2012

Darebin City Council
Racism Inquiry Report

City of
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01 Mayor's foreword

Early in 2011 Council was alerted to the findings of a national research project which implied that the levels of racism in Darebin were higher than the State average. It responded by launching a local Racism Inquiry to investigate and hear from the community about their experiences of racism in our municipality and their ideas to tackle it.

This report presents the results of the Inquiry. It contains positive findings such as the very strong support for cultural diversity in Darebin but it also points to elements of concern. Too many individuals and communities in Darebin still experience prejudice, discrimination and racism in employment, education, or simply when walking down the street. This should motivate us all to action, because racism has a significant impact not only on the individuals who experience it, but also on the wider community, as it undermines social cohesion and works against our commitment to a diverse and inclusive community.

The Darebin Racism Inquiry gives us an in-depth understanding of areas where our efforts should be increased. It validates our investment in community relations. It also identifies emerging issues. This will allow Council to take preventive measures: building on the National Anti-Racism Strategy, we will create a local response to address race-based discrimination, strengthen community relations and continue to foster harmony and dialogue.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants who have provided input to the Inquiry - the 300 randomly selected residents who participated in a phone survey, the online survey respondents, the participants in the focus groups and public forum - and assure them their voices have been heard. Many thanks to the members of the Racism Inquiry Steering Committee: Cr Gaetano Greco, Cr Trent McCarthy, Alan Brown (Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee), Nalliah Suriyakumaran (Darebin Ethnic Communities Council), Ian Smith (Darebin Interfaith Council), Rae Kingsbury (Darebin Women's Advisory Committee), Said Dileri (Spectrum MRC), Kavitha Chandra-Shekeran and Rivkah Nissim (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission), Ben Waterhouse and Pamela Rodriguez (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation), who have given their time, guidance and wisdom in shaping the Inquiry's content and methodologies. The Steering Committee has agreed to continue meeting to inform Council's proposed Anti-Racism Strategy. Thank you also to Professor Fethi Mansouri (Deakin University) and Dr Yin Paradies (University of Melbourne).

I commend this report to everyone interested and committed to building an inclusive and respectful community where we all feel valued as a citizen regardless of our race, ethnicity, faith, skin colour or accent.

Cr Steven Tsitas
Mayor — City of Darebin

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02 Executive summary

In February 2011, the federal government announced a new National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. At the same time, national research into racism *(Challenging Racism Project)* showed that, while they held more positive views of multiculturalism than average, the residents within the suburbs of Moreland, Banyule and Darebin combined also experienced higher incidents of racism than the state and national average.

In light of these two elements, Darebin City Council took a proactive approach and decided on 18 April 2011 to conduct a locally based racism inquiry, notably to understand and unpack the seemingly paradoxical findings from the *Challenging Racism Project*. The Inquiry investigated race-based discrimination and sought a community-grounded view of experiences of racism in the City of Darebin, as well as ideas on possible solutions, from those who live, work, study or recreate in Darebin. The aim was to document experiences in Darebin and gather evidence, with a view to building a response.

The Inquiry was conducted in September and October 2011, with analysis of the data over the following months. It included a phone survey of 300 residents, representative of the Darebin community in terms of gender, age, geography and cultural diversity; an online survey; 15 focus groups including participants from diverse backgrounds and ages; a public forum and other data-gathering methods.

The Inquiry focused on race-based discrimination (whether direct or indirect, interpersonal or institutional) i.e. "those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion", with a view of racism as "these behaviours and practices, along with the beliefs and prejudices that underlie them" (VicHealth 2009). This broad definition, inclusive of religion and distinct from a legal definition, was thought to be more reflective of people's understanding and experiences.

Findings

Attitudes to diversity

On the whole, respondents to the Darebin Racism Inquiry phone survey seem to hold very positive views and be very supportive of diversity and multiculturalism. It could be argued that, because Darebin is a very diverse community, its members' attitudes to diversity and multiculturalism are generally positive.

Well over eight in ten agreed that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions (89%) and that it is important to them that Darebin remains a culturally diverse community (85%). As far as overtly racist attitudes are concerned, only 7% of respondents in Darebin were prepared to agree that they are to some extent personally prejudiced towards certain races, cultures or religions.

There were, however, less positive findings with 13% of respondents opposed to inter-racial, -cultural or -religious marriages and a relatively high level of denial of racism in Darebin. Similarly, some results suggest that while there is a very strong commitment to diversity in principle among respondents, there is more uncertainty and more ambiguity in practice.

In addition to this, there are some elements of concern: 40% of Darebin residents suggested there are some racial, cultural or religious groups that do not fit into Australian society.

While there are multiple and complex layers of meaning and interpretation around this, it is in part an indirect indication of prejudice and covert and subtle feelings of racism.

Community views of racism

In the focus groups and public forum, racism was described as verbal abuse, physical abuse, stereotypes, prejudice, unequal access to services, different groups not interacting, avoidance strategies, intolerance, institutional racism and, notably by Aboriginal participants, imposition of a culture.

Participants' views of racism pointed to its fluid nature and how difficult it is to define and recognise. The commonalities between, and compounding effect of, the multiple layers of discrimination (ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status…) were emphasised.

Racism was seen as stemming mostly, at an individual level, from ignorance, unfamiliarity, lack of education and fear, and at a collective level, from politicians and the media. Racism was also linked to history and international politics. The ideas of "opportunistic racism", i.e. that racism could be a by-product of conflict or other behaviours, and "inadvertent" or "unintentional" racism were also put forward. The "novelty" of the concept of race, hence racism, for some groups is worth noting.

Specifically Australian dimensions of racism identified were the legacy of the White Australia policy and the specificity of Australia's treatment of its Indigenous community.

On the whole, participants to the Inquiry seemed to hold mixed views of Australia as a country with a lot of tolerance and goodwill, but also a lot of racism. There was the sense of an evolution of racism in Australian society, now less explicit and direct, but pervading through society as a whole, which echoes ideas in the literature of new forms of racism.

Experiences of racism

Almost four in ten respondents (39%) to the phone survey said that they, a friend or family member had witnessed a race-based incident in Darebin in the past five years. The most common type of incident witnessed was verbal abuse (26% of phone respondents), then tensions between groups (23%) and cases of race-based discrimination (22%), and finally physical violence or destruction of property (7%). Comparison with previous surveys indicates there seems to have been an increase in race-based tensions and cases of discrimination in Darebin between 2005 and 2011. However, further elements to corroborate this potentially increasing trend are needed.

With regards to personal experiences, the vast majority of Darebin residents (eight in ten or more phone respondents) had not personally been victims of racism within the last five years.

However, there were quite high levels of experience of direct, overt racism (name-calling – 20% of phone respondents; racist jokes or teasing – 17%); more intermediate levels of experience of physical confrontations (9%); and much lower levels of institutional or formal racism (between 2% and 5%). This might be a sign that institutional racism is decreasing or emphasise the difficulty of identifying it. The most common experience of racism was being faced with racist material in the media (46% of phone respondents and most focus group participants). Cyber-racism was not that widespread, but findings warrant keeping an eye on the development of racist material on the internet.

Participants in the focus groups provided many examples of race-based incidents and discrimination, ranging from subtle forms of exclusion and prejudice to experiences of interpersonal racism or blatant instances of discrimination. Institutional racism was also experienced, with service providers and in employment, whether by Council or outside.

Settings

Consistent with eight in ten phone survey respondents saying they had not experienced racism, more than nine in ten had not experienced racism in the last five years in any setting (employment, education, housing, public venues or events, with police or service providers).

The most common settings where race-based discrimination occurred were the workplace (over 9%) and educational settings (8%). Then came the public space (7% of phone respondents experienced racism in a shop or restaurant, and 7% at a sporting or public event), and at lower levels, dealings with agencies or government service providers (4%), with police (2%) or in the housing market (2%).

In keeping with the statistical findings of the survey, the workplace and employment were identified by focus group participants as a major setting for race-base discrimination. All groups, to differing degrees, mentioned issues with employment. Participants from newly-arrived and Aboriginal communities were particularly exposed to not finding employment because of their background. This shows that addressing employment issues will be a key element to combat race-based discrimination in Darebin.

Schools were also mentioned by focus group participants as a major setting for racism, as well as the public realm (public transport, notably buses, streets and parks, sporting venues, local shops). Accommodation came across as an issue for some of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged ones, and hospitals for CALD elderly.

Affected groups

Findings from the phone survey showed that the most likely to be victims of race-based discrimination in Darebin were those from a "minority" religious background, those from non-English speaking backgrounds (whether speaking a language other than English at home or born in a non-native English speaking country), younger people and in some cases, women.

However, in the focus groups and public forum, there was a general agreement that anyone may be a victim of racism and that racism might be coming from any group. Most victims of racism in Darebin underlined how racism was coming from a small proportion of people and also underlined that racism was not a constant thing.

This, however, was not the case for two groups for which the experience of racism seemed constant and relentless. Data from the focus groups depicts a pervasive, all-encompassing experience of racism for Aboriginal people - exemplified by widespread stereotyping and linked to their collective history of dispossession and mistreatment, which still weighs on the individual today - and, to a slightly lesser extent, for newly-arrived communities, notably from Africa, who "discovered 'being black'" upon coming to Australia. For both these groups, racism was described as an integral part of everyday life, with a lot of informal racism, notably in shops or venues, and mistrust from (and in return towards) institutions. Police particularly were often felt to be discriminatory by the African and Aboriginal communities.

While Aboriginal Australians and newly-arrived communities seem to have the most pervasive experience of racism in Darebin, other groups were also affected. Among these groups, Muslims experienced high levels of discrimination, with the specific dimension of a strong anti-Muslim sentiment from a part of the community, fuelled by media coverage. This was linked to 11 September 2001, seen as a watershed moment. There also seems to have been a gendered experience of racism in the Muslim community, with ambivalent experiences by women regarding the headscarf.

Visible difference (skin colour, headwear for Muslim women or Sikh men…) appeared as a trigger in race-based incidents. There was a feeling that people tend to be more exposed to racism when they display "otherness" or look different. This was also true of distinctive accents, different-sounding names (hence the need felt by some to change their names) and language issues. It seems that how 'foreign' a person looks or sounds has an impact on the type and degree of race-based discrimination they experience.

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The impact of racism

Phone survey respondents reported that witnessing race-based incidents left them feeling sad (41%), outraged (38%), shocked (32%), but also wanting to intervene (32%). This latter figure shows potential for bystander action against racism. There appeared to be no notable difference between genders in terms of feelings experienced when witnessing racism. The only measurable difference was that men were more likely to be outraged.

The main reactions to personal experiences of racism were anger (47%) and feelings of sadness (41%). There were notable differences in feelings across the genders, with men more likely to report being angry or unaffected and women more likely to feel stressed or like they didn't belong.

Numerous focus group participants indicated how racism had scared them, especially Muslim women, but also left them embarrassed or angry. Racism was depicted as preventing people from fully participating in community life through feelings of shame, sadness, isolation and humiliation that made victims feel like they did not belong or that they were not recognised as valuable members contributing positively to Darebin. This lead to hopelessness, powerlessness and, ultimately, disengagement.

Most of the feelings expressed by Darebin respondents can translate into negative health outcomes, in keeping with the now strong evidence of a link between race-based discrimination and ill-health, notably poor mental health.

Racism also affected people's social life and made them behave differently. In the phone survey, three in ten residents (29%) who had experienced racism said that they had changed their behaviour as a result. Key behaviour changes included avoiding people (12%), breaking up a friendship (10%) and avoiding a location (9%). This is concerning, especially as younger respondents appeared to be the most affected.

Similarly, data from the focus groups shows that women, particularly of Muslim faith, were becoming isolated as a consequence of racist incidents, being afraid to go out and staying home. Other groups also reported changing their habits as a result of racism, notably avoiding locations or people.

Responses to incidents

In the phone survey, just under half (45%) of those who experienced (whether personally or as a bystander) a racist incident said they did not take action in response. Confronting the perpetrator in a non-violent way was the second-most common course of action (34%). All other types of actions were less common (10% reported the incident, 9% sought help). Only 4% of phone respondents reported confronting the perpetrator in a violent way or using force. Focus group participants reported a wide range of responses, from taking no action, fleeing, ignoring racism or seeking help (quite often from police, despite little faith in their capacity to do anything about it), to responding to racism, using it or reclaiming one's culture.

In the phone survey, there were clear gender differences in regards to responses when witnessing or experiencing a situation of racism or discrimination. Women were more likely not to take action or to seek help; men were much more likely to confront the perpetrator in non-violent or violent ways (no woman reported responding in a violent way or using force). This raises queries as to how women can be empowered to respond to racism.

The powerlessness felt by many respondents, regardless of their gender, pleads for capacity building programs or actions to support assertive responses (including from bystanders) to race-based discrimination.

Suggestions and recommendations

When asked what Darebin Council can do to address racism, most phone survey respondents were unsure (28%). The most common suggestions were public education about cultural sensitivity (19%) and celebration of multiculturalism (15%). Working with both the established community to be more welcoming (8%) and new arrivals to assist with integration (8%) was also recommended.

However, a sizeable minority (16%) refuted the need for Darebin Council to do anything further, stating that Council is already doing enough. This was echoed in some focus groups and might reflect the feeling that tackling discrimination is not Council's business. It is something to be taken into account when devising policies to address racism.

Numerous recommendations emerged from the focus groups and public forum.

Education and awareness-raising around racism and cultural diversity were seen as paramount. This was particularly the case in schools, with education about cultural diversity, training for teachers and development of an educational "combat racism" toolkit. There were also calls for education with CALD communities, within institutions and in the wider community - by disseminating the outcome of the Racism Inquiry widely and by putting together an education campaign that would emulate the LEAD "See beyond race" campaign.

Community celebration and community building were also recommended to address racism, particularly through social activities such as events and festivals, with strong support for existing Darebin festivals such as the Festival of Light and Friendship and the Darebin Community and Kite Festival. Development of interculturalism, notably through the Darebin Intercultural Centre, facilitation of interactions through sports and culture and action on the public space were also called for.

Improving Council community engagement and developing partnerships was also suggested to tackle racism. Participants called for the development of community engagement in all Council policies and projects, and notably in regard to the Racism Inquiry itself, around the key ideas of accountability and commitment and the need to work in partnership with the community to address racism.

Participants wanted to see Council act as a role-model and take leadership, notably by having anti-racism as part of its vision and declaring Darebin a "racism-free municipality", acknowledging the First Peoples of Australia and celebrating all of Darebin's diverse communities. This extended to employment, with calls for Council to be more reflective of the community in employment, provide training to staff and work with businesses to improve job opportunities for Aboriginal and CALD Australians. Being a role model in service provision and delivering inclusive services was also recommended. Council was also called upon to lead through innovation, notably by using its funding as a tool to address racism, through support for projects fostering inclusion and promoting diversity, or as a tool to redress race-based discrimination, with the idea that Council should "pay the rent".

Council was also seen to have an important role in advocating against racism to the State and Federal levels; to other institutions such as police, transport (notably bus) companies, education institutions and hospitals; to businesses about the benefits to be gained from a changed approach to minority groups; on behalf of victims of racism, with the idea of an ombudsperson for that role; and to the media.

In addition to actions aimed at preventing the occurrence of racism, participants wished to improve support for victims of racism, with more information about anti-discrimination law and the relevant agencies (VEOHRC, AHRC) and their powers and the idea that all services (Council, police, agencies…) should work in cooperation at the local level to tackle racism.

All those suggestions and recommendations show the wide array of ideas from the Darebin community to address racism and underline the expectation to see Council commit to do something about it.

Conclusion

The Racism Inquiry has helped Council identify issues and key areas of difficulty in terms of race relations and tensions, but also good practices and ideas for solutions. It will be used to feed into and inform a City of Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy aimed at addressing all forms of racial discrimination.

It's sad. You just grow up with it and it becomes acceptable when you are Aborigine. That's just how it is. Being Aborigine in our own country is to be the target of racism. It has always existed. People don't talk about it, […] it's part of life.

—Aboriginal woman

03 Background

a. Genesis to the Inquiry

A new national multicultural policy, *The People of Australia,* was released on 17 February 2011. The new policy is based on four principles: celebrating and valuing diversity; maintaining social cohesion; communicating the benefits of Australia's diversity; and responding to intolerance and discrimination. An important element of the policy is the federal government's intention to establish a National Anti-Racism Partnership to design and deliver an anti-racism strategy aimed at tackling all forms of racial discrimination.

On 21 February 2011, following the federal government's announcement of this new policy, Darebin City Council passed a resolution asking Council officers to investigate the possibility of a racism inquiry within the City of Darebin. Research has shown that the role of local government is crucial in devising programs at the local level to mitigate the risk of racial discrimination and to foster trust and respect between various groups.

Such a decision was all the timelier in light of the findings of the *Challenging Racism: the Anti-Racism Research Project (CRP)* by the University of Western Sydney. At the national level, an important finding of the *Challenging Racism Project* is that "Australians are in large part secure with cultural difference", but that "there are still pockets of the country that hold on to 'old-fashioned' racist views". At a more local level, for the suburbs of Moreland, Banyule and Darebin altogether, the research showed that, while support for diversity and multiculturalism was higher than the Victorian and Australian average, residents from those three municipalities combined also experienced higher incidents of racism than the state and national average.

In light of those worrying and seemingly paradoxical findings and upon presentation of the officers' report, Council decided on 18 April 2011 to hold a local racism inquiry. The Darebin Council Racism Inquiry's aim was to hear from people who live, work, study or recreate in Darebin on their views on and experiences of racism, race relations, discrimination and community cohesion, as well as ideas for solutions, with a view of using the data to inform a City of Darebin anti-racism strategy.

b. Underpinning values

The Darebin Council Racism Inquiry was underpinned by the Australian value of "a fair go" for all and by the work conducted at all levels of government.

At the national level, it built on Commonwealth legislative requirements and protections, notably the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Racial Hatred Act 1995* and section 351 of the *Fair Work Act 2009.*

In addition to the new national multicultural policy *The People of Australia*, it also drew on the Australian government's vision of a socially inclusive society as one in which all feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. This vision aims at making sure that all in Australia have the resources, opportunities and capability to:

- learn by participating in education and training;
- work by participating in employment, voluntary work and family and caring;
- engage by connecting with people and using their local community's resources, and;
- have a voice so that they can influence decisions that affect them.

Darebin's inquiry, particularly in its consultation and data gathering phase, intended to allow people to engage and have a voice.

At the state level, the Racism Inquiry was also in keeping with the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (amended 2006)*, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and the Victorian government's multicultural policy, notably as laid out in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004* (Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 since 1 September 2011), and its commitment to recognise the social, cultural and economic contributions of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to Victoria.

In addition, Darebin Council's Racism Inquiry relied on a human rights approach as outlined by the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. Human rights are basic entitlements that belong to every one of us, regardless of our background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe. Based on the values of freedom, equality, respect and dignity, human rights acknowledge the fundamental worth of each person. Human rights are the cornerstone of strong, healthy communities where everyone can participate and be included.

At a local level, the Racism Inquiry was aligned with the explicit support for diversity expressed in Darebin City Council Plan 2009-2013.

c. Council's policy context

The City of Darebin is, culturally, linguistically and religiously, a diverse community.

Over 50% of its population is from a non-English-speaking background, including second generation and newly arrived communities.

In 2006, 28.1% of the Darebin population was born in a non-English speaking country and overall, 32.1% of the Darebin population was born overseas. Darebin's residents speak a wide range of languages, with 39% speaking a language other than English at home. The most common languages other than

English are Italian, Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese, Macedonian, Mandarin, Cantonese and Hindi.

The City of Darebin has the second largest Aboriginal community within the Melbourne metropolitan area, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders residents contributing 0.9% of the total population, twice as much as in the Melbourne Statistical Division (0.4%). Roughly one in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Melbourne live in Darebin.

The City of Darebin is also religiously diverse with the non-Christian religious community doubling in size from 4.1% in 1991 to 8.6% in 2006. This includes Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic communities. The dominant Christian religion is Catholic (32.1%). The proportion of residents with no religious affiliation has grown from 12.3% in 1991 to 19.2% in 2006.

Acknowledging its very diverse population, Council has taken steps to promote and advance intercultural interaction, harmony and understanding. Darebin Council is recognised as progressive in its approach to cultural diversity.

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A number of actions have taken place over the last decade at Darebin. Through initiatives such as the Cramer Street Neighbourhood project, the Darebin Interfaith Council, the Social Inclusion Agenda, the Fair Go for International Students, the Darebin Intercultural Centre, the Memoranda of Understanding with Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) and with the Islamic Society of Victoria, Darebin has developed and sustained intercultural relations.

Darebin boasts a highly engaged and pro-active community that values and cherishes its cultural diversity capital and is protective of it and keen to invest in its development. This is reflected in the Darebin City Council Plan 2009-2013, which is explicit in its support for diversity. The Plan makes several commitments as part of its five strategic goals of:

- Leadership and Engagement
- Community Wellbeing
- Liveability and Regeneration
- Celebration and Participation
- Prudence and Prosperity.

In particular, as part of its Leadership and Engagement goal, Council declared:

"We will ensure our governance practices and structures reflect our diverse community and will provide a whole of organisation response to diversity, evident in the way we make decisions, develop policy and deliver programs and services."

As part of its Community Wellbeing goal, the Council promised:

"We will place particular emphasis on Darebin's diversity, including Darebin's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, our culturally and linguistically diverse residents, and our residents with a disability."

And to fulfil its Celebration and Participation goal, Council made the following commitment:

"We will harness Darebin's diversity, and continue to celebrate the vibrancy and vitality that it brings to our neighbourhoods."

Preserving the benefits of cultural diversity is a real commitment of Council, as reflected in its recently adopted Equity and Inclusion Policy. This commitment drove the decision to conduct a locally based racism inquiry, which would help to identify issues and areas of difficulty in terms of race relations and tensions, as well as uncover best practices and ideas for solutions.

d. Theoretical background: racism in Australia

i Definitions and concepts

Racism is a very complex social phenomenon, not easily described nor understood. It is created through people's thoughts, words and actions — embodying the power relations of domination and subordination — and represents just one form of inter-human relationships. A common approach to understanding racism is to consider it as a combination of prejudice and power.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) defines racism as "an ideology that gives expression to myths about other racial and ethnic groups, that devalues and renders inferior those groups, that reflects and is perpetrated by deeply rooted historical, social, cultural and power inequalities in society". Racism "asserts the natural superiority of one group over another" and "is often used to justify differential treatment and social positions". Hence racism can be defined as a set of beliefs and attitudes that consider

different races and ethnicities as possessing characteristics that render them either superior or inferior and thus legitimise their status as either privileged or disadvantaged.

Racial discrimination is the action resulting from racist views, beliefs, policies and programs.

This means that racism can take many forms. It can be direct, as seen in incidents of racist abuse, insults or name-calling, assault, harassment and discriminatory treatment. But racism can also be manifested indirectly in the form of prejudiced attitudes, lack of recognition of cultural diversity and culturally biased practices.

The AHRC highlights that racism exists in many different forms and "may occur at the individual level, but often occurs at a broader systemic or institutional level". Racism can be direct, indirect and institutional. It can be overt or covert.

Direct (or overt) racial discrimination happens "when one person or group of people receive less favourable treatment than another person or group in the same position would have received on the grounds of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin". Direct racism can be defined as unequal treatment that results in unequal opportunity or outcome.

Indirect (or covert) racial discrimination "includes practices or policies that appear to be 'neutral' or 'fair' because they treat everyone in the same way but adversely affect a higher proportion of people of one racial, national or ethnic group. It can occur even when there is no intention to discriminate" and is most commonly seen where the uniform treatment of individuals does not allow for the requirements of the disadvantaged or alienated. Indirect racism can be defined as equal treatment that results in unequal opportunity.

Interpersonal racism or discrimination "occurs when interactions between people result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups.

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Examples of interpersonal discrimination include bullying, harassment, rudeness, name-calling, over-checking, frequent stopping, verbal/ physical abuse, providing bad service, following around in shops, hiring/firing biases in employment and jokes and teasing. As blatantly discriminatory behaviour has become increasingly socially unacceptable, discrimination may be expressed in more subtle or passive ways." (VicHealth 2009, p. 14)

Institutional (or systemic) racism refers to "forms of racism that are structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when organisations, institutions or governments discriminate, regardless of intention, against certain groups of people (and individuals within these groups) to limit their rights. This form of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, so that the practices of that group are seen as the norm to which other cultural practices should conform. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and marginalises others." (Mansouri 2011, p.15)

As the AHRC puts it:

"Institutional racism is often the most difficult to recognise and counter (virulent and covert), particularly when it is perpetrated by institutions and governments who do not view themselves as racist. When present in a range of social contexts, this form of racism reinforces the disadvantage already experienced by some members of the community."

As the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) underlines in its 2009 *Building on our strengths* report (p.15), "systemic discrimination can persist in institutional structures and policies in the absence of interpersonal discrimination. Its operation may be unintentional and it is often unrecognised by those practising it. For these reasons, systemic discrimination may be difficult to pinpoint."

Another form of racism is **internalised racism.** "It occurs when an individual accepts attitudes, beliefs or ideologies about the superiority of other groups and/or the inferiority of their own group. This can then have an effect on how they regard and behave toward themselves, members of their group, and those from other groups." (VicHealth 2009, p.15)

The impact of racism and racial discrimination, whichever their form, leads to increased isolation, segregation and marginalisation by the people affected. Usually minority ethnic and religious groups and Aboriginal communities are most impacted by racial discrimination at a personal level and institutional level.

