parliament is the essence of democracy. It is an extremely effective and relatively simple means of getting your concerns across, and evidence from other campaigns, both in Australia and overseas, suggests that it really works. Putting direct questions to MPs to elicit their views, as well as asking them to act in Parliament and in the local community, can help create a ground-swell in the parliament and/or party room. Local action also helps to shape opinion and action by government. In effect, you are encouraging Parliamentarians to do one of their most important jobs - that of listening and responding to the interests and concerns of the people they represent.

What to ask your MP to do: you need to be absolutely clear about what you want MPs to do. We suggest the following requests that could be put to your member of parliament; you may choose those most appropriate for your own MP. Not all MPs will undertake them all, but try to get a commitment on some.

- Encourage local councils in their electorate to consult local communities to develop local plans of action against racism (see action sheet 4)
- Write personally to the Prime Minister/Premier, multicultural affairs ministers, requesting them to note our concerns regarding racism and its prevalence, and asking that greater action be taken to eradicate racism in our society.
- Write to or question their own party leaders and front bench on the action they are prepared to take in protecting human rights and working for the eradication of racism.
- Speak out in adjournment debates and/or ask parliamentary questions with or without notice on any of the above. Please ask for Hansard copies of any contributions, as you may be able to publicise a favourable intervention. (Note: Although you should not make this too obvious, always remember that most MPs will be keen for any positive publicity.).
- Take action to promote an anti-racism message in your electorate, through their newsletter, and through promoting the holding of anti-racism meetings.

Even if they do not support you, being forced to justify their position in the face of your polite but firm concern is valuable in itself and a fundamental part of the democratic process.

Local Members of the House of Representatives/Legislative Assembly should first be written to by local groups and a face-to-face meeting set up. This is very important. Advice from MPs themselves is that meetings are much more effective in the long run.

* Check in the phone book if you are unsure of your MP's contact details. Also, let other community groups have copies of letters and feedback from meetings etc. This is vital, as they can add their voices with your MP.

A Letter to Your Representative

Suggested points to be made in your letter to your local MP. Remember these are suggestions only - please re-word them to suit your group and your MP:

- As a local community group, you are concerned at the current situation regarding racism, xenophobia and racial discrimination, and would like to make your concerns known to your MP.
- Ask to have your concerns raised with the relevant Ministers (and within your MP's own party as appropriate).
- Ask that your MP communicates to all her/his constituents her/his support for a community free of racism and xenophobia
- Ask that your MP raise your concerns during adjournment or other relevant parliamentary debates as well as asking parliamentary questions.
- Ask for an opportunity to discuss these questions further with your MP, and arrange a suitable time for a meeting.

OTHER TIPS: Make the letter personal - use full names, tell them who you are, sign letters by hand. Keep it short - short sentences, no more details than necessary. Make it inviting to the eyes - attractive lay-out, left-aligned rather than justified paragraphs, no more than five lines a paragraph and use bullet points to attract the eye. Explain - be careful not to assume knowledge and use easy to understand language. Use a friendly tone - offensive remarks will send the letter into the rubbish bin. Be assertive - friendly but firm - refer to the fact that as your MP their job is to represent you. Ask for activity - appeal to their readiness to help, give recommendations, tell them what you see as the next "step" and suggest ways of providing more information/calls/visits.

Over a Cup of Tea

Holding a meeting is one of the best ways to get your message across, and is the basic essence of grassroots democracy. A typical meeting with government representatives lasts no more than one hour. To make this meeting effective, you should:

- prepare thoroughly before the meeting;
- choose a delegation of 2-3 people and ensure they are thoroughly briefed;
- make sure your goals are clear throughout the meeting;
- take appropriate actions to follow-up the meeting.