A survey commissioned by VicHealth in 2006 found that despite the support for diversity by the majority of Australians, racial discrimination remained unacceptably high especially towards overseas-born and Indigenous Victorians. The study found that exposure to discrimination is a factor in poor health, especially poor mental health. The impact of racism and racial discrimination is multifaceted. In addition to the impact on individuals, there is also a negative impact and cost implication on health services, legal services, community support services, law enforcement agencies and government departments. There is also an impact at the community level on community relations and on workplaces with diminished productivity and increased litigation. Racism undermines positive inter-group relations, social inclusion and the attainment of human rights, and destroys community cohesion. At its worst, it can lead to violence as was seen in the Cronulla riots in 2005. (VicHealth 2009, p.21-23)

ii Racism in Australia

"Racism as an ideology is deeply embedded in Australian society" (Encel 1971). Racism towards Indigenous people dates back to white settlement in 1788 and the subsequent policies that led to dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people from their culture, connection with the land and status as Australia's indigenous peoples. Racism towards minority ethnic and religious groups in Australia has its roots in the "White Australia Policy". This policy can be traced back as early as the 1850s and the introduction of restrictions on Chinese migration by Victoria and New South Wales. But it was formally instituted through the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, which aimed to restrict immigration by people from non-European backgrounds.

After the end of the Second World War and for fear of a population crisis, Australian governments slowly modified their immigration policies and allowed entry to migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The *Migration Act 1958* replaced the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, but it wasn't until the mid 1970s when Australia introduced a non-discriminatory immigration policy. Policies of discrimination and exclusion on the grounds of 'race' were discarded, at least *de jure*, at that time.

However, well until the 1970s, racist policies and practices were embedded within Australian laws and institutions. The most telling examples of these were the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and, until the Constitution alteration of 1967, the denial of full citizenship rights to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Although a number of problems remained and still do, with the introduction of multicultural policies under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and then Malcolm Fraser, and the subsequent official promotion of multiculturalism as a social ideal, significant advances were made that shaped the Australian population. The migration of people from all parts of the world led to the increased cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian population. Australia now includes people who speak more than 400 languages - including Australian Indigenous languages, identify with 270 ancestries, and observe a wide variety of cultural and religious traditions (ABS 2010). One in four people in Australia was born overseas and some 44 per cent of all Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas (ABS 2009).

As multiculturalism developed, "the language of racial or inherited difference was generally replaced by cultural difference and cultural distinctiveness. […] But sentiments associated with race and racial ideology, based on old racism, continued to exist in the popular consciousness" (Mansouri 2011, p.6). And while legislative and policy support is necessary for change, social transformation and attitudinal changes are complex processes that take a longer period to consolidate. This is why "the policy changes involved in the move from 'White Australia' to multiculturalism were not enough to eradicate racist attitudes, beliefs and actions directed at the different ethnic minorities in Australia." (Mansouri 2007, p.23)

In addition, parallel to the development of multiculturalism, some have highlighted the marginalization of an anti-racism agenda. The mere existence of racism in Australian society and its deleterious effects tended to be under-estimated or overlooked, so there was no recognition of the need to address racism and race-based discrimination.

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However, in its 2007 *More than tolerance – embracing diversity for health report*, VicHealth documented the links between race-based discrimination and poor health. A number of other studies showed that Indigenous and overseas-born Victorians continue to report unacceptably high rates of discrimination. (VicHealth 2009, p.10)

Similarly, the University of Western Sydney *Challenging Racism Project*, released in early 2011, gave polarised results, with the persistence of racism in Australia, despite Australians being largely tolerant people who are accepting and welcoming of other cultures. Some of the key findings included:

- Most Australians (84%) recognise that there is racial prejudice in Australia.

- 41% of Australians have a narrow view of who belongs in Australia. This is in keeping with other studies underlining that "contemporary expressions of racism that have emerged in recent years relate to notions of nationhood that are seen as incompatible with diversity. These racist beliefs may be expressed in various stereotyped views of who the 'real' Australians are. This form of racism is based on an ideology of national culture in which minority cultures are regarded as outsiders and a threat to social cohesion." (Mansouri 2011, p.7)

- About one in ten Australians has very problematic views on diversity and on ethnic difference. They believe that some races are naturally inferior or superior, and they believe in the need to keep groups separated.

- More than 85% of respondents to the survey indicated that something should be done to minimize or fight racism in Australia.

The persistence of racism in Australia has recently been highlighted by comments from prominent neurosurgeon, Dr Charlie Theo, pointing out that "racism is still very much alive in Australia", echoed in this by former governor-general Peter Hollingworth.

In Darebin itself, there has been recent evidence of racist behaviours. A statue celebrating Lebanese immigration was defaced with racist and sexually gratuitous graffiti in January 2012. An Aboriginal mural in Thornbury was twice vandalised and sprayed with racist graffiti in August 2011. Initiatives undertaken by Council, such as the 'Salam Alaykum – Muslims reaching out' project or the application for an exemption under the Equal Opportunity Act to hold a 'girls-only' concert, elicited negative media coverage and prejudiced or racist comments. As already mentioned, the *Challenging Racism Project* contains paradoxical, and potentially worrying, findings for the municipalities of Darebin, Banyule and Moreland combined.

In that context, the rationale for a locally-based inquiry into racism in Darebin is all the stronger as there is evidence from the literature that the role of local government is crucial in devising programs at the local level to mitigate the risk of racial discrimination and to foster trust and respect between various groups.

"It feels like there is question mark on [my diplomas], something wrong with them. Although the qualifications were done here, I still do not get a job when my qualifications are relevant. They are from RMIT and one in NMIT. I ask myself, after all this, 'why do I not get a job?' I then changed my name to a more Australian sounding name and when I sent in my application, I immediately got one interview. However, when I got there, they looked at me as if I did not belong. It was clear I would not be considered for this job."

—Man, newly-arrived community (Africa)

Methodology

a. Aim of the inquiry

The aim of the inquiry was to gather the views of Darebin citizens on racism, their experiences of racism and its impact on them, with the purpose of providing Council with an accurate picture of the extent and nature of the problem in the municipality. However, the aim was also to hear about positive experiences or good practices that could help tackle racism in Darebin, with the ultimate goal of creating a City of Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy aimed at addressing all forms of racial discrimination.

The racism inquiry sought to:

- identify any racially-based barriers experienced by Darebin citizens in accessing culturally-appropriate and relevant services, employment, education, sports and leisure, or public space;
- document experiences of racism;
- ascertain the impact of racism and racial discrimination on Darebin citizens in particular and on community relations in general;
- explore bystander feedback about racist incidents they have witnessed and what was their reaction (if any);
- document participants' recommendations on what Darebin Council should and could do to address racism.

b. Scope of the inquiry

The inquiry aimed at being both wide and inclusive, so that the views and experiences of as many citizens as possible were documented. "Citizen" was therefore defined as "anyone who lives, works, studies or recreates in Darebin". Any form of racism that had been experienced, whether direct or indirect, verbal or physical, personal or institutional and whatever the setting, was useful to inform the inquiry.

Drawing on VicHealth's practice in its previous research, a choice was made in this inquiry to contemplate race-based discrimination broadly as "those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion" and to understand racism as "these behaviours and practices, along with the beliefs and prejudices that underlie them." (VicHealth 2009, p. 14) This definition is wide and distinct from a legal definition, which includes only those discriminatory acts that are against the law. This was thought to be more reflective of people's understanding and allowed to capture more of their experiences. The same reasoning applied to the inclusion of religion as there is an "increasing tendency for it to be conflated with ethnicity and culture in popular beliefs and culture" (VicHealth 2009, p.14), despite religious discrimination being usually treated as a separate form of discrimination in legislation and international conventions.

Previous research shows that Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are most affected by racism. The Darebin inquiry was therefore mindful of trying to get these communities' views. The inquiry also sought to engage a broad section of the Darebin community, regardless of where they come from or the language they speak or whether or not they are directly affected by the issue. Because racism is detrimental not only to its victims but to the community as a whole, it was deemed important that every citizen in Darebin felt they could have a say on this topic.

The inquiry also tried to look at a wide range of settings or situations where racism might occur:

- education (school, TAFE, university);
- employment / workplace;
- service provision from public authorities or other agencies;

- community relations, including dealings with neighbours or authorities such as the police;
- public space (shops, restaurants, sporting or public events, etc.);
- access to housing, whether buying or renting;
- online (websites, emails, blogs and online comments as well as social media).

Gathering information on the response to racist incidents, whether personally experienced or witnessed, as well as the impact of these incidents was also seen as essential.

Residents' positive experiences of, or ideas for, interventions that can contribute to reducing racism were also sought.

c. Research design

The Racism Inquiry was undertaken in 4 main stages:

- preparatory phase of the inquiry, including:
  » literature review
  » establishment of the steering committee
  » development of a survey
  » selection of a survey company
  » promotion of the inquiry through media releases and a dedicated webpage on Darebin City Council's website
  » development of running notes for focus groups
- consultation and data-gathering phase of the inquiry from 12 September to 31 October 2011, through:
  » phone and online surveys
  » focus groups
  » a public forum
  » additional methods
- data compilation and analysis phase
- report writing

In the very first stages of the project, a literature review around local governments and racism was commissioned by Darebin City Council to prepare and sustain the inquiry. It constituted a comprehensive reference base and gave the inquiry rigour and a body of knowledge and information to work with.

A steering committee was then established to oversee the completion of the Darebin Council racism inquiry and to ensure a wide and inclusive representation from community organisations and representative bodies. The steering committee was comprised of Councillors, senior officers and representatives from the community (Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, Darebin Interfaith Council and Darebin Women's Advisory Committee) and from agencies (Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – VEOHRC, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation – VicHealth). The committee met three times during the project implementation to receive updates and provide advice, support and guidance. Members of the steering committee also assisted with the public forum and the organisation of some focus groups.

On the whole, the Racism Inquiry used an exhaustive and extensive methodology, with different processes and events taking place over the months of September and October, allowing for a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from a number of sources to be gathered. All of the following methods of consultation and data-gathering were used to capture information from a wide section of the Darebin community.

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d. Survey(s)

i. Phone survey

A survey questionnaire was designed by Council officers from previous research conducted internally on similar topics, as well as elements from the VicHealth and Challenging Racism Project studies, to gather quantitative data for the inquiry.

The survey aimed to:

- explore attitudes towards community diversity and identify prejudice at both individual and community levels;
- assess residents' experiences of racism, their reactions to such experiences, and the impact it had on them;
- gauge public opinion regarding Darebin City Council's role in addressing racism.

A random phone survey of 300 Darebin residents was conducted by McNair Ingenuity Research, with fieldwork taking place between 20 September 2011 and 5 October 2011. This number of respondents ensures that, within the margin of error (+/-2.5% to +/-5.66%), the results published in this report are an accurate reflection of the community's perception.

The phone survey captured a representative sample of the Darebin community, in terms of gender, age, geography and cultural diversity. Additionally, age and gender respondent quotas were set to ensure a valid sample was obtained in these categories. The results of the survey were later weighted by these variables (based on ABS statistics) to bring the sample exactly in line with the population of Darebin aged 16 years or over.

In addition, as a further measure to ensure the representativeness of the sample given the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Darebin community, in-house trained and accredited multi-lingual interviewers were used to conduct the survey in the respondent's preferred language. Overall, approximately one in eight interviews (13%) were conducted in a language other than English. These languages included Italian, Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Macedonian, Croatian, and Portuguese.

This means that, within the margin of error mentioned, the results from the phone survey extend to the Darebin population as a whole and are representative of the community's experience.

The phone survey provides robust, valuable and reliable quantitative data that informs an important part of this report.

ii. Online survey

An electronic survey was made available online through the dedicated webpage (referenced in all promotional material concerning the inquiry) on the Darebin City Council website, from 12 September 2011 to 26 October 2011.

Sixty-five people, including 21 Council staff, completed the online survey which adopted many of the questions used in the telephone version. While the relatively small size of the sample provides only a low confidence level statistically, interesting elements can be drawn from the data. Clearly, a key difference between the two surveys was that the online respondents were not randomly selected, but a self-select sample and may have had an existing interest in the topic. Additionally, almost one third of the responses came from staff.

e. Focus groups

With help and support from members of the steering committee, 15 focus groups, of quite extensive and varied composition, were organised over the month of October 2011 to capture the views and experiences of different

groups within the municipality. The categories for the focus groups included Aboriginal, CALD (both long-established and newly-arrived, as well as representing diverse faiths) and 'mainstream' groups, varied age groups, as well as Council staff and other service providers.

A wide range of trained facilitators and scribes assisted in running the focus groups. These staff were required to adapt to the individual requirements of each session and to create an atmosphere of trust and ease amongst the attendees. In order to ensure confidentiality for the Council staff focus group, an external facilitator recruited participants and conducted the discussion. Consistency between the focus groups was ensured by the development of comprehensive running notes which provided detailed guidelines on how to run the focus group as well as the key objectives of the session. During the data compilation and analysis phase all notes were confirmed against a recording of the session which was made only for verification purposes, and was deleted afterwards to ensure confidentiality.

Participants to the focus groups often expressed how much they appreciated the opportunity of having a say and being heard, and emphasised how much they were **hoping that Council would continue to engage meaningfully with all members of the community, follow up on the inquiry and commit to acting on it.**

Setting aside the service providers focus group, a total of 91 people participated in 14 focus groups. Although slightly more men participated, there was a good gender balance. All age groups were represented. A little under a third of participants held university degrees, and there was a range of other qualifications. About six out of ten possessed a healthcare card. In terms of cultural diversity, a little under a third of participants were born in Australia. Countries or regions of birth included Lebanon

and the Middle-East, India, Africa, China, Vietnam and a number of other Asian countries, Italy, Macedonia and Europe, and a few others. Languages spoken at home were also varied: two thirds spoke English (this includes 'English only' as well as 'English and another language') and the main other languages were Arabic, Italian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Macedonian, Greek, as well as a range of other languages. There were participants from all the main religions, and segments of the community with no religious affiliation. Over a tenth of participants were Aboriginal.

Some constraints and challenges (notably due to very constricted timeframes) meant that the level of participation in the focus groups was not always what was hoped for. In particular, it might be worth noting that an Aboriginal youth focus group was organised which had no success in attracting participants. This is perhaps indicative of how Council might need to work further on engagement with the community and to allow for sufficient time in its planning processes to build trust with certain groups in particular.

Rich qualitative data was nonetheless obtained through these 15 focus groups.

f. Public forum

A public forum was held on 6 October 2011. It was advertised in the local papers and facilitated by Council staff, Councillors and representatives on the steering committee.

Six round tables were organised, where, in addition to facilitators, over 35 members of the public attended. The idea was to gather community members' views on:

- racism in Darebin, at the community and Council levels (not the individual level);
- its impact on relationships, neighbourhoods, community, legal, health, economic, education systems;

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- what can be done as individuals, in the neighbourhood, as a community and at Council level.

The forum generated good discussions.

Participants expressed great overall satisfaction with the process and content of the discussions and gave very positive feedback. The only two concerns that came from a small number of participants were:

- the low level of promotion of the forum, which affected the number of participants;
- a relative lack of time set aside for discussions (one hour and 15 minutes had been allocated out of the 2 hours of the forum), in light of their depth and interest.

The public forum explored issues of racism in Darebin at a broader and more strategic level than the survey and focus groups, complementing these methods of data-gathering. It provided useful insights and ideas to address racism in the municipality.

In addition to these three main methods of data-gathering, other processes were used.

g. Other data-gathering methods

Surveys or research projects previously conducted in Darebin were used to delve further into specific aspects of racism or serve as a point of comparison.

Only one online written submission was received as part of the process set up through the dedicated webpage. Insufficient advertising of that specific means of participating in the inquiry might in part explain this relatively low take-up. However, this is a useful lesson for Council about the need to integrate, and reflect on when best to use, online methodologies in community engagement and consultation processes and should have ramifications for its wider engagement strategy.

In addition, and even though this was unintended, phone and email reactions to the 'Salam Alaykum – Muslims reaching out' project overseen by Darebin City Council illustrated negative views held by some in the community. A number of emails, including hate mails, and phone calls were received. While these reactions were not originally part of the inquiry, they can help cast an additional perspective on racism in the municipality. They showed a strong anti-Muslim sentiment that was documented as part of the inquiry.

Finally, the issue of bystander (anti-)racism was explored in an innovative way, through the work of theatre company Polykala.

As part of a cultural project funded by the Darebin Intercultural Centre, this arts company conducted a series of non-conventional investigations into the subject of bystander reaction to racism. Its members used "invisible theatre", i.e. theatrical performance in places where people would not normally expect to see one (for example, on a tram, in a pub or in a store), and observed bystander reactions to racism.

During the Festival of Lights and Friendship, Polykala also conducted 15 interviews around racism and administered a further 23 surveys specifically directed to bystander (anti-)racism.

While this imaginative approach was part of a larger artistic project, it also provided useful insights into racism and bystander reaction.

All of the sources mentioned above were used to further inform the inquiry. Findings are presented in sections 5 to 7 below.

"We need it to be normal to have a Muslim working, […] to have a covered girl working in retail so people think 'they're just normal, just like us".

—Muslim woman

Views and attitudes in Darebin

Before documenting experiences of racism and its impacts, the Darebin Racism Inquiry explored community views and attitudes regarding a number of closely related topics such as diversity, multiculturalism, privileges and prejudices, with a view to gleaning a broader understanding of race-based discrimination in the municipality.

a. Attitudes to community diversity

i. Encouraging attitudes to cultural diversity

Phone survey

Respondents to the phone survey were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements on a scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree).

Summary results can be found in table 1 below.

Table 1–Attitudes towards community diversity in Darebin

Q5. On a scale of 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree), how much do you agree with the following statements?

Statement	Disagree (0–4)	Neutral (5)	Agree (6–10)	Average score
It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions. N=294	4%	7%	89%	8.5
I feel secure when I am with people of different races, cultures or religions. N=297	8%	11%	81%	7.8
I think I enjoy certain privileges as a result of my race, culture or religion. N=290	26%	14%	60%	5.9
There is prejudice in Darebin towards people of different race, culture or religion. N=286	39%	24%	37%	4.7
I am prejudiced against other races, cultures or religions. N=297	88%	5%	7%	1.3
It is NOT a good idea for people of different races, cultures or religions to marry one another. N=294	77%	10%	13%	2.0
It's important to me that Darebin remains a culturally diverse community. N=295	5%	10%	85%	8.5
Australia is weakened by people of different races, cultures or religions sticking to their old ways. N=289	53%	19%	28%	3.8

* valid responses only excluding "can't say"

The majority of Darebin residents interviewed espoused positive views towards multiculturalism. In particular, well over 8 in 10 agreed **that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions (89%)** and that **it is important to them that Darebin remains a culturally diverse community (85%).**

The average score for both these questions was very high, at 8.5 out of 10. These very positive views on the value of a culturally diverse composition of society are in keeping with the consistently high level of agreement with similar statements found in the Community surveys conducted by Darebin City Council and constitute a positive finding. (Darebin Community Survey 2nd quarter 2011 and 3rd quarter 2007)

On the whole, respondents to the Darebin racism inquiry survey seem to hold very positive views and be very supportive of diversity and multiculturalism.

These seem even more positive than the responses from the University of Western Sydney's Challenging Racism Project (CRP). Strict comparisons cannot be drawn between the two as the questions were not worded exactly in the same way (addition of "races" and "religions" to "cultures" in certain instances, or replacement of "ethnic backgrounds" with "races, cultures or religions"). They can nonetheless help give indications as to the attitudes in Darebin relative to all of Australia.

In that respect, it might be worth noting that, though not by much, an even higher percentage of Darebin respondents thought it was a good thing for society to be made up of people of different races, cultures or religions (89% vs. 86.8% for "different cultures" in the

CRP). Only 4% of the Darebin respondents disagreed (score of 4 or less on a scale from 0 to 10) with that statement, when 5.1% did in the Darebin, Banyule and Moreland (DBM) substatistical area and 6.5% in Australia.

Similarly, slightly less people in the Darebin survey felt insecure with people of different races, cultures or religions (8% vs. 9.4% in Australia in the CRP), even if that number was higher than the DBM substatistical area (6.7%). And 81% of the Darebin respondents felt secure with people of different races, cultures or religions, again a level that is higher than the Australian average (78.1% with the wording "different ethnic backgrounds" in the CRP).

In addition, **as far as overtly racist attitudes are concerned, only 7% of respondents in Darebin were prepared to agree that they are to some extent personally prejudiced towards certain races, cultures or religions.** While this is clearly a statement people might shy from agreeing with for social acceptability reasons, and social desirability bias would have reduced the likelihood of such admissions, this percentage is lower than that measured for "other cultures" in the CRP for Australia (12.3%) or the DBM substatistical area (11.2%). In that sense, and both studies being general population ones, the lower level in Darebin could be interpreted as a positive sign of fewer residents holding overtly racist attitudes rather than a negative one of little awareness of one's prejudice. However, the ambiguity and ambivalence of this statement and the responses to it should be kept in mind.

Similarly, a lower proportion of Darebin respondents showed concern and opposition to cultural difference and diversity by agreeing that "Australia is weakened by people of different races, cultures or religions sticking to their old ways" (28% vs. 41.1% in Australia and 31.2% for the DBM substatistical area for "different ethnic origins" in the CRP). It should be emphasised that the wording "sticking to their old ways" makes this a loaded statement. The 19% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed (score of 5 of the 0 to 10 scale) might show the ambiguity of a segment of the population about how people should behave and how views are not clear-cut and set in that regard.

In contrast to these positive findings, opposition to inter-racial, -cultural or -religious marriages seems higher in Darebin: 13% of Darebin respondents agreed (score of 6 and over on a scale from 0 to 10) that it is NOT a good idea for people of different races, cultures or religions to marry one another. This is higher than the numbers found in the CRP, where 11.2% of Australians agreed with a similar statement and only 8.2% of the respondents in the DBM substatistical area. However, the addition of " cultures or religions" to the wording of the question in the Darebin racism inquiry survey is likely to account for that discrepancy and help explain the higher level of agreement with this statement.

Results were also more ambiguous in regards to the denial of racism, with a seemingly much higher level of denial of racism in Darebin than among Australians in general.

- In the Racism Inquiry phone survey, 39% of respondents disagreed with the statement that there is prejudice in Darebin towards people of different race, culture or religion, while only 8% of Australians shared that view in regards to prejudice in Australia in the CRP. However, the very

different wording in questions, with one concerning Australia in general and the other a very specific location, much more closely-related to respondents' daily experiences, qualifies that discrepancy.

- An almost identical number of respondents (37%) agreed that there was race-based prejudice in Darebin.

- A sizeable proportion (24%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (response at 5 on the 0 to 10 scale), emphasising their middle-ground views on that question and the uncertainty of the community as a whole in regards to the topic.

The discrepancy between Darebin's view of itself as an inclusive and diverse community and the acknowledgement of racism might be a factor in that indecision.

Several factors can be combined to try and explain the differences between the racism inquiry data and the Challenging Racism Project data:

- as mentioned, there are elements of difference in the wording of the questions that might explain the difference in percentages;

- the five year gap in between the gathering of the Victorian data set of the Challenging Racism Project (2006) and the Darebin Racism Inquiry (2011) might explain part of the difference in numbers.

Overall, and despite some qualifications, it would seem that respondents in Darebin hold less racist views than the general population of Australia, and less than in the Darebin, Banyule and Moreland substatistical area. It could be argued that, **because Darebin is a very diverse community, its members' attitudes to diversity and multiculturalism are on the whole very positive.**
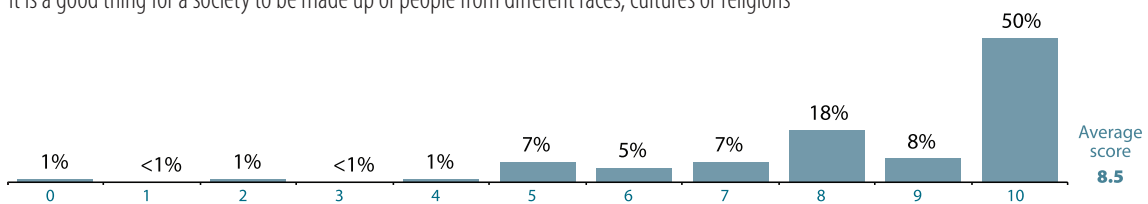
Views and attitudes in Darebin

continued

A closer look at the detailed breakdowns of responses for some of the statements gives more insights.

Table 2a–Detailed breakdown of attitudes towards community diversity

Q5. On a scale of 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree), how much do you agree with the following statements?

It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
1%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%	7%	5%	7%	18%	8%	50%	**8.5**

I feel secure when I am with people of different races, cultures or religions

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	11%	5%	10%	20%	10%	36%	**7.8**
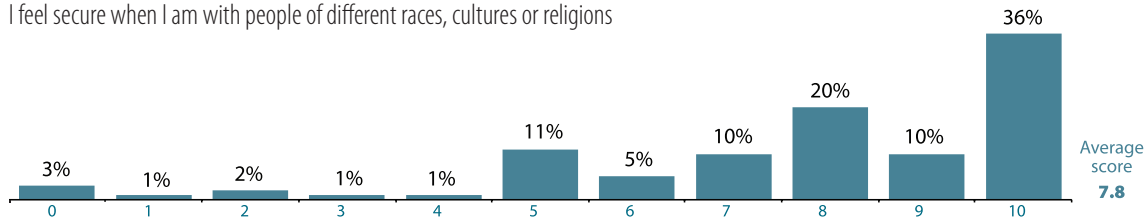
* n=294 and n=297

The distribution of responses on the 0 to 10 scale to "It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures and religions" and "I feel secure when I am with people of different races, cultures and religions" highlights the distinction between theory and practice. While both statements get strong levels of agreement (average score of respectively 8.5 and 7.8 out of 10), the level of agreement is consistently slightly lower for the second statement. It might show that while **there is a very strong commitment to diversity in principle among Darebin respondents, there is more uncertainty and more ambiguity in practice.**

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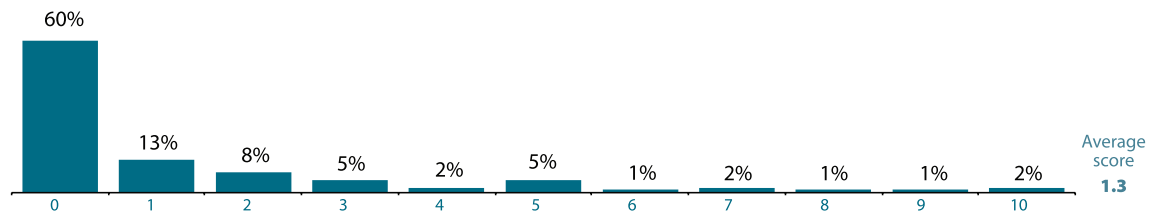# Views and attitudes in Darebin

continued

Table 2b - Detailed breakdown of attitudes towards community diversity

Q5. On a scale of 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree), how much do you agree with the following statements?

I am prejudiced against other races, cultures or religions

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
60%	13%	8%	5%	2%	5%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	**1.3**

It is NOT a good idea for people of different races, cultures or religions to marry one another

| 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
58%	10%	5%	3%	1%	10%	1%	1%	4%	1%	6%	**2.0**
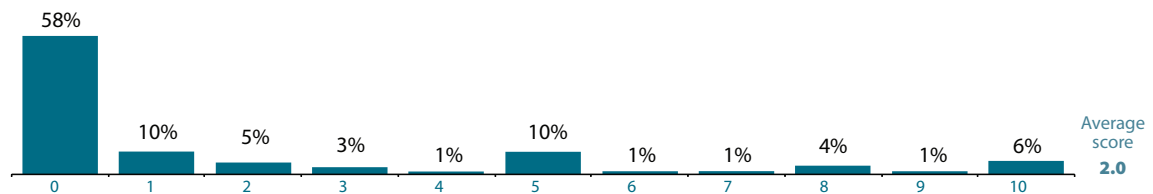
* n=294 and n=297

It should also be underlined that there is little difference between the patterns of distribution of responses on the 0 to 10 scale, as well as between the average scores for the statements "I am prejudiced against other races, cultures or religions (1.3 out of 10) and "It is NOT a good idea for people of different races, cultures or religions to marry one another" (2 out of 10). This perhaps shows a strong correlation between the practicality of acceptance and the self rating of prejudice.

Table 2c- Detailed breakdown of attitudes towards community diversity

I think I enjoy certain privileges as a result of my race, culture or religion

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
15%	4%	2%	2%	3%	14%	6%	15%	11%	7%	20%	**5.9**
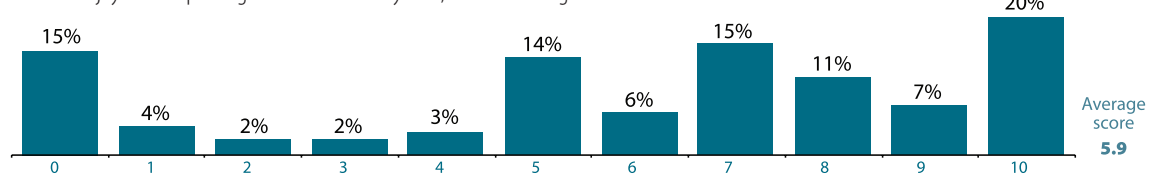
* n=290

On a more methodological note, trying not to be too confrontational in the inquiry did not prove very conclusive. A less direct approach to Anglo cultural privilege in the Darebin inquiry, with a wording "I think I enjoy certain privileges as a result of my race, culture or religion" rather than the more explicit "Australians from a British background enjoy a privileged position in our society" in the CRP was taken. It resulted in an inconclusive spread of responses. The ambiguity of the wording, making the statement too open to interpretation, shows through both the average score and the distribution of responses.

On the whole, an overwhelming majority of respondents to the phone survey held very favourable views of multiculturalism.

Those demonstrating the most favourable attitudes towards cultural diversity generally (in terms of their level of agreement with the range of pro-multiculturalism attitude statements provided) were found to be the under 55s (particularly 16-34 year olds), those who are tertiary-educated, those without a healthcare card and those who are not religious.

People living in the Southern areas of Darebin (i.e. Northcote, Thornbury and Alphington or Fairfield) also displayed on the whole more positive attitudes towards multiculturalism; however this is likely to be somewhat reflective of the younger profile of respondents in these areas.

Online survey

The 65 respondents to the online survey add interesting elements to the findings of the phone survey.

The responses to the majority of statements around multiculturalism and prejudice are similar, both in the average score they receive and the proportion of respondents agreeing.

- Strong support for cultural diversity was shown by nine out of ten online survey respondents agreeing that "it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions".

- Almost the same proportion agreed that it is important to them that Darebin remains a culturally diverse community.

These levels are almost identical to those of the Darebin general population in the phone survey.

Noticeable differences include:

- respondents to the online survey being almost twice as likely to recognise their own prejudice, with one in eight recognising they might be prejudiced against other races, cultures or religions, when only one in 14 (7%) did in the phone survey. While the lower level in a general population survey was seen as a rather positive sign of possibly lower levels of racist attitudes in Darebin compared to the rest of Australia, in the specific context of the online survey, with its self-select sample of respondents, this higher level should not be construed as a sign of higher level of racist attitudes among online respondents but rather as a sign of self-reflection and knowledge of the issue. The complexity regarding interpretation points again to the difficulty with this statement;

- online respondents being more likely to think there is prejudice in Darebin, with a mean score of 5.4 (vs. 4.7 in the phone survey) and almost six out of ten agreeing with the same statement, whereas the existence of prejudice in Darebin was recognised by only 37% of phone survey respondents;

- less online respondents thinking that "Australia is weakened by people of different races, cultures or religions sticking to their old ways", with a mean score of 2.7 (vs. 3.8) and above seven out of ten disagreeing with this statement, when only 53% of phone respondents did.

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These elements point to a higher awareness of the issues, including one's self-prejudices, which is not surprising given this is a self-select sample. They are also reminiscent of the findings from two surveys conducted by Darebin City Council in 2005 that emphasised the discrepancy between Council staff and community members in terms of appreciation of tensions and level of prejudice in the community and linked it to Council employees being in daily contact with the different groups in Darebin, thus more aware of some issues (Mansouri 2007, p.60). The differences between online and phone survey probably stem from the composition of the sample, with one third of online respondents from Council and the rest most likely interested in the issue of racism. They might also be linked to the higher perception of anonymity afforded by an online survey compared to a phone one, which means people might feel they can be more honest online and be more likely to recognise their own prejudice.

On the whole, despite a few discrepancies, both online and phone survey point to a high level of support for cultural diversity in Darebin and positive attitudes towards multiculturalism.

ii. But some elements of concern

Despite these generally encouraging findings with respect to attitudes towards multiculturalism, and the attachment of Darebin citizens to the municipality's cultural diversity, there are some elements of concern.

Research shows that, nowadays, "a relatively small proportion of Australians hold what can be considered 'traditional' or overt racist beliefs, such as notions that some races are inferior to others". But "more covert or subtle beliefs have emerged or increased in recent times" around the idea of an "insurmountability of cultural differences". In that context, certain groups are "not identified as 'inferior', but rather as 'different' – with this difference being perceived as threatening to the cultural values and norms of the prevailing 'host' society and to social cohesion. This can lead to the identification of some groups as not 'belonging' or 'fitting into' Australia and to discomfort with or resistance to racial, ethnic, cultural or religious difference." (VicHealth 2009 p.15)

The idea that some groups do not fit into Australian society can be construed in part as an indicator of covert and subtle feelings of racism and was thus used as part of the Racism Inquiry to indirectly ascertain levels of prejudice.

"People come here with identities, they bring them along. But sometimes, [as a newcomer, it] is tough. It's a difficult process, [trying to] be as Anglo as you can. There is a belonging of somewhere else which no one else knows anything about. Your roots. It does not to go away. You do not want it to go away."
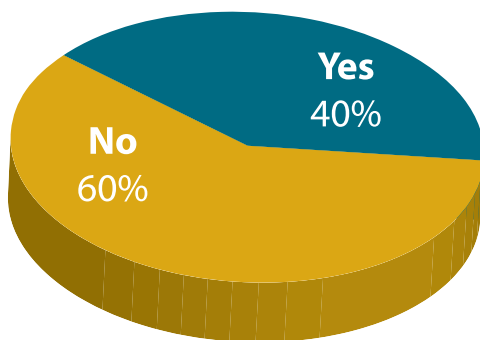
—Woman, Indian ocean region

Phone survey

Table 3- Belief that some groups do not fit in

Q6. Do you believe that there are any racial, cultural or religious groups that do NOT fit into Australian society?

Yes 40%

No 60%

* n=300

Overall, **40% of Darebin residents suggested that there are some racial, cultural or religious groups that do not fit into Australian society.** This level was in keeping with the results overall in Australia (41.4%) in the Challenging Racism Project (CRP). However, it can be disconcerting in light of the generally even more positive views of cultural diversity held by Darebin respondents. One could argue this discrepancy between positive views of cultural diversity and a high number of respondents feeling that "some groups do not fit in" could in part be explained by "entitlement racism", whereby some people tend to be opposed to racism (and supportive of cultural diversity) mostly insofar as they might be a victim of it i.e. feel that "racism is bad" if it touches them or their family, as they have a "special entitlement" (having been in Australia long or being born in Australia) not to be subjected to racist attitudes, but this doesn't apply to other groups or individuals.

In addition, the percentage of Darebin respondents agreeing that "some groups do not fit in" is higher than the 34.6% of the Darebin, Banyule and Moreland substatistical area in the CRP. While the addition of the adjective "religious" is likely to explain some of that difference, this **perception that some groups do not fit in is of concern.**

The proportion of Darebin respondents who shared this perception was found to be notably higher amongst over 55 year olds, at 66%. This group was significantly more likely statistically to feel this way than younger respondents. Comparatively only 30% of 16 to 34 year olds and 28% of 35 to 54 year olds said that they felt some groups do not fit in.

While the Darebin inquiry did not try to investigate which groups were seen as not fitting in, respondents who had expressed their feeling that some groups did not fit into Australia were asked why.
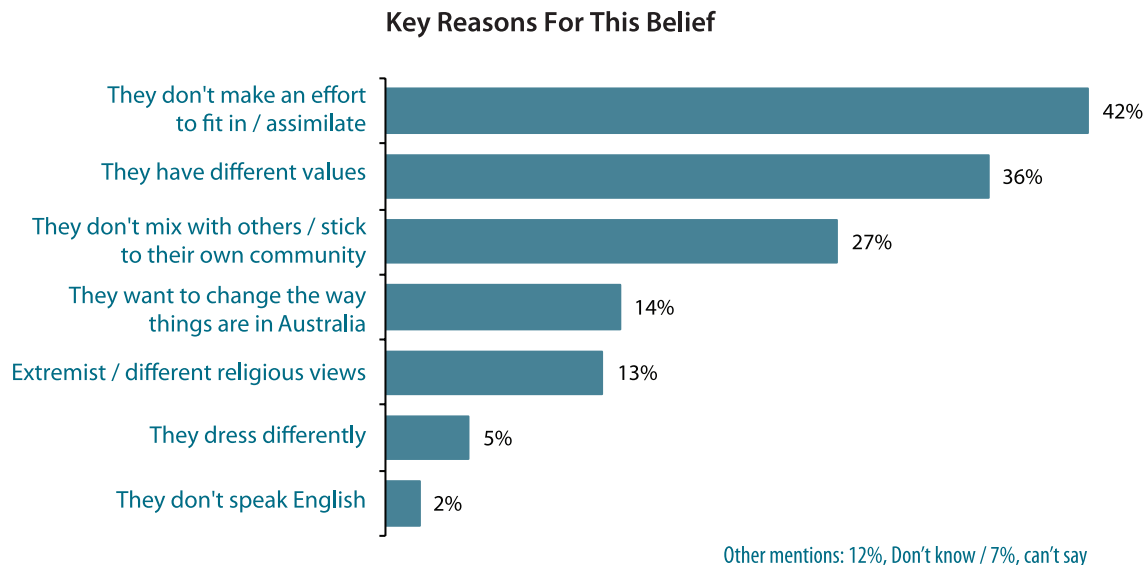
Table 4 – Reasons why some groups are thought not to fit in

Q7. (If 'yes' to Q6) Why is that? (i.e. why do you believe that there are some racial, cultural or religious groups that do NOT fit into Australian society?)
* ***Note:*** *Responses were pre-coded and not read out*

Key Reasons For This Belief

Reason	%
They don't make an effort to fit in / assimilate	42%
They have different values	36%
They don't mix with others / stick to their own community	27%
They want to change the way things are in Australia	14%
Extremist / different religious views	13%
They dress differently	5%
They don't speak English	2%

Other mentions: 12%, Don't know / 7%, can't say

n=131
NB – multiple answers possible

Amongst those saying that certain racial, cultural or religious groups do not fit into Australian society, "They don't make an effort to fit in or assimilate" was nominated most commonly (42%) as the reason. The other primary reasons given for feeling this way were:

• that some groups have different values (36%) and;

• that they do not mix with others but simply stick to their own community (at 27%).

This emphasis on the perceived lack of effort to assimilate might be quite telling, as it would seem to imply that, **for some people, an individual needs to be the same as everybody else in order to be accepted and acceptable.** This sheds interesting light on some people's views of multiculturalism. More broadly, it should be noted there are multiple and complex layers of meaning and interpretation around this statement. Some answers reveal an awareness of barriers placed on some groups (cf. online survey below), others, ambivalence in feelings, and in some cases, a wish for more interaction.

It is interesting to see that only 5% of respondents stated that they thought some groups did not fit in because "they dress differently" and 2% thought it was because "they don't speak English". It would seem to indicate that visibility or language issues are not seen as particularly important barriers to the acceptance of others (or maybe have now become socially unacceptable as too overtly prejudiced) **when the experience from the focus groups shows that visible difference and language are key factors in being a target of racism.**

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Online survey

With regards to the online survey, respondents were slightly less likely to suggest that some groups do not fit in (over three in ten vs. four in ten in the phone survey). The reasons they provided for this response are interesting. They in part revolved around values, with the feeling that individuals within some groups – rather than the groups as a whole – did not respect the pluralistic equal opportunity approach of Australian society, something which echoes some of the phone survey respondents. But some were also more of an observation of what is happening today in Australia, with inadequate services and prejudices preventing some groups from fully participating, than a judgement on those groups.

Previous research has shown that is common for people to hold beliefs such as "Some groups do not fit in" yet "without recognising them as a form of discrimination and without realising that they have negative impacts on the groups concerned" (VicHealth 2009, p.15). This has been suggested as one element explaining why almost 85% of respondents in the VicHealth survey agreed that racial prejudice exists in Australia, but only 12% admitted to being personally prejudiced. Similarly, the 40% of Darebin respondents who think some groups do not fit in may help explain the apparent contradiction between the very low level of Darebin respondents recognising personal prejudice (7%) and the community's divided views on the existence of racial prejudice in Darebin, with almost equal proportions recognising the existence of racism in Darebin and denying it (37% vs. 39%) and a large proportion of undecided views (24%).

This would also be in keeping with the concept of new forms of racism, "which can help explain why a majority of respondents may express positive views of multiculturalism yet still maintain indirectly discriminatory forms of behaviour." (Mansouri 2007, p.120)

All these elements point to **the fluid nature and understanding of racism and how difficult it is to define and recognise.**

b. Community views and understanding of racism

While the survey did not contain elements that sought to reveal how people defined racism, the focus groups and public forum provided interesting insights.

To try and map out what Darebin citizens' views on, and definition of, racism were, the focus groups' participants were asked what racism meant to them, what they thought it was, and where they thought it came from.

While some in the focus groups gave a legalistic definition of racism as "discrimination based on race, ethnic background, colour, religion and nationality", most participants had very practical and experience-based views of what racism is. Their responses emphasised the wide range covered by race-based discrimination and its different dimensions.

Racism was notably seen as:

- verbal abuse: putting someone down, calling people names or teasing them, telling racist jokes, telling people to 'go back to your country';

- treating people differently;

- beating someone up, physically abusing or bullying someone;

- relying on stereotypes, which made victims feel they were "being labelled" or "put in boxes";

- condescending and patronising attitudes, which denote feeling superior: "Racism is when someone is expressing either overtly, strongly, publicly, [by] saying what they think, or covertly, that they think [that] you, as a person, is less than what they are";

- prejudice: passing judgement or making assumptions based on external factors (appearance…) rather than on facts or the person;

- being biased and unfair;

- not giving people access to the same level of services or "running services and programs for the white middle-class";

- mistrust from institutions (towards certain groups, notably Aboriginal people, which in turn builds mistrust towards institutions);

- not accepting difference, whatever its type and whether individual or collective;

- different groups not interacting with each other;

- avoidance strategies, whether in education, housing or transport: "Picking schools with no kids from different backgrounds or selling your house to avoid different cultures is a form of racism";

- non-acceptance and intolerance;

- denial of equality of opportunity;

- institutional racism;

- imposition of a culture (this was particularly true for Aboriginal participants) and lack of choice.

Racism was seen as stemming mostly, at an individual level, from ignorance, unfamiliarity, lack of education and fear, notably fear of "the other" or "the unknown". But at a collective level, participants to the focus groups also linked it to the economic conditions and the use of migrants as scapegoats in times of economic downturn, to politicians and the media. As one participant put it, "These are media generated ideas, not informed or true, pushed by ignorance or political purpose". The negative portrayal of difference by the media was thought to lead to cultural difference being seen as "non-compliance with main values, which is

more of a perception than a reality". It was common for participants to feel that the media are hugely responsible for fuelling racism and that race-relations are being used as a political tool by politicians.

Racism was also linked in some instances **to history and international politics.** "Inter-community relations often boil down to history. History has a lot to do with it. Every time two community groups have had a history of conflict abroad, there's a reverberation of it here in Australia, and particularly if there are overseas incidents. There's a geopolitical dimension to racist incidents: every time something happens overseas, it happens here too and flares up". Tensions between Greeks and Macedonians or the repercussions of 11 September 2011 were seen as common examples of this by focus group participants. Muslim women especially, notably when covered, expressed how the yearly September 'commemorations' of the event in the media exposed them to renewed racist abuse.

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However, some participants in the focus groups and the public forum put forward the idea of **"opportunistic racism".** They emphasised that, at times, racism could be a by-product of conflict or other behaviours (e.g. road rage).

- A service provider participant recalled: "On the footy field, there will be an exchange of words, a 'robust discussion' and sometimes racist abuse. But when you seek clarification, the issue is often separate and racism is just a by-product. It can be alcohol-fuelled, or because the timing's good [night-time] and the opportunity presents to attack someone who can happen to be from a different background, or because of the group setting. A particular environment leads to this".

- Similarly, a girl who was racially abused by another pointed out "this is someone I've had trouble with before. I hate her; she picks on me a lot just because I used to hang out with boys mostly". While the incident was racist, the conflict was pre-existing and racism seems to have been used as a tool in that conflict.

However, participants were keen to emphasise that this was not to say that there was no racism as such in Australia or Darebin.

There was also a shared view that racism could be **inadvertent or unintentional.**

- *One participant recounted:* "Sometimes, you talk to people who do not think they are racist, but they are. They say 'You don't look Aboriginal' or 'What are you: a quarter Aboriginal?' or 'You're Aboriginal, but you're not really black' or 'I have one friend who is Aboriginal' and I think: 'just one? Why do you need to point it out, as if to reassure yourself you're not racist?' You don't blame them, they honestly don't know…"

- Others called it "subconscious racism", stating that "people are often more prejudiced than they think".

This idea of unintentional racism, expressed in several focus groups, is reminiscent of definitions of racism in terms of privilege and oppression, hence not dependent on the intentions of actors, but instead "concerned with the social effects of their actions". Unintentional racism underlines how "oppression is systemic in society and is unwittingly and unconsciously (re-)produced by many actors who have no racist intentions whatsoever" (Paradies 2006, p.147). Intentional or not, as some stated: "It still hurts".

The **"novelty" of the concept of race, hence racism, for some groups i**s also worth noting. Many participants from newly-arrived communities emphasised they did not notice their skin colour until they came to Australia and only became conscious of their black skin colour when they first arrived here.

- As a man from the Horn of Africa put it, "In my country, people do not notice race, so this idea [of race and racism] was new to me. We are all created the same, in the same image, just a different colour. We do not identify as being from a race".

- Another echoed: "Back in my home country, we are not identified by race or colour, but in Australia we are". While identifying people through their skin colour is not specific only to Australian society, this is certainly a finding that should raise some questions as to how Australian society functions.

Specifically **Australian dimensions of racism** identified by some focus group participants were the **legacy of the White Australia policy** and the **specificity of Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal community.** Some participants underlined how "colonial attitudes are still part of our constitution" or how "not allowing people to go back to their homeland and live according to their own principles [is] racism and that's distinctly Australian".

"Whenever people come in my taxi, people ask us *'Where you are from?'* even though we are Australian citizens. But this is our home country now: we have left India for here, we love living in this country. In the eyes of the law, we are Australian, but in the eyes of our customers, we're still Indian. And in India, they don't consider us as Indian anymore, so we don't know who we are, we're left in the middle, we're stuck. We're neither Indian nor Australian."

—Man, Indian background

Discussing racism led to **mixed views of Australia**, seen as an ambivalent country where there is **a lot of tolerance and goodwill, but also a lot of racism.** It also raised questions around what being Australian means, around Australian identity and its fluctuating boundaries, about who defines it and how to create a sense of belonging to the same society among different groups. "Being Australian is not that clear cut", it's "not just Anglo-Celtic culture, [it's] more mixed than that". Participants pointed to the different layers of one's identity and to conflicting identities or loyalties and how reconciling all those elements might be easier or harder for certain groups: "I am a wog but also Australian".

The need to **allow time for migrants to adjust** was also put forward: "People came here for a variety of reasons and the thought that they would come here and throw off their culture, put on an akubra and 'fit in' is ridiculous".

Underlying some of the participants' thoughts on this was the idea of a sort of "hazing ritual" for new migrants in Australian society or of a **"migration cycle",** where each new wave of migrants go through a phase of hardship and refusal by "mainstream" society. "It's not just the Muslims: the Italians and Greeks went through a hard time, had it hard earlier; the Asians too in their time. Now, we're the hated ones, but maybe in 10 or 20 years, it'll be someone else".

Focus group participants also observed that there had been an evolution of racism in Australian society, which was now less explicit, less direct and physical, but pervading through society as a whole. This echoed the elements in the Literature Review concerning "new racism" (Mansouri 2011, pp.12-13). There was also among some people the impression of a "revival" of racism, which they felt was more widespread than it was 20 years ago.

Some focus group participants underlined that, at times, there were cultural misunderstandings between people that were occasionally construed as racist but which others viewed as quite distinctive from racism and not to be confused with it. This once again underlines the difficulty of defining and recognising racism in the less obvious cases.

The difficulty of recognising racism can even happen in more apparently straightforward cases. When one participant shared a past experience of "riding home once to Thomastown from Preston as a young teenager, [at] 2am in the morning and the police pulled us over and let the air out of our tyres and told us to walk home. It was eight kilometres, no reason other than being young and Lebanese", others in the group questioned that this had been a racist incident. This underlines the **difficulty of identifying racism at times**, both because of a sometimes subjective dimension to it, but also because people do not possess the tools to deconstruct a situation and analyse it as racist.

This difficulty, or rather the **fluctuating dimension of racism**, was also noticeable through the confusion between racism and discrimination in general. When asked to define racism, a number of focus groups expressed, at one point or another, the view that it was not just about race, culture or religion but much wider.

> **Statements included:**
>
> "Racism is about money, background, colour";
>
> *racism is* "being picked on because of your nationality, your race, your social status, your gender" or "because of your skin colour, your religion, your gender";
>
> *racism is* "when an individual or group is being targeted because, for a number of reasons, they differ (or feel they differ or are seen to differ) from the rest. The reasons can be: cultural background; political opinion; religion; sexual orientation; …" or;
>
> "There are many different types of racism. But it's mostly linked to class, and that's what's happening with refugees at the moment: they come from the wrong class; that's why they're not accepted." 99

This non-differentiation between different grounds for discrimination might come from the fact that some forms of racism are quite subtle, hence hard to identify as such.

But these views from focus group participants are in keeping with the idea that "racism can be thought of as one of many types of oppression which, along with its dialectical opposite privilege, can be based on a range of social characteristics including gender (sexism), sexuality (heterosexism), physical and mental able-ness (ableism), age (ageism), class (classism), nationality, body size/ shape, criminality, religion, and language/ accent among others" (Paradies 2006, p.144). While academic, this is a view that seems to be instinctively shared by numerous participants to the focus groups, who seem to equate racism with discrimination, whatever its cause, and thus **put forward the commonalities between different types of discrimination.** The multiple layers of discrimination and the compounding effect of disadvantage or different types of diversity (background or ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status…) were also put forward in the public forum.

It is interesting to note that, although much of the literature on racism highlights the concept of power as central to understanding racism, this idea was hardly touched upon by focus group participants. Only forum participants underlined that "power differential and Anglo privilege show through institutional racism". This is probably a reflection that forum participants were people with both an interest in and conceptual knowledge of the topic. Managing to highlight the power dynamics at play in racism and raising awareness of it in a wider part of the community could be an interesting way forward to deconstruct and help address racism. How to relate this with the practical experiences of racism to convey that message in a format accessible to the whole community is another matter.