OTHER TIPS: know your MP - have they met with community groups before? On what issue? What was the outcome? Has he/she ever spoken publicly/via the media about human rights, and racism issues? Have a clear, achievable goal. Decide who is going to say what. Plan for different kinds of response. Dress appropriately - showing knowledge of dress codes increases trust. Keep a positive atmosphere - actively listen and show interest in and understanding of their point of view. State your case precisely. Make your request for help explicit. Keep the discussion on track - summarize progress, dare to interrupt and be interrupted. Deal confidently with questions. Stick to your allocated time. Make sure you do not ask people to do what they are unable to - it may lead to unnecessary frustration on both sides. Check what you have agreed before leaving. Write a letter thanking the MP for the meeting, also mentioning the agreed outcomes. Call again after a two or three week interval, and ask if he/she has taken the action he/she agreed to.

Stop Press

Meeting with your MP may be a great opportunity for local media work. You may decide to inform the media that you intend to meet him/her and to make public the concerns about racism that you wish to raise with them. Or you may judge that it is better to wait until after the meeting itself. Whatever, please use any opportunity to publicise your community delegations.

ACTION SHEET 2

Gather the Clan:

Hold A Community Meeting To Promote A Community Free Of Racism

Plan a Public Meeting around building a community free of racism and xenophobia.

Develop a panel of speakers for the meeting, including NGOs, local experts or community workers, representatives of local council, local councillors, and state and federal members of parliament.

Ask speakers to talk about themes that relate racism to the life of the local community eg:

- A representative of local Indigenous community, or ethnic community, may be able to speak on their experience of racism in the local community
- A representative of migrant women may be able to speak about how the effects of racism impact particularly on women
- A representative of the local Jewish or Islamic community may be able to speak on the combined effects of religious and racial intolerance that members of these communities experience
- A local councillor or member of parliament may be able to speak on what is being or should be done to ensure our community is a tolerant and open one.
- A local university expert may be able to provide the results of local research on race issues.

Involve children by asking them to display materials on human dignity and equality, and against racism

Seek media publicity before and after the event, to ensure that the wider local community hears of the meeting.

If practicable seek partner organizations - see what other groups are doing in your area.

Plan your meeting to happen during relevant national or international days to help promote your meeting: e.g.

21 March **International Day for the Eradication of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (also National Harmony Day)**

10 December **International Human Rights Day**

Follow up any opportunities that might emerge from the public meeting to address racism in an ongoing way.

ACTION SHEET 3

Get Wired ...

Using The Power Of The Internet

The internet is a change as profound in the world as the invention of the printing press. The mythology of the “net” is that it is a place where the “people” can get their message across. Experience shows it can be very effective way to:

- research your work
- network with others who share your goal
- keep up to date with what is happening
- spread your message and mobilise support
- publicise what is happening

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

See Section 7 of this Kit for useful web links where you can find information and contacts to help with your work.

JOIN THE NNCAR NGO LIST

This NGO list is an active forum for community workers to share all sorts of news, activities, and networking around anti-racism work. It is easy to join. Just send your email to amritadasvarma@hotmail.com and ask to be subscribed to the NNCAR NGO list. This is a great way to keep in touch with what is happening.

SET UP YOUR OWN EMAIL CIRCULATION LIST

Once you get a group together – you need to stay in touch. Sharing your email addresses and setting up an email circulation list in your own computer is easy and can be done in most email programs.

Set Up a Longer list of people who you want to work with, but who don't want to be inundated with day-to-day details. These might be people who want major news of your activities or on the issue and would like to come to your meetings. This can also be a mobilisation group if you need to get action quickly.

Send out copies of press releases and notices over such a longer list.

ACTION SHEET 4

Think Global, Act Local ...

Ask Your Local Council To Pass A Resolution And Adopt An Action Plan Against Racism

SUGGESTED AIM:

To persuade your Local Council that it should play a more active leadership role in building a community free of racism and xenophobia. Urge Council to host a local community consultation on racism themes and to develop recommendations to Council for a local plan of action against racism, racial discrimination, and intolerance.