City of DAREBIN

To get a picture of racism in Darebin, the Racism Inquiry sought to assess residents' experiences of racism, their reactions to such experiences, and the impact it had on them.

a. Types and frequencies of experiences

To map out the level and types of incidents, the Racism Inquiry combined quantitative elements from the survey with qualitative data from the focus groups.

The phone and online surveys captured racist incidents where respondents had been the subject as well as incidents where they had been a witness.

i. Witnessed racism

Phone survey

In terms of observed incidents of racism, almost 4 in 10 respondents (39%) to the phone survey said that either they, a friend or a family member had witnessed a race-based incident.

Table 5 – Witnessing race-based incidents in Darebin

Q8. Over the last 5 years in Darebin, have you or a friend or family member witnessed any of the following:
(Multiple responses allowed)

Verbal abuse of people because of their racial, cultural or religious background	26%
Tensions between different racial, cultural or religious groups	23%
Cases of discrimination against individuals because of their racial, cultural or religious background	22%
Physical violence or destruction of property belonging to individuals based on their racial, cultural or religious background	7%
None of the above	61%

* n=300
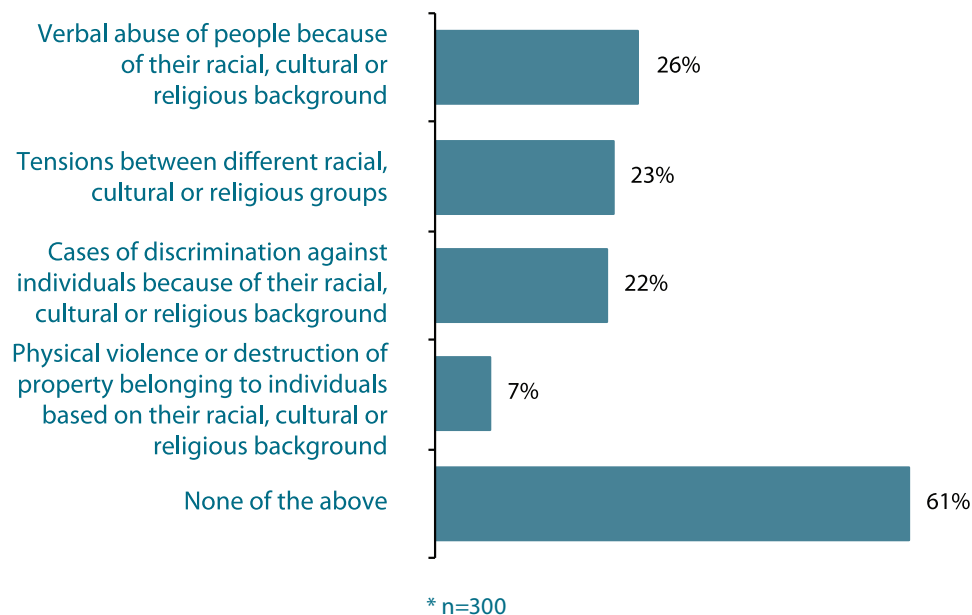
The most common type of incident witnessed (by 26% of respondents) was the verbal abuse of people due to their racial, cultural or religious background, which is in keeping with previous research showing that "the most common form of reported racism in Australia is being called an offensive slang name for a cultural group." (VicHealth 2010a, p.3)

Then came tensions between groups, which were observed by 23% of respondents. Cases of race-based discrimination were almost at the same level (22%). While less frequent, it would nonetheless seem of some concern that 7% of all respondents reported witnessing cases of physical violence or destruction of property based on a person's racial, cultural or religious background. It must be underlined that no verification of the veracity of these claims is available. Still, they highlight the presence of an underlying tension between groups.

As a point of comparison, in response to a similar question asked in the 2005 Darebin Community Diversity survey, the most frequently cited examples of racism in Darebin were tensions between ethnic groups and cases of discrimination (19.3% and 16.1% respectively). Verbal abuse was not suggested as a possible answer, so no comparisons can be drawn in that respect. But as far as the other two items are concerned, and acknowledging that the two questions were not worded in the exact same way (the 2005 question was worded "Have you witnessed or do you know of any examples of the following in Darebin?"), there seems to have been an increase in those two types of race-based incidents between 2005 and 2011. **While further elements to corroborate this potentially increasing trend would be needed, this is nonetheless of concern.** This should be taken all the more seriously as it is supported by anecdotal evidence from some participants to the focus groups and public forum, who

expressed their feeling that racism had increased in Darebin over the last five years.

Online survey

Data from the online survey, which had a different set of respondents due to the self-selection of the sample, also portrays a worrying picture of racism in the municipality. Online respondents had witnessed more tensions or cases of discrimination than the community. Seven in ten reported having witnessed race-based incidents in Darebin, versus four in ten (39%) of phone respondents. Online respondents were twice as likely to have seen tensions between different groups, cases of discrimination, or the verbal abuse of people because of their racial, cultural or religious background, and were three times as likely to know of race-based physical violence or destruction of property.

This is in keeping with the higher level of prejudice in Darebin found by the online respondents, as well as the fact that Council staff might be more exposed than the general population to tensions and incidents or knowledge thereof.

ii. Personal experiences of racism

The Inquiry focused on personal experiences of racism, notably the varied types of race-based discrimination that can be experienced.

Phone survey

Findings from the phone survey underlined that the vast majority of Darebin residents (eight in ten or more) had not personally been victims of racism in Australia within the last five years. This is still an indication that about two in ten Darebin residents, an important part of the community, experience racism.

Table 6 – Types of personal experiences of racism

Q10. I am now going to ask you some questions about YOUR OWN experiences of racism in Australia and how often you have experienced any of these situations over the last 5 years:

* Note 'not applicable' response NOT read out

	Never	Hardly ever	Some-times	Often	Very often
Have you been a target of racist jokes, songs or teasing? N=296	83%	6%	8%	3%	0%
Have you been called an offensive name related to your race, culture or religion? N=297	80%	9%	9%	2%	0%
Has someone suggested that you do not belong in Australia, that you should 'go home' or 'get out' and so on? N=294	92%	5%	2%	1%	0%
Have you been refused the use of a service or denied entry (venue, transport) because of your racial, cultural or religious background? N=299	96%	1%	3%	0%	0%
Have you been refused employment because of your racial, cultural or religious background? N=289	98%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Have you been overlooked for promotion because of your racial, cultural or religious background? N=281	95%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Has someone assaulted or threatened you in anyway for racist reasons? N=298	91%	5%	4%	<1%	0%
Have you been confronted by racist material in the newspaper, radio or tv? N=297	54%	9%	27%	8%	2%
Have you been the target of racism in Social Media such as Facebook or Twitter? N=245	99%	1%	<1%	0%	0%
Have you experienced racism in other online communication? E.g. emails or blogs. N=253	88%	4%	6%	2%	0%

* NB: "not applicable" excluded – Due to rounding up, total might not be 100%

Interesting findings regarding the experience of racism (whether 'hardly ever', 'sometimes', 'often' or 'very often') include:

- 17% of all respondents said they had been the target of racist jokes, songs or teasing;
- 20% had been called an offensive name related to their race, culture or religion.

These numbers suggest **quite high levels of experience of direct, overt racism** (about one in five Darebin residents or just under), even if they appear lower than in the Challenging Racism Project (CRP), where 32.5% of the Darebin, Banyule and Moreland area respondents (and 27% of respondents Australia-wide) said they had hardly ever, sometimes, often or very often been called names or insulted because of their ethnic background.

Unsurprisingly, there seems to be **more intermediate levels of experience of physical confrontations,** with 9% of respondents saying they had been assaulted or threatened in some way for racist reasons. This is nonetheless of concern, **affecting almost one in ten Darebin residents** (and a much higher proportion for some groups in the community cf. section 6c below).

In addition, 8% of respondents said it had been suggested to them that they do not belong in Australia or that they should 'go home' or 'get out'.

But the **numbers for institutional or formal racism appear much lower:**

- 4% of respondents said they had been refused the use of a service or denied entry to a venue because of their racial, cultural or religious backgrounds. However, it should be noted that this low percentage is in stark contrast with the experience from newly-arrived and Aboriginal communities expressed in the focus groups. It might be a sign that these two groups are experiencing higher levels of formal racism, consistent with the pervasiveness of the experience of racism for those two groups. It might also be a sign that, being newly-arrived and with little support in a new society, they have a very different experience of racism. This explanation would obviously not be applicable to the Aboriginal community, but for that group, the entrenched systemic racism still prevalent today in Australia offers a plausible explanation for this discrepancy;
- less than 2% had been refused employment because of their racial, cultural or religious background;
- 5% had been overlooked for promotion because of their racial, cultural or religious background.

This lower level might be a sign that institutional and systemic racism is experienced less often than some would have thought, a sign that progress has been made in this field. However it might also be that, being harder to distinguish, people do not recognise this behaviour as racism, and hence remain silent, whereas verbal abuse, for instance, is much easier to identify, hence more readily reported.

City of **DAREBIN**

In contrast, **one very common experience of racism** is being faced with **racist material in the media.** Almost half of all Darebin respondents (46%) reported having been confronted by racist material in the newspaper, radio or television, with over one in four (27%) stating this happened "sometimes" and 10% "often" or "very often". The existence of racist material in the media seems to have been observed to a greater extent by young people (i.e. those aged under 55 years, particularly those aged 35 to 54 – recognised by 56%), those born in Australia (53%), those speaking only English at home (54%) and particularly by the tertiary educated (62%). This level of exposure is absolutely in keeping with experiences of focus groups participants, who underlined the role and responsibility of the media in spreading and feeding racism. This might be a good indicator of how deeply entrenched racism still is in Australian society.

As far as **cyber-racism**—i.e. racism which occurs on the internet such as racist websites, images, blogs, videos and online comments as well as racist comments, images or language in text messages, emails or on social networking sites - is concerned, experiences were **not that common.** Online racism via social media does not appear to have been a problem generally (experienced only by 1%) and a minority reported having experienced racism in other online communication (12%).

The fact that about 1% of respondents had been a target of racism in social media such as Facebook or Twitter might qualify the concern that is often widely expressed about these forms of communication. Participants to the youth focus groups acknowledged the existence of racism in social media, and at times their posting of unwittingly racist comments or updates. As one said, "Young people might say things in a moment of anger that everyone can see. You change your status on the spur of the moment. […] You don't realise who else can see it and how they might feel. You can tell what you're doing every moment of the day. I might have 'Oh I hate Asians' and you don't realise that people might see it." But, interestingly, most of them said they had heard a lot about it in the media ("It's been on the news a lot"; "It has been in the media") rather than experienced it. This indicates the need for further investigations into cyber-racism on social media.

About 12% of respondents to the phone survey said they had experienced racism in other online communication such as emails or blogs. This was particularly the case of those aged 16 to 34 years (20%), men (17%) and those who are not religious (18%). Those educated to a School Certificate level (or equivalent) were also more likely to report this type of online racism (30%). While these levels could be seen as quite high, they do not necessarily reach the degree one might expect overall from the increased take-up of internet technology and the rapid development of user-generated content. This might be linked to the wording of the question, with the use of "experienced" which might have been interpreted as being personally targeted by, rather than having witnessed, racist content, which could have been better captured with the word "observed". These findings nonetheless provide enough evidence to warrant **keeping an eye on the development of racist material on the internet.**

"When [I was] young, I was on a mission in Warrnambool and every Sunday afternoon, they had a polo match and tried to see how many black kids they could knock off. We had to hide. It was brutal, physical racism. The impact of that is still here."

—Aboriginal woman

"[Racism] doesn't happen everyday, but the bad things that happen, you never forget them."

—Man, Indian background

Online survey

Unsurprisingly, respondents to the online survey reported much higher levels of personal experiences of racism.

As with phone respondents, the most common experience was being confronted with racism in the media, reported by eight in ten online respondents (vs. almost five in ten – 46% of phone respondents). This higher level is once again in keeping with the self-selection of the sample, which would have drawn people more likely to be themselves victim of racism, and with a higher level of awareness of racism highlighted by previous responses, which makes respondents more likely to analyse and recognise an article or program as prejudiced and discriminatory.

Other frequent experiences reported by online respondents include:

- over six in ten had been called an offensive name related to their race, culture or religion (vs. two in ten phone respondents);
- over half had been the target of racist jokes, songs or teasing (vs. about one in six - 17% - of phone respondents);
- one in three had been told that they do not belong in Australia or should 'go home' (vs. one in twelve - 8% - of phone respondents);
- three out of ten had been assaulted or threatened for racist reasons, which is three times higher than phone respondents (less than one out of ten - 9%);
- just under three out of ten had been overlooked for promotion because of their background (vs. one in twenty - 5% - of phone respondents);
- one in four had been refused employment because of their background (vs. one in fifty - 2% - of phone respondents);
- just over one in five had been denied a service or refused entry to a venue due to their background (vs. one in twenty-five - 4% - of phone respondents).

Cyber-racism was also more likely to be experienced by the online respondents, with over half reporting they had experienced racism online and one in five being a target of racism in social media.

It should be noted that Council staff consistently reported much lower levels of personal racist experiences than other online respondents. They reported notably less discrimination in employment (well over nine in ten had not experienced it, in comparison to less than six in ten for other respondents), including promotion, and in service provision. The type of incident Council staff and other respondents experienced at a relatively similar level was being called an offensive name related to their race, culture or religion (reported by six in ten Council staff vs. seven in ten other respondents).

Despite all the limitations due to the self-selection of the sample, these results point to worrying phenomena.

Focus groups

Focus groups participants provided extremely numerous examples of race-based incidents and types of discrimination, ranging from little things and subtle forms of exclusion and prejudice to various experiences of interpersonal racism or very direct and blatant instances of discrimination.

Verbal abuse, whether being called names, teased, spoken to in an abusive manner or made fun of, was incredibly common.

- Examples given included being called "Abo", "curry munchers", "nappy-heads", "white trash"; "bloody wogs"; hearing comments like "you are stealing our jobs"; racist jokes; having a go at someone due to their colour; yelling.
- Derogatory remarks were also mentioned, with an elderly Italian having been told by a nurse to "Go back to school and learn English".

- A usual theme for this verbal abuse was the **idea that the target did not belong to Australia** and should "go home". Participants form all backgrounds, ages and gender had been subjected to this type of abuse, with few variations: "Go back, go home monkey", "Go back to your country", "Go back where you come from", "Why do you stay here? This is our country, just leave"…

This verbal abuse was sometimes accompanied by physical abuse, e.g. being spat on, a Muslim woman "having [her] headscarf pulled".

While physical violence was less common than verbal abuse, there is no doubting its continuing occurrence.

- It sometimes took the form of attacks on property such as graffiti on an Aboriginal mural in St George's road. A newly-arrived man recalled: "Someone used to smash my car with eggs, only my car in the whole street".

- But most times, it was actually physical assault:

  » a participant recalled how a man tried to run him over;
  » another how he was "bashed up and a friend knifed";
  » Muslim girls were "chased around" and had timber thrown at them;
  » another woman had "two teeth knocked off";
  » an elderly man was punched in the face.

A number of fights between different groups were also mentioned, whether at school, on public transport or in the street.

But there were also more **subtle experiences.** People felt they were **being treated differently** due to their skin colour or their nationality.

- An international student explained how he had been told to say he was Sri Lankan and not Indian because "people might treat you differently if you're perceived to be Indian".

- People also expressed how they were feeling looked down upon by people who:

  » adopted patronising behaviours towards them;
  » were rude or condescending;
  » talked disparagingly about Aboriginal issues "just because an Aboriginal person is around";
  » refused to observe the usual rules of politeness such as never saying hello back;
  » passed inappropriate judgement such as "this shirt won't suit you because you're black."

Similarly, people experienced being **ostracised** because of their background.

- An "Australian born [man], with an Islamic background and an Arabic culture" recalled that no one would talk to him during a work placement.

- A Chinese woman recounted that people walked away from her when she sat down near them.

- A Spanish exchange student was left on her own at school as "no one wanted to be her friend because of her English language abilities".

- In a workshop, "the only Asian man was left to sit by himself".

These experiences of exclusion are a reminder that **"as blatantly discriminatory behaviour has become increasingly socially unacceptable, discrimination may be expressed in more subtle or passive ways.** Although people may not be bullied, they may be ignored or excluded from important events; they may not receive [particularly] bad service in a shop, but they may not be actively helped either; **they may not be called names, but they may find that others avoid sitting next to them at school or in cafes."** (VicHealth 2009, p.14)

A similar, but distinct, issue encountered mostly by newly arrived and Aboriginal communities was that of **(mis)trust** by people or agencies. The experience of both groups was very similar in that way, especially in shops, where "they've got eyes on you all the time" and "as soon as you enter, the shop assistant is watching you to see if you're going to steal or break something". The continual suspicion they experienced extended to interactions with institutions, notably for Aboriginal participants.

This was in part linked to the **stereotypes** that are attached to this group, for instance "that we are drunks, unemployed, lazy, violent, child abusers, on welfare, taking away from other taxpayers and always complaining about native title". But Aboriginal people were not alone in being stereotyped. Such stereotyping sometimes took the form of **rumours** such as "Don't trust Indians" or "Indian drivers might rape you if you go alone in the taxi" or "Don't go on the road when Asians are there because they don't know how to drive and don't follow road rules".

There were also numerous experiences of race-based discrimination.

- This could be in aged care settings, where a participant was told "we're not taking Africans because our residents don't want them". But "actually, this was just based on the prejudices of the management, not the ideas for residents, who had not even been consulted".

- It also happened in housing where, to secure a rental property, an Indian participant had to pay six months of rent in advance.

- Service was refused to some people wanting to catch public transport, with bus drivers "not even stopp[ing] for Muslim women who [were] waiting" or refusing to stop their vehicle for people even though they had pressed the button.

- Participants also told of being refused entry to a venue, with:
  - » an Aboriginal man stating they were allowed to buy food, but not stay: "We can buy take-away if we've got money in our pockets and then go to the park" or;
  - » "Six Asian students and an 'Aussie' going to an entertainment centre: the Aussie girl was allowed in without a question, but the rest of the group were stopped and asked for ID".

More **institutional forms of racism** were also experienced by focus group participants.

- It was notably the case with service providers, with the perception that "as migrants, we will not get the same quality of treatment as everyone else" in hospital or the fact that some hospitals "don't use interpreters".

- Certain government services, including Council services at times, were found by some to be "not appropriate and not accessible. Procedures aren't clear enough".

- The lack of proper community engagement, which led to people from minority groups feeling like their voices were not being heard, was emphasised. "Services, whether schools, Council, police, institutions and agencies, think they know, but they actually don't consult properly, don't check that what they're providing responds to the needs of the people and benefits them".

- It was also underlined that, for instance, "the proportion of Africans living in Darebin is higher than the proportion using Council Services" and this barrier in access to services had to be lifted.

This extended also to **employment,** whether by Council or outside. "Racist attitudes in some practices in Council employment itself" were highlighted by Council staff and Council was often found not to be reflective enough of its diverse community in terms of workforce. But focus group participants more generally expressed how it was "very hard to get work" when one is from an Aboriginal or CALD background. Employment certainly came out as a major setting for experiences of racism and discrimination in Darebin (cf. section 6b below).

The Police Force was another institution that focus group participants felt was often discriminatory.

- Aboriginal women talked of "police brutality" and Aboriginal men of how "It's less up in your face, but you can tell from people's body language, the way they talk to you. The coppers are racist". They added "Police have a lot to answer for; they need to take responsibility and question why there are so many Aboriginals in prison. Northcote, Preston and Reservoir police stations: a lot of Aboriginal men have gone through there, with experiences of racism."

- This discriminatory attitude of the police towards the Aboriginal community was alluded to by other participants too. A Sri Lankan man recalled how "police would pick me up and question me, presumably because I had an 'afro' and they mistook me for Aboriginal."

- But other groups also experienced issues with the police.

  » A group of Lebanese international students were stopped by police who "swore at them".

  » African participants shared their "experience of the police framing black people for made up offences" and underlined how, in their experience, "police 'profile you', single you out due to your look; they target you. The police car drove past me and a friend in my car one night. They then pulled us over and said that our light was not on. I said 'my lights are not on! What do you mean? Of course they are on, it's dark, what are you talking about?' They were on as we were sitting there talking but there were two police cars, so what can I do?"

All these examples illustrate how, on the whole, a wide range of experiences of race-based discrimination were reported by Darebin citizens as part of the inquiry.

City of **DAREBIN**

b. Settings

In addition to the type of racism experienced by Darebin citizens, the inquiry sought to explore the settings where these experiences were taking place.

Phone survey

Consistent with the fact that eight in ten respondents to the phone survey said they had not experienced racism, nine in ten or more had not experienced racism in the last five years, whether in employment, education, housing, in the public sphere (venues or events), with the police or service providers.

Table 7 – Settings for race-based discrimination

Q11. How often have you experienced discrimination because of your OWN RACIAL, CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND in the following situations within Australia over the last 5 years? * Note 'not applicable' response NOT read out

	Never	Hardly ever	Some-times	Often	Very often
In your workplace N=269	91%	4%	5%	1%	0%
In education i.e. at a school, TAFE or university N=262	92%	4%	4%	<1%	<1%
When renting or buying a house N=281	98%	1%	1%	0%	0%
In any dealings with the police N=267	98%	2%	<1%	0%	0%
At a shop or restaurant N=299	93%	3%	4%	<1%	0%
At a sporting or public event N=296	93%	3%	3%	1%	0%
In any dealings with an agency or government service provider N=299	96%	3%	1%	0%	0%

 NB: "not applicable" excluded

Due to rounding up, total might not be 100%

The **most common setting** where race-based discrimination had been experienced ('hardly ever', 'sometimes', 'often' or 'very often') was the **workplace** (over 9%), closely followed by **educational settings**, whether schools, TAFE or Universities (over 8%).

Public space came close as well, with 7% of respondents having experienced racism in a shop or restaurant and the same percentage at a sporting or public event.

Dealings with agencies or government service providers, dealings with the police or the housing market were less prone to racist experiences (4%, 2% and 2% respectively). It should be emphasised that, for instance in the case of the police, the proportion of the population having dealings with them is likely not to be that high, which mechanically drives down the percentages of occurrences. These numbers might therefore not be reflective of the experiences of specific sub-groups, as evidenced by some of the focus groups (cf. section 6a above).

In particular, while only a minority of residents had experienced racism in any environment or situation, those who spoke a language other than English at home or were born in a non-native English speaking country tended to be slightly more likely to have done so.

On the whole, however, if comparing the phone survey results to the Challenging Racism Project (CRP) results, **there seem to be fewer experiences of racism in a number of settings in Darebin than in the Darebin, Banyule and Moreland (DBM) substatistical area and even than in Australia in general.**

In the DBM area, the percentages of CRP respondents saying they had experienced racism hardly ever, sometimes, often or very often was:

- 23% in the workplace;
- 20% in education;
- 24.8% at a shop or restaurant;
- 20.9% at a sporting or public event;
- 10% in housing and;
- 8.9% in dealings with the police.

Australia-wide, these percentages were lower, but still above the reported experiences in the Darebin Racism Inquiry:

- 17.5% of CRP respondents reported experiences of racism in the workplace;

- 16.6% in education;
- 17.8% at a shop or restaurant;
- 16.4% at a sporting or public event;
- 6.8% in housing and;
- 7.2% in dealings with the police.

While the comparison cannot be accurately made as the question in the CRP was worded with "cultural background" – which, although less detailed, may be interpreted more widely, hence a higher level of positive responses – this would point to experiences of racism in Darebin being about half the level in Australia. The difference might be linked to different factors:

1. Darebin itself and the characteristics of the municipality;
2. the five-year difference in data collection;
3. the implicit lifetime experience in the CRP compared to the five-year timeframe of the question in the Darebin survey.

Online survey

Consistent with their higher level of reported personal experiences of racism, respondents to the online survey also reported more experiences of racism in the various settings explored.

Similarly to phone survey respondents, the setting where online respondents reported experiencing discrimination most often was the workplace, though at a much higher level (under one in three, compared to less than one in ten - 9% - of phone respondents).

The following most common settings for their experiences of racism were:

- shops and restaurants (under one in three vs. less than one in twelve –7%– of phone respondents);
- dealings with agencies or government service providers (just under three in ten vs. one in twenty-five - 4%);

- sporting or public events (over one in four vs. less than one in twelve - 7%);
- education institutions (over one in five vs. one in twelve - 8%);
- housing (one in five vs. one in fifty - 2%);
- dealings with the police (under one in five vs. one in fifty - 2%).

Apart from lower levels of experiences in education and higher in dealings with agencies, the pattern seems consistent with the experiences of the wider community.

It should be noted that Council staff respondents again reported much lower levels of personal experiences of racism, whichever the setting. The main difference was in dealings with agencies or government service providers, with nine in ten Council staff never having experienced racism in that context, when less than six in ten of other respondents had a similar experience. This might reflect the greater familiarity of Council staff with service providers. The setting where Council staff and other respondents reported most similar levels of experiences was housing, with respectively two in ten and three in ten having experienced race-based discrimination in that setting.

Focus groups

In keeping with the statistical findings of the survey, the workplace and employment were identified by focus group participants as a major setting for race-base discrimination. All groups, to differing degrees, mentioned issues with employment.

i. Employment and the workplace

Simply looking for employment and managing to get a job was a first obstacle.

- An international student recalled how she had "applied for many jobs after completion of my undergraduate course;

some for more complicated jobs but even 'Maccas', KFC, any odd job that I could get and I never heard back".
- Participants of various backgrounds shared how they could not get interviews with their "ethnic name" but when the name was changed to an Anglo-Australian sounding name, employers started calling back.
- Some in the Council staff focus group pointed out that at time in employment, there is "not a glass ceiling but a glass door; you don't get even interviewed because of your name, which reflects a different background."
- Newly-arrived and Aboriginal communities were particularly exposed to this "glass door" and expressed how not finding employment because of their background was a huge issue for them.

This difficulty with finding employment affected **participants from newly-arrived communities.**

- One underlined how "to get a job, you must not have a foreign sounding name because then you do not get even an interview. Even if you change your name, then 'your appearance' when you go for your interview prevents you again from getting the job". He added "Many take a long time to get a job. […] no one calls you back or lets you know how your application went. […]They do not want to employ people from a different background because they do not know how to treat them at work. They do not know how to relate to them. They prefer mainstream people because they are used to them."

- Another explained how his wife "tried to get work placement during her course, but it was very difficult. When she completed her course she tried to get a job. By this stage, she was very experienced both in European hair and African hair. She virtually went everywhere and asked. Each time she was told to go to High Street. 'Why don't you go to the African shops on High St to 'your people'?' It was such a waste of time; she was more qualified than many of the others."

Similarly, **Aboriginal participants** insisted that employment and race-based unemployment was a major issue. They highlighted how there are very few Aboriginal people employed in Council but also in businesses in Darebin. One elaborated "there are thousands of people employed at Northland shopping centre, and not one is Aboriginal, apart maybe from sessional security guards, to take care of the 'Aboriginal problem'."

But **access to employment** was not the only problem. **Once in a job**, people were still faced with race-based discrimination, whether in terms of career opportunities offered or inadequacy of the work.

- A Middle-Eastern man recalled "they made me do inappropriate things like cleaning. I wasn't getting work experience. [I was] being ostracised and eventually denied an apprenticeship".

- Discrimination at work can also take the form of racist jokes or comments or exclusion by co-workers. An Aboriginal man indicated "my son who is a plumber enters the lunch room and everyone else starts suddenly talking disparagingly about Aboriginal issues just because he is there and he is Aboriginal. He doesn't understand why – why can't we talk footy like you were two minutes ago. Why can't it just be normal?"

This wish for things to be "normal" was a common demand of victims of racism.

- Some expressed the hope that some people of "visibly different" background would be hired "so people realise 'they're just like anyone else'"; a way of saying their presence in the public space and employment should be acknowledged but also go unnoticed because it is just part of the normal way society functions.

- Muslim women said "we need it to be normal to have a Muslim working".

- With a number of other groups (newly-arrived communities, Aboriginal people) who are the clearest victims of racism, (un)employment was a key issue and possibilities for jobs were seen as an important part of a solution, allowing the individual to earn one's life and reclaim some dignity, but also symbolically signalling the "normalcy" of it all.

This underlines how **addressing employment issues will be a key element to combat race-based discrimination in Darebin.**

06 Experiences of racism

continued

ii. Education

Schools were also mentioned by focus group participants as **a major setting for racism.** This is in keeping with "recent research [that] identifies Australian schools as a key setting for race-based discrimination, particularly for children and young people from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds." (VicHealth 2010b, p.6) Participants from all backgrounds, ages and gender expressed their concern with the number of race-based incidents in schools. It was not often extremely developed in terms of examples given, but more of a general concern around what was happening in schools.

Participants nonetheless mentioned fights, racist jokes, teasing (notably around "ethnic food" or dress) and name-calling, as being particularly prevalent. It should be noted that some of the service providers underscored how sometimes the issue was not so much racism as conflict, with racism as a by-product (cf. idea of opportunistic racism in section 5b). Young respondents underlined how "Every school has racism". The only group who did not seem to have concerns with schools was the newly-arrived one, with a participant stating "In schools, it's good, not unresolved issues. Both in adult education or in the children's school too. In the Catholic schools, they handle it straight away if there is an issue. They do not want to lose the money. The teachers are on to it straight away". However, this issue was not explored in details with the group, so there might be some qualifications to that statement.

iii. Public sphere

The public realm appeared as an important setting for racism in Darebin.

Issues were reported in **public transport**, with train and train stations, but particularly buses, notably lines 250 to La Trobe and 510 and 552 to Moreland. Buses were a concern with a number of groups, and particularly Muslim women who emphasised how the discrimination they faced (not being taken onboard by drivers…) prevented them from freely moving and going about their daily lives, as they either had to face long waits or ended up not taking the bus anymore.

Streets and parks were also mentioned, notably by Indian respondents, Muslim men and women, as well as youth. Whether this is a sign of these respondents' "visibility" in some cases or a sign of their more extensive use of these locations is not quite clear.

Local venues, such as **pub and bars** for Aboriginal men, **local shops** such as Aldi and IGA for Aboriginal women and new arrivals and more generally **clubs and restaurants** were identified as settings where race-based discrimination happened. **Northland shopping centre** and to a lesser degree, shops in High Street were notably mentioned. Preston Market, on the other hand, while described by few as a place where "you'll see racism at its best", was seen by most as a "great example where there is equality, an effortless mixing and acceptance of diversity. There are markets everywhere in the world – in every culture - therefore people feel comfortable there. Everyone works towards the same goal at the market. It is inclusive and not hierarchical."

Finally, **sporting venues** were mentioned by some as places for race-based discrimination, primarily on the "footy field". This was qualified by Aboriginal men who underlined that "racism in sports is not just the footy, but also the basketball, netball for girls, [and] not so much the cricket."

iv. Accommodation

While accommodation was not identified by most focus groups as being a setting for race-based discrimination, it came across as **an issue for some of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged ones.** It was touched upon by international students and Indian participants, but mentioned more extensively by Aboriginal people and new arrivals.

One mentioned a survey from Whittlesea Council which "showed that many groups had issues finding accommodation, about 90% of respondents from certain groups." This was due to their race, culture or religion. "Africans, Aborigines, Chinese, Muslims and Arabs all had higher [rates of] accommodation issues." While this data is from a different municipality, the participant felt it could apply to Darebin as well. He went on "it's a vicious circle: if you are not working, they say you can not pay your rent; if you don't have accommodation, how can you get a job? There is a lack of trust if you are on Centrelink payments."

This shows how **issues of employment and housing are interlinked** and the multiplying effect of different layers of disadvantage. This would be in keeping with elements of information from the Tenants Union of Victoria, which show that, as Darebin is a desirable location not so far from the city, its stock of affordable housing rental (rent below the median rent) is likely to be occupied mostly by high-income households. This in turn pushes lower income households, who usually are a more diverse population, out. And while there is clearly a **relationship between diversity and disadvantage in housing, race-based discrimination is hard to prove in that setting**, as the tense market excludes all people on lower incomes.

v. Institutions

Institutions were identified as a setting for discrimination, but to a lesser extent than other places (apart from the interactions with police, which were often the setting of race-base discrimination as already developed in section 6a above).

Notwithstanding their role in employment (cf. above), with institutions **such as service providers and agencies, including Council**, racism was mostly experienced as an **access issue.**

- It was mentioned mostly by faith leaders, Aboriginal women and Muslim women (which would seem to support the finding from the phone survey that women are more likely to experience racism in trying to access services) as well as new arrivals.

- An African participant queried "How many African residents use Council services? The proportion of Africans living in Darebin is higher than the proportion using Council Services. Why is that? The issue is that there is no connection between the African community and Council."

This would be an issue worth exploring further if Council is to identify gaps in its service provision and delivery.

The health system, notably **hospitals**, and to a lesser degree, medical centres and aged care, was also an institutional setting seen as prone to experiences of racism. This was particularly mentioned by **CALD elderly.** One among the examples given was of nurses ignoring an Italian man in pain and saying 'I don't understand you' dismissively. It certainly was an important concern for this particular group.

vi. Media

As noted previously in section 6a, the **media** was seen by focus group participants as a **setting where racism festers.** This is in keeping with the idea that "social exclusion and racial biases also develop in response to negative media coverage of the activities of minority groups. Because the media provide a primary source of information to the public about various migrant groups, it can wittingly or unwittingly serve to reinforce the mistreatment of and discrimination against these groups" (Mansouri 2007, p.24). This analysis supports the perception from focus group participants.

- Aboriginal women underlined how "the media have a huge responsibility in their reporting in general."

- International students also highlighted "the huge role from the media and the stereotypes they introduce."

- An artist from a non-English speaking background added that "the media has a lot to answer for with its negative portrayal of Muslims, Indians and refugees".

- Council staff talked of "biased media."

- A CALD elderly pointed that "the media only highlights crimes but never highlights contributions made by migrants."

- Similarly, a Muslim man emphasised "it's about the spin on negative things rather than positive things. You hear a lot about the negative, almost never about the positive."

As to cyber racism, it was mentioned only by:
- young participants (cf. section 6a above) who reported a few instances of cyber bullying on Facebook;

- Indian participants who had seen a number of racist comments on the Internet or below YouTube videos and;

- by service providers who reported some exchanges of racist insults or comments "happening on social media mostly, but […] sometimes [spilling] over into public space."

On the whole, the numbers in the 2011 inquiry seem to show that racism in Darebin might be diminishing in institutional settings. But there indisputably remains violence, tensions and abuse in public spaces, as evidenced by the numbers of witnessed incidents, as part of a potentially increasing trend. These apparently contradictory trends might be an indication of a decline in racism in institutions and formal arenas such as the workplace, as a result of the generalisation of equal opportunity policies and the enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation. However, this decline doesn't seem to be resulting in a decrease of incidents in public space. In addition, it is qualified by the experience of focus groups participants, who identified employment as a major issue and underlined how race-based discrimination was still happening over a number of settings in Darebin.

"In my shop, […] after one week [of being open], a guy walked in and I was talking to my wife in Arabic and he just said 'bloody wogs'. It really affected me. I really got angry inside, but needed to keep quiet, because I'd just started the business and I needed the customers. It's really hard."

—Man, Middle-Eastern background

c. Affected groups

While anyone might one day experience race-based discrimination, previous studies indicate that "those most likely to experience race-based discrimination are Indigenous Australians and those from CALD communities (including temporary migrants and refugees)." (VicHealth 2009, p.17)

The Darebin Racism Inquiry sought to map out the groups affected by race-based discrimination in the municipality, both through the quantitative approach of the survey and the qualitative dimension of the focus groups.

Phone survey

There were a few statistically significant findings from the phone survey regarding experiences of racism, with the most likely to be victims of race-based discrimination being those from a "minority" religious background, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, younger people and, in some contexts, women.

Overall, those most likely to report having been a victim of racism, were those from a Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic or Jewish religious background, although it should be noted that small sample sizes mean these results should be viewed as indicative only. Respondents from these four religious backgrounds were notably more likely than average to report at some stage:

- being told they do not belong in Australia (25% vs. 8%);
- being denied entry to a venue or use of a service (12% vs. 4%);
- being overlooked for promotion for racial, cultural or religious reasons (26% vs. 5%) and;
- being threatened or assaulted for racist reasons (29% vs. 9%).

Younger people (aged 16 to 34) were significantly more likely statistically than older people to report:

- having been a target of racist jokes, taunts or teasing (25% vs. 14% of 35 to 54 year olds and 11% of those aged over 55);
- having been called an offensive name relating to their race, culture or religion (34% vs. 13% of 35 to 54 year olds and 11% of those aged over 55)or;
- having been assaulted or threatened at some stage for racist reasons (15% vs. 5% of 35 to 54 year olds and 7% of those aged over 55).

Young people were also slightly more likely to report having experienced discrimination across a variety of places, particularly in an educational setting (15% versus 8% on average) or at a sporting or public event (13% versus 7% on average).

This higher prevalence of experiences of racism among the younger segment of the Darebin population might in some cases reflect the opportunistic nature of racism in schools and the use of racism as a tool in unrelated conflicts as pointed out by some focus group participants (cf. section 5b above). It could also point out to ambivalent views regarding the acceptability of racist jokes, evidenced in the youth and international students' focus groups. It could also be linked to their higher presence in the public space, as they might be more likely to go out and be faced with confrontational situations. It might also be a sign of a more widespread bullying culture among youth.

Those speaking a language other than English at home were significantly more likely to:

- have been called an offensive name relating to their race, culture or religion than those speaking English only (29% vs. 15%);

- have been told that they 'do not belong in Australia' (16% vs. 4% respectively),

- have been overlooked for promotion (11% vs. 1%) or;

- have been assaulted or threatened for racist reasons (16% vs. 6%).

Settings where those 'speaking a language other than English at home' were significantly more likely than those speaking 'English only' to report having experienced racism were:

- the workplace (16% vs. 5%);

- at a shop or restaurant (13% vs. 4%) and;

- in dealings with an agency or government service provider (7% vs. 2%).

Those born in a non-native English speaking country were significantly more likely than those born in Australia to report:

- having experienced someone suggesting that they do not belong in Australia (20% vs. 5%);

- having experienced racism in the workplace (17% vs. 6%) or;

- having experienced racism at a shop or restaurant (14% vs. 5%).

Women were significantly more likely than men to say they had at some stage been refused the use of a service or denied entry somewhere based on their racial, cultural or religious background (7% versus 1%). The reason for this is unclear. It might be that women tend to use services more, e.g. for family-related reasons, so have more opportunities to be denied a service. It

might also be that gender roles make them easier targets in certain environments.

It should be noted that the experience of racism for the Aboriginal community does not come out in the phone survey. This is unsurprising given the fact that this was a general population survey. With about 1% of the Darebin population being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander according to the census data, the numbers of Aboriginal respondents in the survey were too small for any statistically significant findings. The very frequent and commonplace experience of race-based discrimination by Indigenous Australians is nonetheless well-established by a number of studies. A review of studies on race-based discrimination and Indigenous health found that around three out of four Indigenous Australians regularly experience race-based discrimination, while another study concluded that only 7% of the Indigenous people surveyed had never experienced race-based discrimination (VicHealth 2009, p.19). These are extremely high figures, revealing the entrenched nature of racism towards Indigenous Australians and in keeping with the qualitative data provided by the Darebin Inquiry's focus groups.

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Focus groups and public forum

Qualitative data from the focus groups and public forum interestingly complemented the phone survey and informed the inquiry with a rich, grounded picture of groups affected by racism.

There was a general agreement that anyone may be a victim of racism and that r**acism might be coming from any group.** This is in keeping with views in the literature that racism can be perpetrated by individuals from 'ethno-racial' groups with limited social power.

- Several participants pointed that racism does not necessarily come from white Australians only, but also occurs between different ethnic groups. As one participant put it, sometimes "there seems to be an 'us and them' attitude of all racism coming from white Australians, where my experience has been that racism occurs often from one ethnic group to another."

- The view that came out from the public forum was also that racism comes from all groups, not just Anglo-Australians. In keeping with the notion that racism may occur between actors of different races (inter-racial) but also actors of the same race (intra-racial), public forum participants pointed that "it exists between CALD groups and within CALD groups as well."

Examples given included:

- some in the Sri Lankan and Indian communities being prejudiced against people with dark skin, both within their community, for instance through matrimonial ads stating "fair-skinned wanted", and against Africans;

- a group of Middle Eastern men picking on Aboriginal men at Preston railway station during the middle of the day;

- a group of Aboriginal teenagers picking on a woman of Greek background on a bus;

- girls of Macedonian background calling an Anglo girl "white trash" in school;

- a group of Anglo men telling Muslim girls off the swings in Edwards lake park and chasing them off;

- Australians of Lebanese, Italian or Greek background insulting Indian taxi drivers… This latter example illustrates what some in the public forum called the "new racism of old migrants", with a sense of a repetition or vicious circle of previous waves of migrants being prejudiced against newer waves of migrants.

While these examples are not exhaustive and do not in any way attempt to paint a representative picture of the reality of racism in Darebin, they just illustrate how complex a phenomenon it can be.

It is worth underlining how **perpetrators of racism are not always strangers** (even though there is 'random' racism in the public sphere), but on a number of occasions are known by the victim e.g. neighbours, co-workers, other pupils in school.

It is also worth noting that most focus group participants who had been victims of racism underlined how **racism was coming from a small proportion of people.** "It's only a minority of people" said an artist of non-English speaking background, echoed in this feeling by a number of other focus groups.

Most participants also underlined that **racism was not a constant thing.** Occurrences of racist incidents were relatively rare for most of them, even though, as an Indian taxi driver recalled "it doesn't happen everyday; but the bad things that happen, you never forget them". Similarly, a Muslim woman insisted "It's not all the time."

This, however, was not the case for **two groups for which the experience of racism seemed constant and relentless.** Data from the focus groups depicts a pervasive, all-encompassing experience of racism for **Aboriginal communities**, compounded by their collective history of discrimination, dispossession and mistreatment, which still weighs on the individuals today, as well as, to a slightly lesser extent, **newly-arrived communities**, notably from Africa. For both these groups, racism was described as an integral part of everyday life.

i. Aboriginal community

The **omnipresence of racism in Aboriginal lives** was striking.

- Focus group participants underlined how "every Indigenous man [and woman] experiences it at one point; it is part of daily life, of 'normal' life".

- Another added "the sad reality is all Aboriginals experience racism in their life. That's a statistic that's unacceptable for any race."

This is certainly in keeping with the studies mentioned above about the prevalence of racism for Indigenous communities and highlights how racial discrimination has continued to influence the lives of Indigenous Australians in the more than two centuries following white settlement.

The **frequency** of the experience of racism not only extends to **time**, but **space** as well. Aboriginal Australians in Darebin experience racism **"everywhere**: in employment, in housing, in education, at the local shops, in sport, with institutions…" As one woman explained, "at the IGA down my house, they've got eyes on you all the time. It's the same everywhere […] When you're Aboriginal, as soon as you enter, the shop assistant is watching you to see if you're going to steal or break something. They always treat you with doubt".

Similar experiences took place in a number of settings.

- This was the case in transport: "When I get in a taxi, they ask 'do you have the money? Show it to me'. Even before they ask where you want to go".

- But it also happens in schools with children being picked on by other students. They are "called 'Abo-nopoly'; 'petrol-sniffer'; 'bong-head'; 'bike stealer'." The experience was described as relentless. "He's living it everyday of the week, and then people wonder why Aboriginal kids leave school."

- Employment (cf. section 6b above) was a major issue, as well as police (cf. section 6a above).

Aboriginal participants also recounted experiences of **institutional racism** with some service providers.

- They emphasised how "as a principle, [institutions] do not trust what we [Aboriginal people] tell them. A social worker was threatening to remove the baby from the family because the mother refused to have the baby vaccinated again. But they wouldn't believe her that he had been vaccinated already. All because the previous injection hadn't been properly recorded by the nurse."

- This institutional racism made the women feel like they were not being considered as human beings by some agencies and service providers. "They treat you like you haven't got a heart or feeling. They think you're not educated, not smart enough because you're black."

- Other agency workers adopted patronising attitudes, which made people feel like they were being denied a voice or treated like children. "They tell us 'we know better, you're just Aboriginal and we know what's good for you'."

These experiences fed in return the mistrust towards institutions, already fostered by history, from Aboriginal Australians in Darebin.

These examples are reflective of a more extensive form of racism towards Indigenous people in Australian society in general.

- This was exemplified by the widespread stereotyping of Aboriginal people reported: "we're seen as drunk, lazy, petrol-sniffing… but also privileged, getting good deals by 'choosing' to identify as Aboriginal. These are enduring myths."

- Participants expressed their weariness at being constantly boxed in a definition of themselves imposed from the outside. One remarked that Aboriginal men in Darebin had "made an important contribution", running organisations, advising the state government, winning awards… "But that's not as important as other people reminding us of who they think we are and that we can't contribute."

- Another participant echoed "you will just knock off work and go buy a beer and someone walks past you and he'll believe you've been drinking all day. There's this idea that we're lazy, we drink, that men are perpetrators of violence, that we abuse children, that we're all on welfare and taking away from 'them', that someone else's taxes are paying for us. When we talk about native titles and things, we're all complainers and we always want things and want more." And then added "But the majority of our demands have to do with our ancestors, really, to pay our respects to our past elders."

This remark underlines the **specificity of the Aboriginal experience of racism in the Australian context, linked to the history of the country.** The contemporary pervasiveness of racism against Indigenous people stems from the past. In the Aboriginal experience of racism, as expressed by focus groups participants, the legacy of past hardships and mistreatment and the trauma of past experiences do not only have an individual, but also a collective, dimension. The history of entrenched racism against Aboriginal people constitutes a (collective) legacy that weighs on the present and on the individual. This specificity, due to "an imposition on us of a culture" and the lack of recognition of Aboriginal culture, was acknowledged by a number of other focus groups. As one participant stated, merely "being Aborigine in your own country is to be the target of racism." This encapsulated both the pervasive dimension of the Aboriginal experience of racism and its specificity stemming from the dispossession of their land.

> **"We're seen as drunk, lazy, petrol-sniffing… but also privileged, getting good deals …"**

The recognition that the circumstances affecting Aboriginal Australians, as the original inhabitants of the land, are in some ways different to those facing CALD communities does not mean that some of these groups do not experience similar patterns of race-based discrimination.

ii. Newly-arrived communities

This similarity in experience was particularly marked for refugees or migrants from newly-arrived communities (mostly from African countries, either from the Horn of Africa or West and Central Africa, but also West Papua…).

As mentioned, the pervasiveness of the experience of racism in everyday life for people of these backgrounds was quite similar to the Aboriginal experience. From the comments of focus groups participants, it seems that, for them, **everyday experiences turn into everyday nightmares.** Common comments included:

- "I've had many experiences with being treated different due to my skin colour";
- "This happens all the time [e.g. that we are ignored in shops when we need help]" or;
- "Everyday I encounter this everywhere."

This underlines the frequency of racism in time and space, similar to the experience of Aboriginal Australians.

Two settings where people from newly-arrived communities experienced a lot of racism (cf. section 6b above) were **employment and housing.**

- As one participant said "they think it's harder to employ a person from a different background."
- Another added "getting accommodation is very hard for the same reason as for getting a job. People do not believe that you can pay your bills."

This underlined the issues of stereotyping and distrust of these groups, not dissimilar to the ones experienced by the Aboriginal community. As one participant put it "they have preconceived ideas about your ability to fit in." These preconceptions about new groups in Australian society act as barriers for access to a number of services.

For refugees and migrants from newly-arrived communities, life in Australia sometimes resembled an obstacle race: "you must not have a foreign sounding name because then you do not get even an interview. Even if you change your name, then your 'appearance' when you go for your interview prevents you again from getting the job." The tendency of mainstream society to see the negative in the unfamiliar, rather than the positive, extended to serious interactions with courts and police (cf. section 6b above), an experience reminiscent of the Aboriginal one of general mistrust, and at times mistreatment, from institutions.

This was also the case in other areas of the focus group participants' daily life. They felt they were constantly ignored or harassed in going about their daily business, with a lot of small incidents and informal racism, such as checking bags or not being attended to.

- One recalled: **"I went to Aldi the other day and after I was inside, a lady followed me and she said she wanted to look in the bag. I said 'what do you mean you want to look, am I the only one coming out?'."**

- Another echoed **"I was doing shopping but was only in the shop for a couple of minutes. I had my bag on my back and they stopped me and asked to check my bag. They clearly targeted me because of my race! I was singled out, the only person [that was] checked."**

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This **feeling of being singled out because of one's skin colour** made it all the harder for members of these newly-arrived communities as it was something new (cf. section 5b above), something that wasn't part of their frame of mind. Discovering "being black", realising for the first time upon coming to Australia that one is black came as a shock for some of the participants. As one put it, "it did not hit me that I was 'black'. Of course I knew, but it was not in my conscious mind. It did not occur to me until I got here that people treat you differently due to your skin colour. When I got to Australia I became a race."

The 'novelty' of the experience of (a certain type of) racism for some newly-arrived migrants reinforced the harshness of it. It also underlined how racism is often linked to "visible difference", an experience shared by other groups.

While Aboriginal and newly-arrived communities seem to have the most pervasive experience of racism in Darebin, other groups were also affected.

iii. Muslims

Among these groups, Muslims experienced high levels of discrimination, with the specific dimension of being explicitly and overtly deemed by some elements of the mainstream community as not being welcome in Australian society and not being 'compatible' with Australian values. This was notably shown by a number of phone calls and emails received in reaction to the media coverage of the 'Salam Alaykum – Muslims reaching out' project overseen by Darebin City Council. While these reactions were not originally part of the inquiry per se, they proved quite revealing and shed interesting light on the views held by some in the community. The rhetoric of the emails was often quite inflammatory, drawing on ideas of "invasion", "crusade", "missionary". They showed a very **strong and deeply-rooted anti-Muslim sentiment from a part of the community,** usually **fuelled by media coverage.**

This is in keeping with experiences of Muslim participants to the focus groups. While the media's role in fostering racism was a concern expressed by all (cf. section 6b above), Muslim participants were particularly troubled by it. A participant said "if a Muslim commits a crime, they mention it and all Muslims are blamed. If a Christian commits a crime, they don't mention he's Christian. It feels like Muslims are targeted." This feeling of being unfairly targeted in the media was linked to **11 September 2001, seen as a watershed moment.**

This is supported by the literature that shows that Muslim minorities in Australia have experienced an increase in levels of discrimination in response to September 11 and other terrorist attacks and the subsequent "war on terror" (Mansouri 2007, p.119).

- Muslim participants expressed their weariness of this negative portrayal. As a man emphasised "for 10 years, why are you every year badgering us with this? Most of us are good, not all Muslims are terrorists."

- A woman insisted on the fear they experienced every September due to the media 'commemoration': "Every year, the media coverage of September 11 and its 'anniversaries' is very stressful for Muslims and just maintains hateful relations."

- Participants were also apprehensive of the impact of media coverage on them. As one woman explained "every time the media talk about the niqab or burqa, people start getting abused." Media coverage thus had very real consequences, for Muslim women especially.