SUGGESTED STRATEGY:

- find out what Council is already doing
- Develop a proposal to put to Council, for Council to host a community consultation, with the aim of developing a "community declaration against racism" and a "community plan of action" to ensure that racism is eliminated from the local community.
- Ask Council to consider erecting "Refugees Welcome Here" signs throughout the municipality
- Invite other community organizations to co-sponsor the approach to Council: such as local churches and religious communities, local human rights groups, migrant communities, Indigenous communities, refugee or welfare groups, women's organizations
- Meet with local state/federal members of parliament and ask them to write a letter to Council to support your proposal for a community consultation.
- Decide what contribution your group could make and offer to provide this contribution (eg promote the public meeting, arrange a venue, provide background materials, assist on a Council working group for the community consultation etc)
- Arrange a meeting with the Mayor, elected Councillors, and Senior Council staff to seek support for the community consultation and plan of action.
- Seek media interest and support for the idea of the local community addressing questions of racism and community harmony in the local community.

WHAT A DECLARATION AGAINST RACISM MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

A declaration against racism should reflect the views and approaches of each local community, so that there are no particular words that must be used. However, the following example may be useful, if it would be of assistance to have a 'model' of what a local declaration might look like.

(The declaration in the following box is modelled on the declaration on a tolerant and open society adopted by the Australian Parliament)

Declaration on Racial Tolerance

On behalf of the people of the ... of ...

Council reaffirms:

- **Its commitment to work for the opportunity for all in our community to enjoy equal rights and to be treated with equal respect, regardless of race, colour, creed or origin**
- **Its commitment to working for, and maintaining, a community which will always be wholly free of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or origin**
- **Its commitment to reconciliation with the Indigenous community in our area, and to working to redress the social and economic disadvantage they face**
- **Its commitment to working for a united and harmonious community with a shared commitment to the well-being of all the people of our ...**

Council condemns racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of community we are and want to be.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY PLAN OF ACTION

A community plan of action is best developed on the basis of community consultation as to the needs and experiences of the local community. The suggested community consultation would provide a basis for the development of such a plan of action. One way of organizing a community consultation would be a full-day meeting, divided into several segments:

1. A plenary session introducing participants to the day and the issues that are being discussed;
2. Subsequent parallel workshops addressing separate issues in greater detail, with discussion of experience and "recommendations for action" as outcomes of the workshop discussion.
3. A final plenary, to follow-up the issues raised and finalise the draft community plan of action that would be launched by the Council

Organising themes for your workshop is probably best done after considering what local issues are most important. Broadly the following types of discussions might be useful:

- How does racism, hatred, discrimination, intolerance, or fear along racial or cultural lines manifest in your community? What are its causes and symptoms in the local community?
- Who are the victims of racism and its associated problems in your community?
- How can a community which is unified across racial and cultural lines and free of racism and its associated problems be most effectively promoted? What specific programs could be pursued?
- How can we remedy any ongoing injustice suffered by individuals or community groups as a result of racism and its associated problems?

Outcomes of the workshops would be reported back to the full meeting, and could be compiled and submitted to Council to draw up a plan of action that it would approve, and then share with the community.

ACTION SHEET 5

Taking it to the Streets ...

Contacting The Media

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA - GUIDELINES

Using the media to promote an anti-racism message is the best way to reach many people at once. As a person working at the local level, you are in a unique position to make an anti-racism story relevant to local media. Through your local media you can provide a link to the human rights that are being violated by racism and racial discrimination around the world, or in Australia. And as a community member you are considered good 'talent' for local press images and radio interviews.

You may also wish to respond to events you hear in the media – for example, if there are stories on refugees and the story is accurate and gives a sympathetic portrayal, you can call in and congratulate the station/newspaper on its reporting, whereas if the story is wrong or is intolerant, you can call in to offer a correction or different perspective. The points you can raise are listed in some of the websites listed in this kit, particularly the Face the Facts kit from HREOC and the government's Living in Harmony kit.