"I was working in a call centre. I'm of South-American origin, but with an Anglo-Australian accent. A number of customers said: 'I'm so glad, not an Indian at last!' or 'a real Aussie at last'."

—Woman, South-American background

There indeed seemed to be a **gendered experience of racism in the Muslim community.** While both genders reported being abused on the street or told to "go back to your country", notably when dressing traditionally, men reported experiences of racism at work, in the shops they run, in education, in schools. Women, on the other hand experienced racism mostly in the public sphere: streets, shops (as customers), parks, public transport (cf. section 6b above).

The gender dimension compounded their experience of racism, which might explain why, when asked about a personal experience of racism, a young Muslim woman answered "Once I had a Muslim taxi driver and I was terrified. He was Afghan and looked at my jeans and my headscarf and said 'Are you sure you are Muslim?'" While there are instances of intra-racial racism (cf. section 5b above), this does not so much seem to be the case here as a gender-based experience, even though it was not analysed as such. A few other examples of gender-based rather than race-based discrimination were reported.

Muslim women also **shared ambivalent experiences regarding the headscarf.** It seemed to constitute a trigger for a number of race-based incidents such as being called "nappy-heads", being honked at when driving or, in more serious cases, assaulted. But this was not always the case. There seemed to be a generational gap in experiences in that respect.

- As a young woman explained "I'm just wearing a scarf, so I have never been told anything, because apart from the scarf, I dress 'modernly'. But it's when you're in a full Islamic dress [like my mother] that things happen."

- This was echoed by another who said "I've been in Australia six years and haven't had bad experiences around wearing the hijab (headscarf). But my friend wearing a niqab (covering the face, except for the eyes), yes, she's had a terrible time."

While this is more a question of 'degree of cover', it echoes the generational gap in experiences in the sense that the headscarf per se does not necessarily lead to experiences of racism. It may be a sign that it might be getting more accepted or less conspicuous, more of a part of daily Australian life, which doesn't always entail racism. However larger versions of the garment or a scarf worn in addition to a traditional dress seem to elicit more attention and more reactions. This might be because it is then more visible hence easier to target, something that echoes other experiences of "visible difference".

iv. Triggers for racism

An idea that came out quite strongly from the focus groups and public forum is that racism is in part linked to **visible difference** and that people tend to be exposed to racism when they display 'otherness', look different or are "immediately visible like Indians, Somali, Africans, covered Muslims… in Australia". Examples given included:

- a man walking down the street in a hat that looked like a skullcap and being shouted at 'kill all Jews' by a passing car;

- a Sikh man who was "bearded and wearing a turban" being assaulted by youths;

- being "singled out due to [one's] skin colour"…

Appearance (skin colour, headwear for Muslim women or Sikh men…) was seen as a trigger in race-based incidents.

Participants also pointed out how, in their experiences, **"colour matters.** It's less hard if you are fair skinned." This was found to be the case not only between different groups but also within groups. As one man reported, "sometimes, even among us (Muslims), there is ignorance and people here that have been established longer look down on me because I'm African. Some even say 'oh, you're so dark'."

How 'foreign' a person looks has an impact on the type and degree of race-based discrimination they experience.

But it is not only about visual difference, but also auditory. **How 'foreign' a person sounds** also has a bearing on their experience of racism.

This was evidenced by experiences of international students. One recalled "I worked at a call centre. […] There were a lot of Indians working there, but […] because of their accent, they could not make the sales, because people did not want to talk to them. […] I got asked a lot if I was even calling from Australia or whether I was calling from somewhere else. They kept asking me: 'Are you calling from Melbourne or from India?' I said 'I'm in Collingwood'. But they wouldn't believe me. […] It was the same for every student who had an Indian accent – it's a quite **distinctive accent.**" Faith leaders, artists and Council staff also pointed out the role of accents in prompting racism.

It was also evidenced by the need felt by a number of participants to **change their names** so as to have a chance to participate in Australian society and not be discriminated against. This was particularly the case in employment or education.

- As one refugee recounted, "I couldn't get a job [despite my overseas and Australian qualifications]. I then changed my name to a more Australian sounding name and when I sent in my application, I immediately got one interview."
- Others echoed "we have had to anglicize our names to get into uni, for jobs."

This was seen by them as a sign of the subtle, hidden dimension of discrimination in Australia.

It is interesting to note that **international students had quite a different take on that same experience.** Most of them had changed their name.

- "Lily is my English name, not my Chinese name."
- "Many students here have an 'English name' because their names are hard to pronounce [for Australians…] and it's easier in class or with friends because otherwise you do not know when you are being talked to."

But they didn't seem to suffer at all from having to anglicise their names.

- "I've never thought about it being a problem."
- "I don't care, it's useful."

Far from being an issue for them, it was seen as understandable, as their names were sometimes hard to pronounce correctly for Australians, and even "fun" or liberating: "It can be really fun to choose your own name for a little while, while you're away; you can get to choose who you are."

This might be a mark of internalised racism, not perceived as such by these students. It might also be reflective of their capacity and choice to live independently from their family, hence be in a unique position, if only for a short time before they return. In any case, it underlines the difference between the experience of (some) students who are younger, more flexible, and only here for a short time for some of them, and the experience of people who either have migrated permanently so want to feel accepted as themselves in this new society, or have lived here their whole life and still feel their names, part of their identity, are being used to deny their belonging to Australian society.

On a related note, focus groups participants also identified **language issues** as a trigger for racism, which exposed groups from language backgrounds other than English to prejudice and discrimination. As one pointed out, "Not having good English is a weakness. Having good English helps. You're judged straight away from the way you speak."

Language issues raised barriers in access to services and in participation to the community. Elderly people from CALD backgrounds, Muslim women and newly-arrived communities reported issues with poor level of English. In these groups, some emphasised how the difficulties in everyday life were compounded by language issues. Not understanding the language also meant not understanding the system or the way things work in this (new) country, which left them vulnerable to race-based discrimination.

The lack of patience from certain members of the community towards new migrants with language issues was pointed out.

- Faith leaders highlighted how "When you don't speak good English, you're treated very curtly."

- Similarly, some international students reported being excluded from group assignments as other students felt their English skills were too low.

As all these examples show, there are a number of reasons why people experience racism and people from all groups can experience it.

On the whole, in keeping with research, experiences of racism in Darebin are higher among Aboriginal Australians, those born overseas and those who speak a language other than English. Among CALD communities, the highest levels of discrimination are experienced by those of African and Middle Eastern (notably if Muslim) backgrounds and, to a lesser extent, Asian (including Indian) heritage. This is not to say that Darebin residents from longer established communities (Italian, Greek, Macedonian…), or even at times Anglo-Celtic Australians, do not suffer from racism.

In any case, racism affects all victims alike, as the Inquiry's look into the impact of racist incidents on Darebin citizens shows.

d. Impact of racist incidents

As widely researched, the experience of racism has significant consequences, notably on the affected person's health and wellbeing, and also on the wider community more generally, with impacts on the economy, social inclusion and inter-group harmony and community cohesion (VicHealth 2009, p.21-23). The Darebin Racism Inquiry sought to explore and document these impacts, in terms of the range of feelings experienced, but also of behavioural consequences.
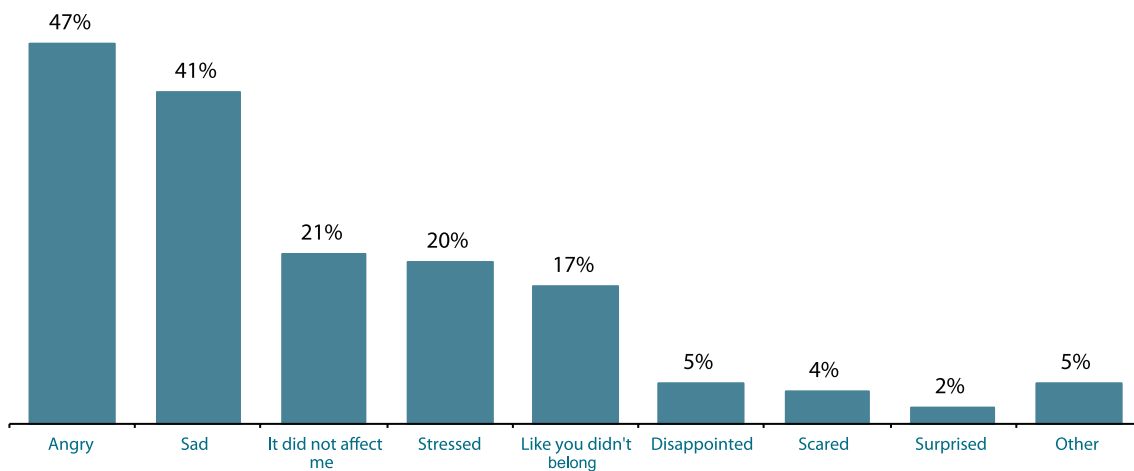
i. Feelings and their consequences

Phone survey

The survey looked to gauge the gamut of feelings victims of race-based discrimination might experience.

Table 8 – Feelings when personally experiencing racism

Q12. If you have personally experienced a racist incident or discrimination on the basis of your racial, cultural or religious background, how did it make you feel? (Multiple responses allowed)

Angry	Sad	It did not affect me	Stressed	Like you didn't belong	Disappointed	Scared	Surprised	Other
47%	41%	21%	20%	17%	5%	4%	2%	5%

 *Question asked only of those answering 'hardly ever', 'sometimes', 'often' or 'very often' to any item in Q10 and 11. Results exclude the 39% who say they have never experienced a racist incident (n=81). N=103

Overall, the main reactions of the phone survey respondents to personal experiences of racism were **anger** (47%) and feelings of **sadness** (41%).

However, notable differences in feelings appear to exist between the genders when talking about personal experiences of racism. Men were more likely than women to suggest they felt angry (54% vs. 40%) or unaffected (30% vs. 12%) as a result of personally experiencing racism or discrimination. Comparatively, women were more likely to suggest they felt stressed (27% vs. 14% of men) or like they didn't belong (24% vs. 9% of men).

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This **clear gender difference in terms of feelings experienced i**s not necessarily surprising and would seem in keeping with gendered reactions and responses to racism (cf. section 6e below). It is nonetheless striking in light of the generally non-gendered feelings experienced by Darebin respondents when witnessing racist incidents (cf. section 6f below).

There also appears to be an **age difference,** with respondents between 16 and 34 years old being notably more likely than older age cohorts to suggest they felt angry (55% vs. 35% of 35 to 54 year olds and 39% of those aged above 55). This should be taken as an indicative result only, due to the small base sizes.

Indicative results also suggest that those born in non-native English speaking countries were more likely than average to feel angry (56%) or sad (49%) whilst those born in Australia were more inclined to feel unaffected (27%), indicating maybe that being equipped with networks and support might help build resilience and capacity to remain less touched by such incidents.

Online survey

When personally confronted with a racist incident, respondents to the online survey reported anger (for almost two thirds of them) and sadness (nearly six in ten) as the feelings they experienced most. Anger was more likely to be experienced by non-Council staff and sadness by Council staff. But online respondents were also twice as likely as phone respondents to have felt stressed by the incident (over two in five vs. one in five) and three times as likely to feel like they didn't belong (under six in ten vs. under two in ten – 17%). These higher scores are in keeping with the personal interest for, and possible emotional involvement with, the topic of racism for the online survey respondents. In that regard, it is

worth noting that none of the online survey respondents who had personally experienced racism said it had not affected them.

Focus groups and public forum

Participants to the public forum provided a comprehensive summary of what the impact of racism might be on affected individuals.

'At the individual level, the experience of racism was found to be hurtful, and also generated anger and stress, which were seen to lead to anxiety and depression (sometimes leading to suicide). Racism was seen as affecting physical and mental health. Racist experiences were also reported to make one feel vulnerable and to generate fear (for oneself and others), as well as loss of trust in others and lack of trust in the community. Racism also caused humiliation, isolation, withdrawal, alienation, marginalisation… These sentiments made one "feel like [one doesn't] have a voice and made [one] feel excluded", which leads to discouragement and disempowerment.'

Data from the focus groups supports this analysis.

Numerous focus group participants revealed how the racism they had experienced had **"scared"** or "frightened them". This was true for most groups (Indian, long-established CALD communities, Middle-Eastern), as well as among all age groups (youth, CALD elderly) and for both genders. However, Muslim women were particularly frightened by their experiences of racism. Their level of fear was expressed through comments such as "running for our lives" or "too scared to go out for fear [of encountering racism]."

Racist experiences also left focus group participants "uncomfortable" or **"embarrassed"** (e.g. when asked to open their bag in a shop) and in some instances "shocked".

"After 9/11, as a taxi driver I was abused by a customer all throughout the drive and then told to 'keep the change to blow up the World Trade Centre in Melbourne'. […] Whenever something happens in the Middle-East or Africa, we all get scared."

—Muslim man

But they also generated annoyance and **anger.**

- An international student recalled being "very offended".
- Aboriginal men and new arrivals reported being "angry" and "pissed off".

The degree of anger and its negative consequence were hinted at too.

- Talking about a sibling, a participant explained "She gets angry at being abused for wearing the headscarf. […] She passes on her anger to her children. She doesn't do anything about it but just boils over it and remains angry. It's self-destructive."
- In another group, a man echoed "It really affected me. I really got angry inside, but needed to keep quiet [as the abuser was a customer]."

Bottling feelings in, internalising anger seemed to be a fairly common reaction (notably amongst men), but was quite destructive in the long term as it kept gnawing at people from the inside, generating long-lasting bitterness, then more anger and resentment. These are very damaging, to both the self and to the community, as they deprive people of their capacity to be a constructive member of society.

Racism was also depicted as **preventing people from fully participating in community life** through other mechanisms, notably feelings of shame, sadness, isolation, humiliation and ostracisation that made victims of racism feel like they did not belong.

- New arrivals particularly reported feeling humiliated.
- A teenager emphasised "you feel bad, you feel like a nobody pretty much."
- A man of Middle-eastern background insisted on his feeling of exclusion, of always being considered as an outsider despite being Australian: "I feel like a perpetual foreigner - 'where do I belong'?"
- An Indian man echoed: "Whenever people come in my taxi, people ask us 'Where you are from?' even though we are Australian citizens. But this is our home country now: we have left India for here, we love living in this country. In the eyes of the law, we are Australian, but in the eyes of our customers, we're still Indian."
- These feelings of **not being accepted as part of the community**, of **not being recognised as valuable members contributing positively** to Darebin were also expressed by Aboriginal participants, who stated "Racism contributes to us not being seen as being able to make a positive contribution to the Darebin community." The **disempowerment** linked to the experience of racism as well as the absence of recognition of their capacities and contributions made them feel as if they were being prevented from participating in society.
- Similarly, a Muslim man underlined how racism "affects production and participation of people who would like to take part and do and achieve" and feel they are being denied this opportunity.

It is worth noting that some of these feelings, notably of "not belonging", do not only relate to race-based discrimination, but more generally to issues of identity that any migrant, whichever their background, might come across, and that most experience.

For some, racism could generate even deeper discouragement. A refugee recalled an incident with the police, who newly arrived migrants think they should be able to go to for advice and help but feel they can't.

"I felt so sad. These are the people I should be able to count on, but I can't trust them. The feeling is indescribable; you have no one to turn to."

These types of behaviours (by police in that specific case, but by institutions generally), and the feelings of **hopelessness and powerlessness they generate, threaten the very fabric of society as they undermine the legitimacy of, and trust in, the frameworks that are supposed to be holding society together.**

The repetition of race-based discrimination also led to **disengagement** of some victims. This was particularly true of Aboriginal participants.

- As one stated: "My generation, 1980s born, a lot of my mates and me, we're used to it, so in a bad way, we're lenient. If someone is being racist, we think 'in this day and age, you're an idiot' [to be a racist]. We're used to it. We still get offended, but we don't care."

- Another insisted this was also affecting the new generations: "the younger generation has got used to it and doesn't react anymore."

While this might be seen as a coping mechanism and a way of building resilience so as not to get affected, these reactions also point to the 'eroding' capacity of racism, leaving victims "disheartened" and "worn down". As a faith leader explained "you just grow up with it [racism] and it becomes acceptable when you are Aborigine. That's just how it is."

On the other hand, a few participants managed to either **not be affected** by the incidents or turn their experience into something positive. One said his experience of racism "made me a better person because I could treat people better. I brought up my family to respect everyone."

The **long-lasting impact** of some experiences was also alluded to: "Even if it happened a long time ago and was small, it stays with you and has an impact on you. It stays vivid and you relive it every time someone looks at you strangely when you start talking and have an accent."

From feelings to health impacts

Most of the feelings expressed by Darebin respondents can translate into **negative health outcomes,** with stress potentially feeding into hypertension or depression. The feeling that one doesn't belong can lead to disengagement and potentially depression. This is in keeping with the now "strong evidence of a link between race-based discrimination and ill health" and notably the "risk that targets of race-based discrimination will develop a range of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression." (VicHealth 2009, p.21)

According to research (VicHealth 2011, p.6), "the ways in which race-based discrimination can lead to ill health include:

- reduced access to resources that can create and protect health such as education, employment, housing, good medical care and social support;

- increased exposure to factors that intensify health risks;

- direct physical assault causing injury;

- stress and emotional responses that impact poorly on mental health;

- risky health behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and other drug use."

Reduced access to protective resources for a number of groups, as well as stress and emotional responses for all groups, were particularly emphasised by focus groups participants, underlining the health risks they were exposed to as a result of racism. This points to the burden of disease stemming from race-based discrimination and, in turn, to the economic cost of racism, as ill health resulting from racism, which is avoidable, has to be addressed through the healthcare system.

As mentioned, successive well-designed studies have shown the "strong relationship between exposure to discrimination and poor mental health, especially depression" (VicHealth 2007, p.11). This was found to be the case by some focus group participants. One recounted how, after being assaulted by a group of youths, an Indian taxi driver friend of his had suffered from "post-traumatic stress" which eventually turned into "depression". Young participants also reported bouts of depression or self-harm as a consequence of racist experiences.

It has also been documented that "discrimination can provoke stress as well as fear and other negative emotions, which in turn have been found to have negative impacts on mental health and on the immune, endocrine and cardio-vascular systems" (VicHealth 2007, p.29). There are also "possible associations with diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease" (VicHealth 2011, p.6). This health impact was corroborated by some focus group participants. A Muslim woman explained: "We hate the month of September. Covered women can't go for walks in public. They're just sitting home, depressed, with high cholesterol. They never go out alone."

This comment shows that race-based discrimination did not only have an impact on Darebin residents who experienced it in terms of feelings and potential health impacts, but it also had an impact on their behaviour.
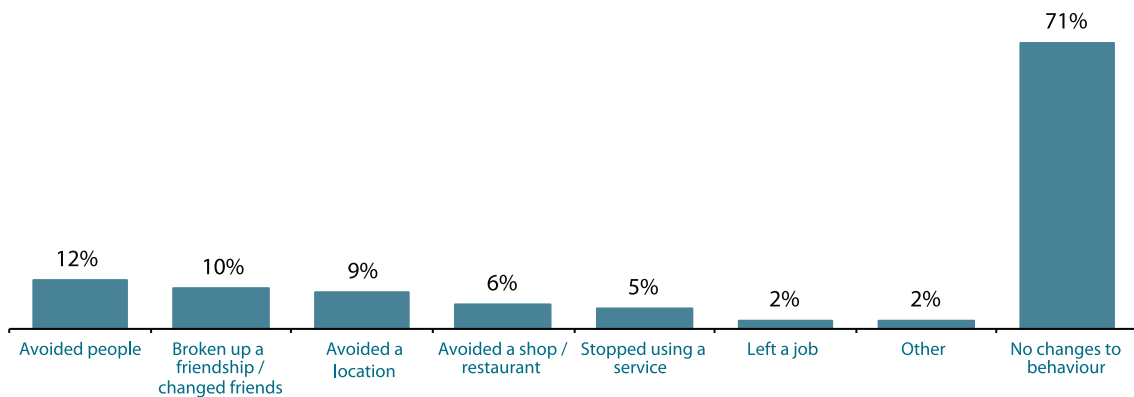
ii. Behavioural modifications

Phone survey

Phone survey respondents were asked whether racism had led to a change in their behaviour.

Table 9 – Changes in behaviours due to racism

Q16. As a result of racism, have you ever... (Multiple responses allowed)

Avoided people	Broken up a friendship / changed friends	Avoided a location	Avoided a shop / restaurant	Stopped using a service	Left a job	Other	No changes to behaviour
12%	10%	9%	6%	5%	2%	2%	71%

* n=209

Just under three in ten residents (29%) who had experienced racism of some kind said that they had changed their behaviour as a result. Key behaviour changes included:

- avoiding people (12%);
- breaking up a friendship or changing friends (10%) and;
- avoiding a location (9%).

It could be argued that the fact that 71% of respondents did not change their behaviour shows that people can be fairly resilient when confronted with racism. However, as almost a third of respondents felt that they were forced to modify their behaviour, it shows an important impact on people's lives. This is all the more concerning as **younger respondents appeared to be the most affected.**

Young people (those aged 16 to 34) were notably more likely to have made such a behavioural change (43% in total). In particular, they were more likely to have:

- avoided a location (16% vs. 4% of 35 to 54 year olds and 5% of those aged above 55);
- broken up a friendship (15% vs. 8% of 35 to 54 year olds and 4% of those aged over 55) or;
- avoided people (16% vs. 10% of 35 to 54 year olds and 8% of those above 55).

Reasons for this stronger impact might be that young people are more subject to some forms of racism (cf. section 6c above); or that they haven't yet built the resilience older respondents might have; or a sign that they might be less set in their ways and thus more prone to modifying their behaviour.

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Online survey

The impact of racist experiences on behavioural changes is much stronger for respondents of the online survey than for the phone survey respondents. Online respondents were more than twice as likely to have modified their behaviour as a result of racism, with almost seven in ten having done so (compared to three in ten – 29% - of phone respondents).

Some of the key changes made were similar to that of the phone respondents, though in higher proportion. Respondents mostly:

- avoided people (over four out of ten vs. one in eight – 12% – of phone respondents);

- avoided a location (just under four in ten vs. just under one in ten – 9%) or;

- broke up a friendship (under one in three vs. one in ten).

However, online respondents were:

- ten times as likely as phone respondents to have left a job as a consequence of a racist experience (over one in five vs. one in fifty - 2%);

- six times as likely to have stopped using a service (over three in ten vs. one in twenty - 5%) and;

- five times as likely to have avoided a shop or restaurant (three in ten vs. over one in twenty - 6%).

The reasons for these differences are multi-fold. The demographic differences between the phone sample representative of the Darebin population and the self-select sample of the online survey might explain some of the differences in answers.

- Two thirds of respondents to the online survey were women (vs. half in the phone survey).

- Six in ten online respondents belonged to the 35 to 54 age group (vs. one third in the phone survey).

- Only one in eight online respondents had a healthcare card (vs. three in ten in the phone survey).

- Even though they were just as likely to be born in Australia as phone respondents (about two thirds in each case), online respondents were more likely to speak another language at home in addition to English, pointing to a higher proportion of respondents from a non-English speaking background.

- The high proportion of Council staff respondents in the online survey (about one third) adds to this. Staff are not representative of the Darebin population, as they tend to have higher education levels and are all employed.

The methodology itself (use of internet) is likely to attract people who are more connected, possibly with higher education levels. And the self-select nature of the sample means respondents have an interest in the topic and are probably more aware of racism.

In any case, all of these elements point to very serious consequences of the experience of racism.

"The police 'profile you'; they target you. The police car drove past me and a friend in my car one night. They then pulled us over and said that our light was not on. I said 'my lights are not on! What do you mean? Of course they are on, it's dark, what are you talking about?' They were on as we were sitting there talking but there were two police cars, so what can I do? I felt so sad. These are the people I should be able to count on, but I can't trust them. The feeling is indescribable; you have no one to turn to."

—Man, newly-arrived community (Africa)

Focus groups and public forum

Similarly, focus group participants reported modified behaviours as a result of racism.

Women, particularly of Muslim faith, were becoming **isolated as a consequence of racist incidents**, being afraid to go out and staying home. They said they:

- "do not go out of the house" anymore;
- "do not take the bus";
- were "too scared to walk on the street" or;
- "never walk[ed] alone" but "always [went] out in a group".

This was the case whether they had personally experienced racism or heard of incidents and shows an undeniably strong, debilitating, impact of racism.

In these cases, these women's freedoms and basic human rights, notably freedom of movement and right to safety, were impinged on. This is in keeping with previous research which showed that "the impacts of discrimination are not confined to those directly subjected to it, but can also create a climate of apprehension and fear" that ultimately restricts activities for others from similar backgrounds. An example given was that of "women from Muslim backgrounds [who] reported restricting their movements to avoid racially motivated harassment". (VicHealth 2007, p.19) It seems from the focus groups that this is still valid today in Darebin.

Other groups also reported changing their habits as a result of racism, notably **avoiding locations or people.**

- Following up on his Indian taxi driver friend's assault, one man explained: "whenever there are groups of three to four men or boys, he doesn't stop the car. He avoids the area [where the incident happened]."
- New arrivals described how they "never go back" to the shops where

they have been harassed and "have told all our friends" about it.

- Participants also reported anticipating racism at times: "When I go into a shop, I think ahead: am I going to be treated well or turned away?"

Other serious consequences of experiencing racism were exposed:

- an Indian student "left the university";
- an Aboriginal student "didn't come back to study this year" after being excluded and stereotyped by other students.

Participants gave further examples of how **"racism makes us behave differently".**

- "I try to pull my head in to not offend people or get into trouble. I changed my name to have a better chance to get a job."
- Aboriginal men explained how they had "learnt to turn up individually" if they went to a pub or bar. "If Aboriginal men show up in a group, security won't let them in."

Participants to the public forum gave further examples of modified behaviours, e.g. not coming home late and always ringing the children to make sure they're ok. They emphasised how these modifications undermine the quality of life of individuals, but also have an impact at the collective level. Some called it **"residual racism"** meaning the **carry-over effect of racism (including when experienced individually) to the whole community.** In their view, this happened because people affected by racism retreat to their own community, with their communities becoming isolated and leading to the creation of an environment of mistrust. It is this lack of confidence between groups that allows rumours to spread and feed intolerance and makes it harder for groups to communicate with each other, ultimately affecting community cohesion and the fabric of society.

Public forum and focus group participants also insisted on how racism impedes employment of certain groups or leads to some customers avoiding certain shops (whether prejudiced customers not using shops from CALD owners or victims of racism avoiding shops as a result of racist experience), which results in loss of business. Racism was also seen as fuelling bullying in some offices. All these elements combined to lead to diminished productivity in Australian society.

Finally, participants highlighted how racism prevents people from accessing the services or support they need, which has a flow-on effect (e.g. on their health, but also on the wider community) in the long run. This idea was reminiscent of research that illustrated how "discrimination affecting one generation can also compromise the social and economic prospects of future generations, contributing to intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage." (VicHealth 2007, p.19) This has been shown to be particularly the case with "Indigenous Victorians who continue to experience markedly poorer physical and mental health and to have lower life expectancy than other Victorians." (VicHealth 2007, p.8)
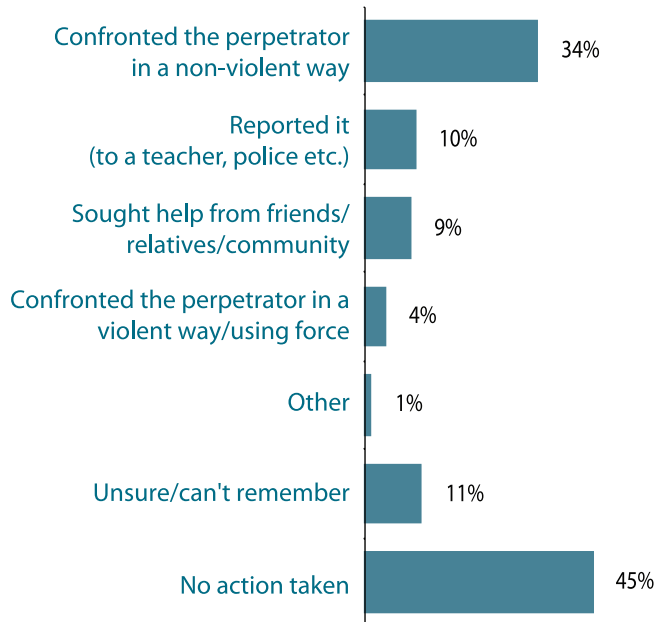
e. Responses to racist incidents

In addition to the impact that race-based discrimination had on Darebin residents, the inquiry sought to explore responses to racist incidents.

Phone survey

The phone survey explored reactions to racism generally, whether personally experienced or witnessed.

Table 10 – Actions taken in response to racism

Q13. Have you taken any of the following actions in response to a racist incident or a situation of discrimination on the basis of racial, cultural or religious background? By this I mean either discrimination you have experienced personally or have witnessed occurring towards someone else. (Multiple responses allowed)

Action	Percentage
Confronted the perpetrator in a non-violent way	34%
Reported it (to a teacher, police etc.)	10%
Sought help from friends/relatives/community	9%
Confronted the perpetrator in a violent way/using force	4%
Other	1%
Unsure/can't remember	11%
No action taken	45%

* Excludes those who say they have never experienced such an incident (n=32). n=177

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In total, **just under half (**45%) of those who experienced a racist incident (whether personally or as a bystander) said **they did not take action in response to this.** This was the most common response. Online respondents were similarly most likely to not have taken action in response to an incident, and in similar proportion (less than half).

While this is not in keeping with research from the *Challenging Racism Project,* which found that "the most common form of response from those targeted by interpersonal racism is to engage directly with perpetrators", usually in a non-violent way and often through humour or ridicule (VicHealth 2010a, .p3), this might be because both reactions to personal experiences of racism and reactions to witnessed racism (not just responses to personal experiences) were considered jointly in the Darebin inquiry.

In any case, **confronting the perpetrator in a non-violent way was the second-most common course of action**, chosen by 34% of respondents. Online survey respondents were just a little more likely to do so (four in ten).

All other types of actions were less common. About one in ten respondents reported the incident (10%) or sought help (9%). In that respect, online survey respondents differ, as they were in both cases twice as likely to take these courses of actions.

It should be noted that the type of racist incident experienced is more than likely to have a bearing on the type of response and course of action taken by the victim or observer.

The fact that 11% of phone respondents were unsure of the action they took or couldn't remember it, might be linked to a time factor and the selectiveness of human memory. It might also be an indication of their feeling of **disempowerment at the** **time** or of the fact that the strongest and most traumatising part is the experience itself, the aftermath being more of a blur.

Only 4% of phone respondents (and half as many online respondents) reported confronting the perpetrator in a violent way or using force. It is worth noting that all these respondents were men.

This indicates that, similar to the gender differences in feelings when personally experiencing racism, there were clear gender differences in regards to responses when witnessing or experiencing a situation of racism or discrimination.

- Women were more likely than men:
  - » not to take action (51% vs. 40%) or;
  - » to seek help from other sources (13% vs. 5%).
- Men were much more likely to respond by confronting the perpetrator of such an act:
  - » 41% in non-violent ways, compared to 28% of women and;
  - » 9% in a violent way or using force, compared to 0% of women.

Although it would be worth exploring further before drawing any conclusion, these differences in responses do not appear to be linked to differences in experiences. In the phone survey, the types of experiences of racism were mostly comparable for men and women, apart from women being more likely to be refused a service or denied entry to a venue (cf. section 6c above). This is not to say that experiences of racism for both genders are always similar, as evidenced in some of the focus groups.

These clearly gendered responses to experiences of racism (whether witnessed or personally experienced) are consistent with the literature on bystander responses to racism.

Studies found that men are more likely than women to help in emergency or dangerous situations, in keeping with stereotypical gender roles. In that context, normative ideas of masculinity constitute an adjuvant to bystander intervention, while normative femininity and gender role prescriptions for women to be passive and accommodating inhibit bystander action. (VicHealth 2010a, p.21)
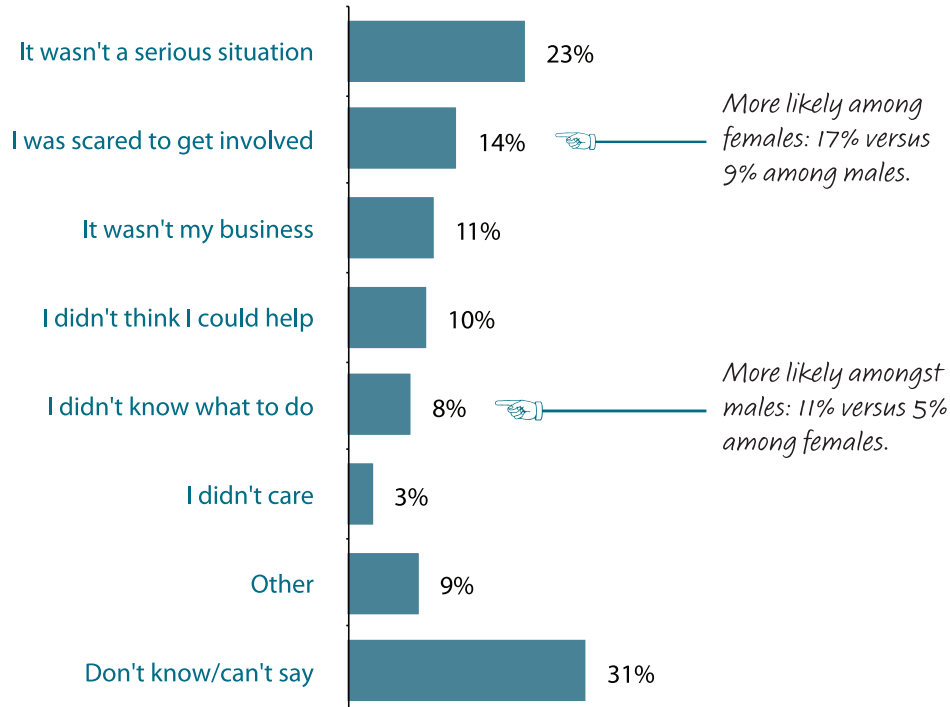
This echoes the international students' focus groups, where participants emphasised that, despite their varied cultural backgrounds, men were more likely to react and women more likely not to intervene. As one participant put it "as a girl, if I see trouble, I'm raised to stay away and not interfere. But as men, you are raised to intervene and do something". Other girls from different backgrounds agree, as did the boys, which is interesting as it seems to indicate this gender difference cuts across nationalities and cultures.

This raises **queries as to how women can be empowered to respond to racism.**

Exploration of the reasons why people did not react to a racist incident might help shed some light on that issue.

Table 11 – reasons why no action taken in response to a racist incident

Q14. (If 'no action taken') Were there any particular reasons you did not take action in response to the racist incidents? (Multiple responses allowed)

It wasn't a serious situation — 23%

I was scared to get involved — 14% *More likely among females: 17% versus 9% among males.*

It wasn't my business — 11%

I didn't think I could help — 10%

I didn't know what to do — 8% *More likely amongst males: 11% versus 5% among females.*

I didn't care — 3%

Other — 9%

Don't know/can't say — 31%

* Note: Responses were pre-coded and not read out - n=85

Phone survey respondents who did not react to a racist incident (whether witnessed or personally experienced) said it was primarily because they felt it wasn't a serious situation (23%).

Other reasons included the fact that:

- they were scared to get involved (14%);
- they felt it wasn't their business (11%) or;
- they didn't think they could help (10%).

That 31% of respondents declared they didn't know or couldn't say why they hadn't acted, combined with the 8% who said they didn't know what to do, illustrates the **powerlessness felt by many in such a situation and pleads for capacity building programs or actions to support assertive responses (including from bystanders) to race-based discrimination.**

Once again, reasons for not taking action showed a difference in gender.

- Women were more likely to admit to being scared (17% vs. 9% of men).
- Men were comparatively more inclined to say they didn't know what to do (11% vs. 5% respectively). It is unclear whether this response might actually have been another way for men to say they had been afraid of intervening, while still conforming to gender stereotypes of men not being "allowed" to be scared.

Focus groups

While the survey did not explore how or where people who had experienced racism were seeking help, the focus groups shed more light on this aspect.

Seeking help

A number of focus groups participants reported seeking help and relying on external players in response to a racist experience.

- This sometimes took the form of talking to their friends about what had happened.
- Despite a number of people not knowing about them, turning to human rights and equal opportunity agencies such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) or the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) was also mentioned. However, there wasn't much confidence in the outcome of such procedure.
  » Faith leaders underlined "People have taken their case to agencies, but nothing came out of it so it felt like a waste of time".
  » Another echoed "when people complain [to the AHRC or VEOHRC], it takes years and no one knows what came out of it."
  » International students agreed that reporting incidents to VEOHRC sounded "like a good idea" but queried "what would really happen?"
  » This underlines how publicising both the existence of such agencies (and their role) and the outcome of the cases brought before them would help build faith in their capacity to address racism.
- The external agency people were most likely to turn to was the police.
  » A number of participants said they "would call the police" and recognised that it was "important to report [racism]" and to encourage "people to do something about it, talk to the police. Even if nothing happens, straight away, it might change with time. We have to stop keeping things to ourselves and open up."
  » However, there was widespread disappointment with the police's handling of racist incidents.
    › A Sri-Lankan recalled how friends who had been racially assaulted "called the police but they did not follow up and there was no outcome."

› An elderly Chinese woman said "When people who are victims of racism go to police, they sometimes respond that it's 'not their problem'."

› A similar experience was reported by an Indian taxi driver who said he "went to the police, but they didn't do anything."

» The perceived lack of police follow-up on racist incidents meant reporting incidents to the police was seen as "a waste of time. They don't do anything."

» An added difficulty for some groups was their pre-existing lack of trust in the police, which made them even less likely to report incidents.

Participants to the focus groups elaborated on other ways of responding to racism.

Fleeing

A few participants reported flight as a response to racism, whether as a deliberate strategy (as one said "I just walk away") or because of the fear they were experiencing ("we were just running for our lives").

No action

Some focus group participants reported not having taken any action in response to the racism they had experienced. Mostly this was because they "didn't know how to react" or because their "lack of knowledge about what services exist". But this was far from being the case for most.

Ignoring racism

Quite a number reported ignoring racism, by ignoring the perpetrators, "keeping [their] cool" or deciding "not to care. The attitude to the perpetrator is that 'you're ignorant'." A man explained: "I'm not biting on the bait, not picking a fight." A young respondent said: "I laugh it off and feel better than the teasers. I look down on the ones doing the teasing. They're pathetic."

Responding to racism

On the contrary, other participants explained how they responded to racism. This response was often verbal: "I talk back"; "I'm not going to sit down or stay quiet"; "I talk to the person and try to explain."

But it could also be more physical or verbally violent.

- A participant admitted "I just lost it and started yelling."

- A girl who had been racially teased by another said "I fought with her. I punched her."

Some explained how standing up to violent racism with more violence was a form of self-preservation of "protecting themselves from racism". This (verbal) protective violence was sometimes racist in turn. A man recalled "growing up, racism was a defence against racist bullies. […] I had to defend myself. In this country, you defend yourself by talking. You do not hit someone or go to violence, because you're going to get in trouble with the police. By using your tongue, you react. I would respond with racist language when I was bullied by racists. It was a reaction."

Using racism

On a related, if sightly different, note, some used racism, turned it around and played on it to their advantage. In an inversion of the effects of racism, they used the abuse they were subjected to as leverage rather than letting it affect them.

An Aboriginal participant remembered: "Sometimes, the racism in sport, from the basketball league, actually gave us the motivation to win. So we used that racism. We would play on the stereotypes, on their fear: we knew they were a little bit frightened of a group of seven Aboriginal men, we knew they didn't know what they were dealing with and sometimes we'd already won the game before we were on the court or on the field. It was just so easy. We turned it around. In a strange way, that's how we got through things."

Surprising the opponent

In a somewhat similar move, surprising the racist attacker was a response for some. As a Muslim man put it "speaking fluent English is a [protective] barrier. It can combat; act as a defence against racism. If you're being attacked and reply in a well-mannered way, with fluent English, they think 'this guy knows what's going on'." This was seen as destabilising the 'adversary' by "having good English" when they would not have anticipated it.

Reclaiming one's culture

Aboriginal participants evoked reclaiming their culture as a way of responding to racism.

- Following an incident with an art teacher, a participant recalled "from then on, I did all my work on Aboriginal culture to show her I was proud".

- Similarly, in sports, some responded to racism by standing up for their community. "When we played, we were not just playing for ourselves, we were representing our community. So a victory for us was a victory for our family, for everyone, for our community."

Being accepting

Another way of responding to racism was to espouse values diametrically opposed to racism, hence be accepting. An Aboriginal woman pointed out that her response to racism was "to practice what we're preaching, so we should be open to other cultures, we should be welcoming."

f. Bystander (anti-)racism

In addition to exploring the personal experiences of racism, the inquiry sought to briefly investigate bystander experiences of race-based discrimination and the feelings these brought about.

As mentioned earlier in section 6a, almost four in ten respondents to the phone survey said that they, a friend or family member, had witnessed an incident of discrimination or tensions based on race, culture or religion in Darebin over the past 5 years, with verbal abuse being the most common type of incident.

Ethnic discrimination not only has detrimental effects on those directly targeted, but has negative outcomes, notably deleterious wellbeing consequences for those who witness the discrimination as well. The extent of the distress experienced by witnesses is comparable to that suffered by direct targets. (VicHealth 2010a, p.21)

"It did not hit me that I was 'black'. Of course I knew, but it was not in my conscious mind. It did not occur to me until I got here that people treat you differently due to your skin colour. When I got to Australia I became a race."
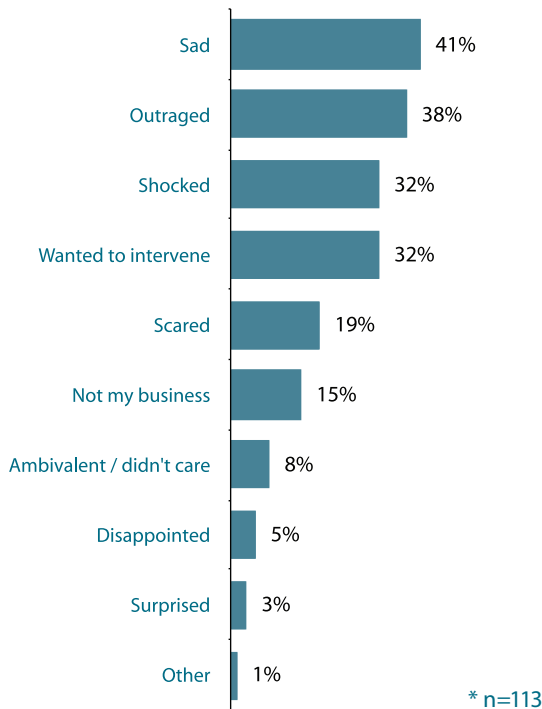
—Man, newly-arrived community (Africa)

Phone survey

In the Darebin phone survey, witnessing race-based incidents left the respondents feeling mostly sad (41%), outraged (38%), shocked (32%), but also wanting to intervene (32%).

Table 12 – Feelings after witnessing discrimination

Q9. When you heard about or witnessed the examples of discrimination, abuse or violence, how did you feel? (Multiple responses allowed).

Feeling	%
Sad	41%
Outraged	38%
Shocked	32%
Wanted to intervene	32%
Scared	19%
Not my business	15%
Ambivalent / didn't care	8%
Disappointed	5%
Surprised	3%
Other	1%

* n=113

This provides an interesting insight into the range of emotions experienced by witnesses of discrimination that can be leveraged to promote bystander anti-racism.

That almost one in three respondents said they wanted to intervene shows the potential for action by bystanders and the goodwill that should be tapped into when devising collective responses to race-based discrimination. Finding ways to empower people and equip them with the tools to translate that willingness into actual intervention would be a valuable policy goal.

It should be noted that, while there were some clearly gendered responses in terms of actions taken when faced with or witnessing racism (cf. section 6e above), there appears to be no notable difference between genders in terms of types of feelings experienced when witnessing racism. The only measurable difference was that men were more likely to be outraged (46% vs. 31% of women), an echo of men being more likely to feel anger when personally experiencing racism (cf. section 6d above). This might be worth considering when developing local policies to encourage bystander action against racism.

Online survey

Online survey respondents experienced the same arrays of feelings when witnessing racism, but to a higher degree, which is consistent with previous results from that sample.

- They were notably more likely to be outraged and sad (six in then vs. four in ten phone respondents in both cases).

- They were also more likely to be scared (three in ten vs. two in ten) and slightly more likely to want to intervene (under four in ten vs. over three in ten).

- They were however about four times less likely to feel that it was not their business (one in twenty-five vs. under one in six– 15%)

Focus groups

When asked about their reactions to racist incidents they had witnessed:

- some focus group participants said they would "step away because it is not your business and you may not know what the situation is and what the context is and therefore shouldn't step in";

- others indicated they would be "afraid to intervene";

- some said they "may call the police" while others "may step in and support".

There seemed to be some potential for bystander action, but as focus groups usually focused on personal, rather than witnessed, experiences of racism, this is only indicative.

The Racism Inquiry provided a wealth of data on the experiences of racism for Darebin citizens. The picture obtained in sections 5 and 6 illustrates all the different dimensions and levels of discrimination, from the most blatant to the most subtle. This underlines once more how fluid definitions and understandings of racism can be in the community and how difficult to pinpoint it is, making it all the harder to address. It also illustrates the commonalities and themes that can be harnessed into a policy response.
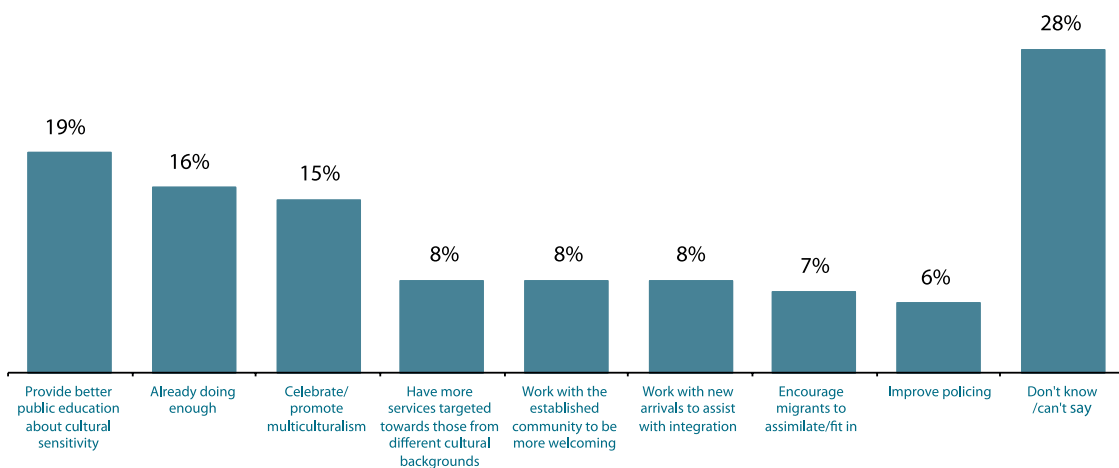
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In addition to obtaining a snapshot of racism in Darebin in 2011, and in light of the "wide range of literature [supporting] the view that local government is the most appropriate vehicle to address intercultural understanding in the community" (Mansouri 2007, p.32), the Inquiry focused on what could be done and what the community had to say in terms of how race-based discrimination could be addressed.

The survey sought to gauge public opinion regarding Darebin City Council's role in addressing racism.

Table 13 – Suggestions on how Darebin Council could address racism

Q17. What can Darebin Council do to address racism?

* Note: Responses were pre-coded and not read out.

Chart data:
- Provide better public education about cultural sensitivity: 19%
- Already doing enough: 16%
- Celebrate/promote multiculturalism: 15%
- Have more services targeted towards those from different cultural backgrounds: 8%
- Work with the established community to be more welcoming: 8%
- Work with new arrivals to assist with integration: 8%
- Encourage migrants to assimilate/fit in: 7%
- Improve policing: 6%
- Don't know/can't say: 28%

* n=300

When asked what Darebin Council can do to address racism, around three in ten (28%) were **unsure**. While this shows uncertainty and maybe ambiguity, it should be noted this is a difficult question to answer, especially as people might not always have extensive knowledge of the responsibilities of local government or be aware of Council's priorities.

The top suggestions emerging were:

• firstly, to provide better **public education** about cultural sensitivity (19%) which subscribes to a prescriptive view of Council's role, and;

• secondly to **celebrate and promote multiculturalism** (15%), an indication of the wish for a more participative side of Council.

Both these suggestions also came out strongly from the focus groups and public forum.

Respondents also thought valuable actions would be:

- working with the established community to be more welcoming (8%) and;
- working with new arrivals to assist with integration (8%).

These are two sides of the same coin, underlining the need for more links and interactions between groups and the fact that integration of newly-arrived groups in the community is "a two-way street", as stated by several participants to the focus groups.

Other suggestions for Council included:

- having more services targeted towards those from different cultural backgrounds (8%);
- encouraging migrants to assimilate or fit in (7%), and;
- improving policing (6%), which could indicate concerns around community safety issues, also brought to the fore by participants to the focus groups.

Other suggestions at less frequent levels included:

- holding a talk or meeting (1%);
- promoting or ensuring equal treatment (1%) and;
- addressing the media's involvement (1%) – a surprisingly low level considering the proportion of people exposed to racist material in the media and the overwhelming feeling from the focus groups that the media held a huge responsibility in spreading racism. It might be indicative of people's awareness that the media does not fall under Council's jurisdiction.

In contrast, a sizeable minority (16%) **refuted the need for Darebin Council to do anything further, stating that Council is already doing enough,** while 2% denied any existence of racism within the Darebin community, saying they didn't feel there was any racism for Council to address.

The perception that Council is already doing enough was found to be more pronounced amongst those aged over 35 (22% for the 35 to 54 group, and 18% for the over 55 group vs. 9% for the 16 to 34 group). It was similarly found to be higher amongst those from English only speaking households compared to those who speak another language at home (20% vs. 10% respectively). Those born in an English-speaking country other than Australia were also more likely to think that Council is doing enough (32% vs. 17% for respondents born in Australia and 15% of respondents born in a non-English speaking country).

These attitudes might reflect the feeling of a segment of the population that **tackling discrimination is not Council's business** and is contrary to the traditional "core" businesses of "roads, rates and rubbish". It might also reflect the perception that multicultural policies direct Council's attention away from programs that are seen as benefiting "the whole community". This is a reminder of how affirmative measures or programs are seen by some as little more than the preferential treatment of one group at the expense of another, rather than the means of redressing the disadvantage inherent in society. This view is reinforced by the notion that treating all people in the same way equates to equity and social justice, when in fact not everyone has the same opportunities. This might be indicative of an **unawareness of the continued existence of racism in Australian society** and of its damaging impacts on individuals and on the community as a whole.

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This was also a feeling expressed in the general population focus group.

- One participant queried: "Why is Darebin thinking that it is such a big issue now, when all is going on in New South Wales? Why here? Why now?"