It is suggested that you only approach 'local' media that cover your immediate area. Community radio and your local newspaper will be the easiest first point of contact to line up interviews or send media releases. Commercial radio will be more of a challenge. You need to be familiar with the media outlets you are targeting and have an appreciation of their demographics.

Unless you set yourself up with a 'shock jock', you are unlikely to be misrepresented or humiliated. When you go to the media you must be well equipped with information, in particular knowledge about the issues being raised.

HANG ON THERE – THAT'S NOT RIGHT!

At the same time, we encourage people to listen to Talk Back Radio and call up to rebut incorrect statements or prejudice, for example on refugee or Indigenous issues. You can use the information available in the Face the Facts and Living in Harmony kits, which are statistical, accurate and reasonable. Racism is most effectively challenged by people speaking out reasonably in their community and once you ring a radio station, you will have gained incredible confidence. Get together a group of friends who can work as a team to challenge implied hate messages in this kind of media.

Local media, especially press, are very responsive to photo opportunities. Visual stunts, such as drama re-enactments, or the local MP/celebrity writing a letter to the Prime Minister or other relevant Ministers, work well. Listen out for opportunities on talk-back radio and phone in. Don't restrict your media activity to 'obvious' media, approach organizations in your area about getting your message in to their newsletters.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor are an excellent and easy way to get racism issues mentioned in the press. Letters are usually in response to stories or opinions in a publication. Either mention your concern in the body of the letter or sign the letter from your group. Letters should be a succinct 200-400 words, be

signed, dated and include a contact phone number. Ring the publication you are targeting to find out the name and fax number of the Letters Editor.

WRITING A MEDIA RELEASE

A media release should be written to give advance notice of an event, announce the launch of your group's work in support of a community free of racism, outline your response to current events, or draw attention to any new initiatives.

It must be newsworthy: have impact, be timely, and interesting. The first paragraph should contain the '5Ws' - who, what, where, when and why. The rest of the media release is for you to provide details and background information.

A media release must be word processed and include, the date and contact phone numbers of your group. Media releases should be no longer than one page and in an easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman, minimum size 12. Include quotes from your spokesperson.

Media releases should be addressed to either the editor (print media) or producer (radio), or to a journalist you believe would be interested in reporting the event. Ring the person you sent the fax to and 'sell' them the story over the phone by discussing possible story angles, photo opportunities, why their listeners would be interested and spokespersons.

THE INTERVIEW

The more media interviews you do, the easier it will become. Be prepared with your message and background information and be comfortable with the time and place of the interview. Try to anticipate what questions you might get asked and practice answering them aloud. Discuss the line of questioning with the journalist beforehand to help you prepare. It is important to get your message across - never be forced to comment on something the answer to which you are unsure.

If you are being interviewed for TV or radio news, the journalist will take from you a 5-30 second 'grab' (TV grabs are shorter than radio). The journalist will interview you for several minutes but pick out the part of your interview which; makes a statement, explains the statement (usually with an example), then concludes the statement

For example:

"Our community is calling on the government to note the issues and concerns as raised by the Race Discrimination Commissioner's report..."

Always say 'our group believes' as opposed to 'I believe'. Remember that 'um' is a thinking word and silence will also help you think. If a journalist asks you a question you don't have the answer to, you can either 'bridge' to something you do know or say that your group is considering the issue - it sounds better than saying you don't know. 'Bridging' is a good way to not answer the question but provide alternative information. For example;

"It is hoped that governments everywhere will pursue actions that will help stamp out racism and racial discrimination, and allow everyone to exercise and enjoy their full human rights".

If you are going on television or being photographed, wear smart but simple clothes. Most of all, try to relax and be natural. Think of longer interviews as a one-on-one conversation with the journalist. Remember there is no such thing as 'off-the-record' comment.

ACTION SHEET 6

Youth Against Racism

Young people can play a critical role in promoting the anti-racism message, in schools, on campuses and in their communities.

Young people represent the hope of the future, and you can start working now for a better world, one that you will inherit and inhabit. Such involvement encourages the development of the skills you will require to create this new world, and empowers you in dealing with the issues that will arise.

SOME ACTIONS YOU COULD TAKE:

- Promote a debate at schools or on campus: “Have we done enough to fight racism?”
- Organise 'speak-outs' at schools, universities and at TAFEs, focusing on youth experiences of racism and ideas of how to combat it;
- Approach your local Youth Affairs Council, student organization, community centre or other youth organizations to help organise some of the above activities, whether by providing a venue, resources to make phone calls and send out letters, or to host an event;
- Hold a concert promoting anti-racism messages;
- Promote a petition headed “Students Against Racism” and asking students to commit to rejecting racism in all its forms and promoting understanding and tolerance between all cultures and races.

ACTION SHEET 7

Women & Racism

Racism is not just about our skin colour, or our ethnicity; it can be influenced by other factors as well. We need to keep in mind that the intersection of issues such as race with **gender**, sexuality, disability, age, and religious beliefs can result in very specific types of discrimination.

Issues of gender may affect the way in which the problems are perceived and articulated, and what solutions are suggested. The experiences of women and girls are just as important as those of men and boys, and their contributions towards overcoming racism are equally vital.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Ensure that in every and any action or campaign you undertake to combat racism - whether in organizing a community meeting, writing a letter, approaching your local council, hosting a Youth Forum, or dealing with the media - there is recognition given to the issues of gender and sex discrimination faced by women and girls.
- Encourage the participation of women and girls in all of your actions against racism.
- Participate in any Gender and Racism activities, such as forums, consultations and documentation processes being run by organizations such as the Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA) or the Association of Non English Speaking Women Australia (ANESBWA).
- If you are a women's organization, or have a large membership comprising women and girls, host a workshop about the connections between racism and sexism, and the resultant problems faced by so many women in our community.

SOME GOOD EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE INTERNET ARE:

- World Conference Against Racism website: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/racism/index.htm>
- Women's Caucus Against Racism: <http://cwgl.rutgers.edu/ac/wc.htm>
- Human Rights Internet: <http://www.hri.ca/racism/>
- Commission on the Status of Women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/csw>
- Amnesty International Australia (Torture of Women): <http://www.amnesty.org.au>

ACTION SHEET 8

Faith Communities Against Racism

For many Australians, religious faith is an important influence on beliefs, values and behaviour. All of the major religions represented in Australia are opposed to racism and uphold the equal dignity of all human beings.

The National NGO Coalition Against Racism includes groups whose anti-racism work is inspired by the Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Baha'i and other faiths.

Faith communities can act together to promote human rights and oppose racism.

ORGANISE AN INTERFAITH GATHERING

Many people know little about religions other than their own. Sometimes this is simply because they have not had the opportunity to spend time discussing beliefs with people of other faiths. Fear, mistrust and misinformation can prevent people from seeing faith communities other than their own as a force for good.

You can organise a gathering of people from all the faith communities in your local area to share their experiences of racism, their teachings, and their actions inspired by religious belief to combat racism. Such a gathering could make a simple statement together affirming its shared belief in the equal dignity of all peoples. A photograph of the different religious leaders together in their ceremonial attire may help to gain publicity for such a statement.

SPEAK OUT AGAINST ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF BELIEF & WORSHIP

Discrimination on the basis of religion or belief can overlap with racism to result in specific forms of discrimination and abuse, like attacks on places of worship. For example, following the recent escalation of tensions in the Middle East, attacks have been made on synagogues, and mosques were attacked following the events of September 11.

Religious leaders at the national level have spoken together clearly condemning attacks on any places of worship. Your local faith community can also make public acts of solidarity and support for other faith communities who suffer in this way. Getting in touch and offering love and support can help to undo the harm of hate which is directed at minority faith communities.

JOIN FAITH COMMUNITIES FOR RECONCILIATION

Faith Communities for Reconciliation brings together representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i and Buddhist communities along with various Christian traditions, to work for reconciliation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Your local faith community can join in.