- Similarly, a few participants felt that promoting harmony is not the responsibility of local government and that intercultural harmony between the different groups will eventually even out over time. This view "may draw on historical cases of migrant groups that struggled to be accepted into Australian society for some time before achieving successful integration." (Mansouri 2007, p.83).

- A concern was also expressed that Council remain committed to policies and programs that also promote the "Australian culture and way of life". As one online survey respondent exclaimed: "stop forcing multiculturalism down our throats."

All these elements combined are certainly **something to take into account when devising policies to address racism.**

Still, the focus groups, public forum and comments to the survey (notably online, as well as in interviews with Polykala) provided a huge number of ideas, suggestions and recommendations on how to tackle racism. While all were addressed to Council, a number of these ideas are actually out of Council's scope and capacity for action. They have nonetheless been included in this report as a reflection of all of the community's contributions.

a. Education and awareness-raising

Education and awareness-raising around racism and cultural diversity were seen as paramount.

i. In schools

The first setting where participants to the focus groups and public forum wanted to see it happening was in schools. As a focus group participant stated "combating racism should happen in schools, following campaigns that were successful like 'slip, slop, slap' or 'don't rubbish Australia'." It should be noted from the start that this is an area where Council has little capacity to intervene. The schools themselves can implement specific policies or programs around racism if they so choose, but curriculum and funding are Federal and State responsibility.

There were numerous calls to provide education and training in schools (from primary level and above) about multiculturalism and diversity, as well as racism and anti-racism, and also the reasons and stories about why migrants come to Australia. It was suggested to show the SBS documentary "Go back where you come from" in schools. It was also mentioned that children should learn about Aboriginal people in the school curriculum and Aboriginal history from very early on.

Examples of "good practice" were given. One woman mentioned a school in Darebin that offers "Indigenous studies as part of its curriculum, with the help of an Indigenous educator". She saw it as successful in teaching her (non-Aboriginal) children about Aboriginal culture and developing interactions between children from all backgrounds. It was mentioned, however, that this program recently lost funding from the state government. Another participant mentioned how "At my daughter's school, every six months, everyone has to dress or bring some food or something from their background."

Development of an educational "combat racism" toolkit for schools, as well as training for teachers and principals, was called for. There was a sense that schools should also support bullied kids and help them build self-esteem, as well as have a commitment "this is a proudly culturally diverse school".

ii. With CALD communities

Education for CALD communities was also seen as one way to address racism. Some participants felt migrants and new communities should be taught or informed about the Australian system, the services available, Australian values and laws. It was also suggested to have culturally-sensitive projects when tackling issues e.g. use ethno-specific workers to try and combat violence against women (VAW). Council could also support ongoing casual language courses.

iii. Within institutions

The need to provide education and diversity training to institutions and agencies staff, "notably police as there is a lot of turn-over" was underlined. This need was also identified for Council workers (cf. section 7c ii below).

iv. In the wider community

Mostly, participants wished to see Council raise awareness of racism in the wider community and provide information through a number of complementary measures.

Disseminating the outcome of the racism inquiry to other institutions and agencies as well as publicising it widely to make people aware of racism in the community was often mentioned.

Putting forward the effects and health impacts of racism, organising an education campaign to "make everyone visible, to get things out there" and educating everyone about racism was also suggested. Many people referred to the VicHealth-funded LEAD (Localities embracing and accepting diversity) project taking place in Whittlesea and Shepparton, notably its "See beyond race campaign", and called to replicate it in Darebin.

As far as Council's communication is concerned, it was suggested using Councillors' speeches and Council newsletters to take a stand against racism, raise awareness of racist abuse and of the law, spread knowledge about different cultures and spread an anti-racist message. Participants wished to see more stories about racism in Council newsletters, explaining "how it's unacceptable and that actions have been taken". Council newsletter was also seen as a good vehicle for "a statement that Council fights against racism", with a reminder that people who discriminate face penalties and information on what can be done. "Getting the victims' voices heard in cases of racist incidents" through the Council newsletters was also raised. It was recommended that in advertising and communication materials, Council should be reflective of the diversity of its community and that there should be a reflective representation of the community at every Council event. This was seen as a symbolic gesture that has educational value.

Raising awareness around racism was understood as a means to support victims, empower people to challenge racist beliefs around them, empower witnesses or bystanders to act or confront the perpetrator, as well as promote respect, acceptance and politeness with a view to changing attitudes in the long term

As part of an awareness-raising strategy, recognising that addressing racism is an "all-of-community" task was seen as essential, as "parents, teachers, leaders… All have an influence over the next generation." Participants underlined how "we should work with the whole community on this" if racism was to be addressed.

07 Suggestions and recommendations

continued

b. Community celebration and community building

Community celebration and community building were also mentioned by numerous participants, as a way to foster community cohesion and help create change and shift values.

i. Undertake community building through social activities

Community building with an anti-racism aim was thought to be best achieved through social activities, festivals and events to celebrate diversity and educate the community, as well as strengthen community cohesion, sense of belonging and neighbourliness. This might stem from the "'common sense' recognition that increased levels of exposure and interaction helps break down fears and cultural barriers and stereotypes" and that 'getting to know people' can help overcome racism through contact and knowledge (Mansouri 2007, p.107). Most participants called for Council to "organise community based activities to bring people together and bring new migrants with mainstream people: events, street markets, festivals…" and to "create more opportunities to interact in-between different cultures, to get together, talk, just get to know each other…" People thought that "activities that bring different community groups together are good: embracing diversity and promoting similarities across different cultures".

There was very strong support for existing festivals such as the Festival of Light and Friendship or the Darebin Community and Kite festival, which were seen as already contributing to fostering community dialogue and understanding. There were also calls for Council support for street parties, community barbecues and multi-cultural events. It was suggested Council could emulate the "Know

your neighbour" project from Manningham Council, celebrate Harmony day or organise "a school competition about a festival on the anti-racist theme. Some people do not like competition, but it's not about the best, more about a celebration of diversity. This is what we think would help: two good prizes [that would reward] an expression of ideas [for an anti-racism festival]."

ii. Support interculturalism

Strategies to promote intercultural understanding and harmony were seen as essential. Numerous participants underlined how, to overcome intercultural tensions and promote understanding, different groups need to interact with one another, with the hope that this would in turn foster increased intercultural harmony and understanding in the Darebin community. Hence there was strong support for interculturalism i.e. the promotion of different cultures and dialogue between them.

In that sense, the Darebin Intercultural Centre was seen as "a good start", with calls for more intercultural activities to be developed, so as to promote contact and understanding between people and groups, share knowledge of different cultures, explain different cultural attitudes and behaviours and promote understanding and acceptance of difference.

"Racism is linked to lack of understanding. Australia isn't the land of anyone, except the Aborigines. We're all new and foreigners, we've all come to give our children a better life."
—Woman, Lebanese background

iii. Facilitate interactions through sports and culture

Creating "opportunities to get to know each other through sports and culture" was also recommended.

As far as sports are concerned, they were mentioned as offering "opportunities for kids to engage e.g. through sports clubs", and thought to "have a flow-on effect to the rest of the community."

Arts and cultural events were seen as excellent opportunities to promote tolerance and foster understanding.

Theatre was seen as an important tool to teach people about each other and promote "a powerful way to help us walk in the shoes of others". The idea of street theatre was evoked by one participant, who put forward the example of the Somali community, who "had a racial incident with the police: a policeman said terrible racist things to a Somali boy and broke his arm. Now a group of us are going out to make theatre and raise awareness."

Music, either linked with food, or dancing, or just on its own, was also suggested with the idea that organising concerts and promoting high quality arts might help "break the stereotypes of what people think we are."

Dance was recommended as a way to teach people about different cultures, but also to interact and discover commonalities with mention of a "Dancing in the park project" with dances from Europe, Africa, or the Middle-East.

Painting and visual arts were also suggested, with notably the idea that the 'Clothesline' project (women painting or drawing their feelings and emotions regarding domestic violence on tee-shirts, later on hung on a clothesline in a public arena) could be replicated about racism and to promote harmony.

Other suggestions regarding the arts included the use of story-telling to break down barriers, as well as queries as to how to include everyone in such cultural activities, notably how to include some of the 'hard-to-reach' or uninterested or reluctant groups. Establishing links between different cultures, and notably between Aboriginal and newly-arrived groups, through arts was also mentioned.

iv. Act on the public space

Finally, one way to work on community building and address racism was to act on the public space, with suggestions such as:

- finding ways to break down barriers between people in the course of daily activities;

- having "more places like Preston market where people mix effortlessly, as there are markets the world over, so people feel comfortable there", that is the idea of finding common denominators and unifying factors between people;

- using All Nations Park more, to draw on the symbolism of its name;

- taking into account community safety issues and acting to solve them, with calls for more public phones in the streets, more patrols at train stations and more police. This might be to avoid racist incidents or provide victims with avenues to seek help. But some of these community safety issues were not directly related to racism. They were nonetheless concerns expressed by citizens.

c. Improve Council community engagement and develop partnerships

To tackle racism and build the community, community engagement was seen as paramount. Participants strongly called for the development of community engagement in all Council policies and projects. While this goes further than the scope of this inquiry, it is nonetheless interesting feedback from the community. It also points to how the community wants to be involved in addressing racism.

The need for further community engagement was first highlighted in regard to the Racism Inquiry itself, around the key ideas of accountability and commitment.

There was a strong expectation that "our contributions will be heard and that we will get some feedback" as well as the idea that there should be "a launch for the report, where we would all be invited: it would send a message."

Council's commitment was seen as imperative, with the idea that, to tackle racism, "Council should continue to listen", "be serious about it, be committed", be "consistent" with "ongoing and sustained" actions, and "not just talk."

The need to work in partnership with the community to develop an anti-racism strategy was also put forward by numerous groups, with the idea of a need for ongoing dialogue. In that respect, it should be pointed out how the Aboriginal participants emphasised their wish to work with Council from a position of self-determination. They underlined how "culture and arts, education, housing, health, all of these are important areas to work on [to address racism] and Aboriginal people have innovative ideas on how to address all of these."

More generally, there was a call for Council to take the impact of policies or projects on racism or diversity into account all across the organisation, and to properly and meaningfully engage with the community to this end, with calls for "more community engagement", "more consultations, more workshops", "platforms for engagement" and the fact that "community consultations need to be budgeted properly."

One example of the need for such community engagement was "the redesign and redevelopment of the Northland precinct". Aboriginal participants underlined how Council should engage with their community "to think about how to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people in that environment."

Another example was in planning, with "issues around parking and the [Cramer street] mosque", and how planning decisions "do affect people e.g. who can put up places of worship and community gathering."

d. Council as role-model

Participants also emphasised how Darebin City Council had the responsibility to be a "role model" in addressing racism.

i. Leadership
The need for Council to take on a leadership role and speak out against racism was strongly highlighted, with the idea that Council should "stand up for diversity and multiculturalism" as it then "makes it more acceptable to the rest of the community".

A wish that came out regularly was that **Council should have anti-racism as part of its vision**, saying racism is unacceptable and incompatible with principles and values of social justice and social inclusion and an infringement on human rights. There was also a demand that Council promote one message: "this is a racism-free municipality".

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This took various forms, from "declare Darebin a racism-free zone" to "Darebin is a racism-free city" or "This is a racism-free municipality."

There were also numerous calls, from Aboriginal participants, but also participants from all backgrounds, for Council to **"recognise and acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia"** and recognise them as the owners of the land and "take ownership of the relationship they have with Aboriginal people in this municipality and celebrating that to the wider community."

Celebrating and recognising **all of Darebin's diverse communities** was also recommended.

> This is a racism-free municipality

ii. Employment

Employment having come out as a major issue in the inquiry, it is not surprising that participants had many suggestions to address race-based discrimination in that context. Council was seen as having the potential to be a role-model in that respect, both internally and in interactions with external partners.

Most participants felt that "Council can help combat subtle discrimination in terms of employment". The first need identified was **for Council to be more reflective of the community in employment.**

This was seen as achievable through offers of internships, work placements and volunteering opportunities. There were calls for Council to offer "opportunities for unskilled labourers to get trained in landscaping, road maintenance" as well as to "build people's capacity, have an up-skilling program for unskilled people" and give people from minority backgrounds some responsibility so "they can do something

for the community, do some volunteering and this should be made known."

But Council could also tackle discrimination by offering more jobs in Council. It was suggested that "Council should make a major commitment to an Aboriginal Employment strategy: let's employ some Aboriginal people seriously, across the board, not just when working with Aboriginals", and "with 'reserved' positions within Council". Similarly, new arrivals, as the second-most impacted group in terms of unemployment, recommended "employing more Africans as word-of-mouth is a great way of connecting the African community to Australian life" and because if "Africans were employed in Council, then people would realise that Council exists. Word would spread, people would ask what they do etc. If they are not qualified to work, for example, in Customer Service they could do other work for example cleaning. Any work!" There were also calls for Council to "have more Muslims employed in front-desk jobs" and for "Council to hire someone who is covered so people realise 'they're just like anyone else'."

Internally still, Council was seen as being able to do a lot more to tackle racism as a workplace.

It was recommended that **Council provide education and training** (as briefly mentioned above in section 7a iii) **to staff** about diversity and anti-discrimination, notably by "distributing anti-racism guidelines to staff", organising cultural awareness training and workshops, creating and distributing an "educational DVD for Council workers to know about Aboriginals".

"When I walk into a venue […] people I don't even know will be scared of me because I am an Aboriginal. I'm not a violent man, but they're just fear, they grab their bags. Even when I walk past a car, they lock their doors and I'm with my kids… Do you think I'm gonna jam your car with my kids?"

—Aboriginal man

It was also suggested to embed anti-racism mechanisms in human resources procedures, notably in the recruitment processes, but also by "including racism at work in the OH&S committee role."

Externally, participants urged Council to work with businesses to improve job opportunities for Aboriginal and CALD Australians. Council was in that sense seen as having the potential to build bridges between communities and businesses and work with both to "determine a number of identified positions within the private sector" that would be accessible. Participants also called for Council to "work with businesses about the benefits that are to be gained from a changed approach to migrants, both in terms of employing them and of improved customer service."

iii. Services

The view that **Council should be a role model in service provision and delivery** to tackle racism was put forward by some.

It was recommended to make information about Council services more accessible, notably to most disadvantaged groups, as well as making the services themselves more accessible and appropriate. Participants urged Council to "check that what they're providing responds to the needs of the people and benefits them. People should be involved as 'consumers' in shaping services", so as to make sure that services were inclusive (e.g. Meals on wheels). In that regard, it was underlined that it should be made clear that having "different ways of delivering a service [is] about substantive equality." Participants also highlighted that Council services should be "friendly and accessible", with participants of the Aboriginal community notably stating "we might go to Council more if we were feeling comfortable walking in a local government."

The idea that Council should run an audit for its services to ensure their inclusiveness was also put forward.

Some also indicated that Council should support new migrants in accessing services (internal and from other providers): "Council should interact with them more to let them know about services and to help them integrate in the community. Council is an unknown for many newly arrived migrants from Africa; they do not know what is available to them in terms of services that they should know about as residents." Ensuring that Council services are designed to cater for, or are tailored to, emerging communities was also pointed as a necessity.

Finally, it was suggested that "when it tenders out services, [Council] should have a clear message: this is a Council that will not tolerate racism."

iv. Innovation

That Council be innovative in its approaches of anti-racism was suggested a few times.

In terms of communication, some recommended using social media and setting up a dedicated Facebook page to address racism, with links and resources.

It was also proposed that Council should conduct self-audits or have an internal anti-racism unit to audit all departments to assess diversity and anti-discrimination practices (reminiscent of the audit of Council services mentioned above, but with a broader and more encompassing scope).

Finding ways to capitalise on Preston market was suggested, with the view that "Preston market is so significant to Darebin. It's where Council should be more innovative in terms of community engagement and community building."

Finally, it was advised that Council use **its funding as a tool to address racism.** This could be the case in sports, culture, music, etc. with the idea to allocate **funding to projects or activities that foster inclusion and promote diversity.** Some recommended that "Council's arts funding, and not just the Community grants, should focus on addressing racism and fostering understanding", notably by inviting artists to work on intercultural projects. Council should "use resources to build bridges and help people find commonalities; fund projects that focus on similarities and underline our shared 'humanness'."

But funding was also seen as **a tool to redress race-based discrimination, with the idea that "Council should 'pay the rent'** and use money for Aboriginal programs and employment. Have $10 dollars per household's rates (52,000 in Darebin); we could get money to employ maybe eight people. And this should be publicised too". Alternatives included "initiatives like Melbourne city: take five cents out of every parking meter and put it towards their arts programs, notably Aboriginal artists" or "subsidising rates for Aboriginal organisations, as Council already does for neighbourhood houses."

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e. Advocacy

Council was also seen to have a huge role in advocating against racism.

Participants advised that Council advocate to the State and Federal levels on anti-racism and diversity issues, but also around media laws (in keeping with the deep concern expressed around media's role in fuelling racism) and security laws (to look into ways of restricting bag searches, experienced by new arrivals notably as an epitome of race-based discrimination).

> Advocacy to other institutions such as police, transport (notably bus) companies, education institutions and hospitals about racism and about the need for cultural diversity and anti-discrimination training for staff was also suggested. Areas to address included:
>
> • Council should inform the police about racism. "We have noticed that police treat people poorly. Council could be a voice for people";
>
> • Council "should talk to Unis and TAFEs to advocate for training for staff (academic and non-academic) in higher education", as well as to make sure that international students in home stays are welcomed and not at risk;
>
> • "Council should raise the issue of complaints [notably of Muslim women and new arrivals] with the bus companies and encourage them to organise anti-racism training."

As mentioned earlier (cf. section 7d ii), advocating to businesses about the employment of Aboriginal people, newly-arrived communities, Muslims, etc. and working with businesses around the benefits to be gained from a changed approach to minority groups was recommended.

This included:

• "engaging the private sector into giving back to the community, contributing to arriving at a level of fairness for the Indigenous community, particularly in terms of venue access";

• linking up with real estate agents to raise awareness of housing issues;

• encouraging businesses to view migrant employees as assets to their team, to their business and to their customers;

• working with Northland Shopping Centre to review its relationship with "the Aboriginal kids […] around there. Instead of making it a security issue, where's the engagement with the kids, to get them [working] into these shops? Having a sense of the local Aboriginal community being a part of that big complex, instead of feeling marginalised."

It was also proposed that Council advocate on behalf of victims of racism and people marginalised by racism "whether they're Indigenous, Somali…" This was formalised through the idea of an Ombudsperson, "someone who will support and advise migrants on racist incidents", "who can keep a record of what racist incidents happened and help with what type of action might be needed. The record of complaints could be raised in Council meetings and then forwarded as actions to police and to politicians." Alternatives included that Darebin Council should have a position of "spokesperson for new migrants" or replicate the "multi-cultural ambassadors program developed in Ballarat."

Finally, participants recommended that Council "work with the media, notably local papers to highlight the positive stories and contributions of migrants and cultural minorities", "not just negative ones" and to "showcase diversity and be more reflective and representative of the community."

f. Support for affected citizens

In addition to actions aimed at preventing the occurrence of racism, participants wished to improve support for victims of racism.

They recommended **informing widely about anti-discrimination law and the relevant agencies and their powers.** There were calls for VEOHRC to "advertise a hot line: have you been exposed to racism? Call this number!" but also for increased awareness of the laws and of what can be done when a racist incident occurs. The need for agencies to be consistent in the information they provide and the help they offer was also underlined.

There were also calls to **give more power to VEOHRC and AHRC**, with the idea that "racist behaviours should be punished with fines", seen as a more effective deterrent, and that offenders should be "made through community-based orders to go and speak to different people [who had experienced race-based discrimination] and hear their stories."

More relevant to Council was the idea that all services should **work in cooperation at the local level to tackle racism.** It was suggested to "streamline the complaint process in local situations" as a way to remove barriers to reporting, "with links between Council, police and VEOHRC". Working "within Darebin safety committee to find ways to address systemic racism and provide cross-cultural training" was also put forward. So was the idea that Council should monitor the situation

through the police, asking "how many racist incidents [had happened]" and encouraging residents to report "even small incidents" and the police to "take them seriously."

"Support[ing] residents affected by racism" was also recommended, although how to do this in practice was not detailed.

All those suggestions and recommendations show the wide array of ideas from the Darebin community to address racism and underline its expectation to see Council commit to doing something about it.

Conclusion

Getting a community-grounded view of experiences of racism in Darebin is a fundamental first step in designing a local response to racism that will complement the National Anti-Racism Partnership announced by the Commonwealth government. All of the information gathered throughout the Racism Inquiry and summarised in this report will feed into and inform a City of Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy.

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"Darebin policy statement should spell out that we are not racist, something […]. We need to take it up as our belief system"

—Man, Lebanese–Australian background

English

Darebin City Council conducted an Inquiry in 2011 on Darebin citizens' experiences of racism. Information was collected from a wide range of people who shared stories of racism they either experienced personally or witnessed happening to others. The impact of racism and proposed solutions were also discussed and are the subject of this report. If you would like information about this report in your language please call **8470 8470.**

Arabic

أجرى مجلس مدينة داريبن استقصاءً في عام 2011 حول تجارب مواطني داريبن مع العنصرية. وقد تم تجميع المعلومات من مجموعة عريضة من الناس الذين شاركوا قصص العنصرية التي عايشوها شخصياً أو شاهدوا حدوثها للآخرين. كما تم مناقشة أثر العنصرية والحلول المقترحة وهي موضوع هذا التقرير. إذا كنت تود الحصول على معلومات عن هذا التقرير بلغتك، فيرجى الاتصال على 8470 8470.

Chinese

戴瑞賓市議會於2011年就戴瑞賓居民遭遇的種族歧視事件進行研查。我們從各階層人士收集了有關種族歧視的資料。提供資料的包括親身遭遇種族歧視或目睹這類事件的人士。種族歧視所帶來的影响及建議的解決方案亦曾討論並且是這報告的主題。如欲以你的語言查詢這份報告的資料, 請致電 **8470 8470.**

Greek

Ο Δήμος του Darebin διεξήγαγε το 2011 μια Έρευνα σχετικά με τις εμπειρίες ρατσισμού των πολιτών του Darebin. Οι πληροφορίες συλλέχθηκαν από ένα ευρύ φάσμα ανθρώπων οι οποίοι μοιράστηκαν ιστορίες ρατσισμού που βίωσαν είτε προσωπικά είτε ως μάρτυρες να συμβαίνει σε άλλους. Συζητήθηκαν επίσης ο αντίκτυπος του ρατσισμού και οι προτεινόμενες λύσεις και αποτελούν αντικείμενο αυτής της έκθεσης. Αν επιθυμείτε περισσότερες πληροφορίες για αυτήν την έκθεση στη γλώσσα σας παρακαλούμε καλέστε στο **8470 8470.**

Italian

Il Darebin City Council ha condotto un indagine sull'esperienza del razzismo da parte dei cittadini di Darebin nel 2011. Le informazioni sono state raccolte da una grande varietà di persone che hanno condiviso storie di razzismo vissuto personalmente o a cui hanno assistito. L'impatto del razzismo e le possibili soluzioni discusse rappresentano l'argomento di questa relazione. Se volete informazioni sulla relazione nella vostra lingua chiamate il numero **8470 8470.**

Macedonian

Општина Даребин во 2011 г. спроведе испитување на граѓаните од Даребин за искуствата со расизам. Информациите беа собрани од голем број луѓе кои споделија искуства со расизам кој тие или го доживеале лично или посведочиле да им се случил на други лица. Влијанието на расизмот и предложените решенија беа исто така дискутирани и се предмет на овој извештај. Ако сакате информации за овој извештај на вашиот јазик ве молиме јавете се на **8470 8470.**

Somali

Darebin City Council waxay samaysay wareysi sannadkii 2011 ay muwaadiniinta Darebin wax ka weydiisey waayo-aragnimadooda xagga cunsuriyadda. Macluumaad ayaa laga soo urururiyey dad farabadan kuwaas oo wariyey sheekooyinka ku saabsan cunsurinimada kuwaas oo ay ayagu la kulmeen shaqsi ahaan ama arkeen dad kale oo ay ku dhacday. Saamaynta cunsurinimada iyo xalalka laga soojeediyey ayaa laga wada-hadlay waana waxay warbixintan ku saabsan tahay. Haddii aad doonayso macluumaad ku saabsan warbixintan oo luqadaada ku qoran fadlan soo wac **8470 8470.**

Swahili

Baraza la Jiji la Darebin lilitekeleza uchunguzi mnamo mwaka wa 2011 kuhusu masaibu ya raia wa Darebin kuhusu ubaguzi wa kimbari. Maelezo yalikusanywa kutoka kwa watu wa aina mbalimbali ambao walishiriki hadithi za ubaguzi wa kimbari ambao walipitia kibinafsi au kushuhudia ukiwafanyikia wengine. Athari ya ubaguzi wa kimbari na utatuzi uliopendekezwa ulijadiliwa pia na ndio mada ya ripoti hii. Kama ungependa maelezo kuhusu ripoti hii kwa lugha yako tafadhali piga simu **8470 8470.**

Vietnamese

Hội Đồng Thành Phố Darebin đã thực hiện Cuộc Thăm Dò Ý Kiến năm 2011 về trải nghiệm của dân cư Darebin đối với nạn phân biệt chủng tộc. Thông tin được thu thập từ nhiều tầng lớp dân chúng qua những câu chuyện được chia sẻ về phân biệt chủng tộc mà bản thân họ đã trải qua hoặc chứng kiến. Tác động của nạn phân biệt chủng tộc và những giải pháp đề xuất cũng đã được thảo luận và là chủ đề của báo cáo này. Nếu quý vị muốn có thông tin về báo cáo này bằng ngôn ngữ của quý vị, vui lòng gọi số **8470 8470.**