WELCOME THE STRANGER

Hospitality towards the stranger is a strong value in many faith communities. Most faith communities are engaged in some practical support work with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Encourage your local faith community to speak and act with other faith communities on issues that affect refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Anti-Racism Action Circles

When confronted with racism or xenophobia many of us don't know where to start. One way to begin is to get a group of friends and acquaintances together who want to "do something" but like you are asking where to begin.

THESE ARE SOME SUGGESTED STEPS:

1. Agree to study the problem together. Begin by borrowing some books on racism in Australia from your local library and sharing what each of you learn at your meetings. Look at what is happening internationally: in Europe and North America, where trends similar to Australia can be seen.
2. Hold a brainstorming session about the problems and issues in your local community – what are they – who do they affect worst – why are things happening? What could be done?
3. Network with someone experienced in antiracism work (see this guide for contacts): invite them to your meeting and bounce around ideas.
4. Focus on solutions rather than just problems. Develop a vision of what you would like to see happening in your community.
5. Work on a realistic action plan for your group – that your group can make happen. Focus on practical things that can be done (e.g. organise a meeting between racial groups that don't ordinarily meet; work with local youth). Draw on ideas in this kit.
6. Share your successes – others can learn from your group.
7. Join the NNCAR NGO list.

Other Events to include Community Members ...

Film Nights, Seminars, And Other Cultural Events

One important way of raising awareness within the community is to organize various events that can all, in their different ways, bring the issues of racism and racial discrimination to a wider public awareness.

FILM NIGHTS

Film nights are a popular and stimulating way to raise awareness. A local community, school or church hall is probably the easiest to arrange, and you should allow time after the film for a discussion of the issues it raises.

Assessing films: there are many sources of relevant films, ranging from the ABC (its recent series "The Australian Story" had one programme devoted to the white Australia policy) and SBS through to the National Library or the Koori Educational Centre at Sydney University.

SEMINARS

While these may sound a rather dry way of trying to generate interest, they are actually an excellent forum for canvassing issues and ideas, and dispelling misconceptions. Choose a topic (perhaps one of the race issues identified in this Kit, or perhaps some issue of relevance to your local community), and organize appropriate speakers.

A range of organizations may be able to provide speakers (*in alphabetical order*)

- Amnesty International Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- State Labor Councils
- Local universities

CULTURAL EVENTS

Then there are cultural events. Within most communities now there is often quite a wide range of cultural and ethnic diversity. Events that bring these groups together and allow for all the community to see aspects of other communities' life are an excellent educational tool. And they can be both entertaining and enjoyable (think of sampling all those different ethnic foods).

Contact local groups representing the different ethnic and cultural communities within your area, and discuss with them the possibility of holding something like a fair day (A Fair Day as a Fair Way to Combat Racism), with stalls selling traditional foods, and with performances of traditional dances, or mime, or short plays. Or, if this seems too daunting, perhaps simply organize a Cultural Night, with the performances only. Or perhaps a local art gallery might be willing to mount a display of art from persons of different ethnic groups.

Approach your local schools, they are often sensitive to issues of the diverse cultures of their students, and ask if they can be involved (providing a school grounds, or a hall). Involving children is useful, since it then brings parents along.

Inside Back Cover

***A Fair Go* is a community action kit produced by the National NGO Coalition Against Racism.**

This action kit provides some information about racism, ideas on where to find further information, and a series of action sheets. The action sheets provide some simple, concrete ways in which individuals and groups can take action against racism in Australia. We hope that it will help you to take up the challenge of fighting racism.

The National NGO Coalition Against Racism (NNCAR) brings together a broad range of community and non-governmental organizations that are working to promote equality, respect and non-discrimination, and to oppose racism. An important emphasis of NNCAR is fostering constructive action by non-governmental organizations working collectively at the local and national levels to make sure that the issue of racism remains on the public agenda, that governments honour the commitments that they made at the World Conference Against Racism held in South Africa in 2001, and that Australian society as a whole confronts racism.