FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. FECCA’s role is to advocate for and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community.
Welcome to the 54th issue of Australian Mosaic, FECCA’s flagship magazine. This year has been a testament to the strength, resilience, and necessity of Australia’s multicultural communities. At the beginning of this year, we watched in horror as every state and territory in the country was hit by an unprecedented bushfire season. Thousands of Australians lost their homes and livelihoods, but our sense of community was as strong as ever. We had almost daily news reports of migrant and refugee communities volunteering their time and resources to help in any way they could.

Immediately thereafter, Australia’s first cases of COVID19 were detected. Businesses, schools, and communities across the country have been impacted once again. With over 50% of doctors and over 30% of nurses in Australia being born overseas, it is clear that migrants play an essential role in this country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Migrants, seasonal workers, temporary workers, and international students all contribute to the Australian economy and must be treated like Australian workers. Many migrants and refugees are employed in highly casualised industries such as hospitality, retail, and aged and disability care with no job security and no access to government subsidies. This treatment goes directly against the Australian values of giving everyone a fair go. A visa class should not undermine the values this country has been built upon. To help all members of our diverse communities feel Australian, FECCA has requested that the Australian government review the criteria for Jobkeeper and extend its safety net.

We have aptly themed this edition of Australian Mosaic ‘Social Cohesion and Racism’. The ideas of social cohesion and fostering integration have been heavily invested in by all levels of government. The Department of Home Affairs lists social cohesion as a way to assist migrants become a part of the Australian economy, social and civil life, and adopt Australian values. In 2019, the Department of Home Affairs announced $2.3 million in funding for programs and events that would promote social cohesion. Multicultural events and celebrations such as Harmony Day play an important role in allowing migrants to honour their heritage. Similarly, the Government’s Community Languages Multicultural Grants Program is designed to help young people study languages other than English and help them connect to their cultures and heritage. As a country, we embrace diversity and recognise both the economic and social benefits it brings. FECCA’s vision of social cohesion celebrates the rich multicultural history of this country and sees a flourishing society where diversity and difference continue to be welcomed.

FECCA has long called for a well-funded national anti-racism strategy and campaign to combat abuse, discrimination, and racism. We hope, in light of recent events, our Government also sees that our country is in dire need of leadership on this issue. FECCA was heartened to be supported in our call for an anti-racism strategy by thirty community organisations. There is a clear and shared vision from civil society and our communities to see a strategy being formed that will address racism in Australia.

ADDRESS BY
FECCA CHAIRPERSON
Mary Patetsos
For this issue of Australian Mosaic, we have an incredibly diverse range of writers from all backgrounds including first-time writers and students to academics and full-time authors. We thank the Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner, Chin Tan, for his reflection on the current state of racism in Australia and his support for a national anti-racism strategy.

In her article, Dr Alice Chik details how her team at Macquarie University have led a recent project in collaboration with the City of Ryde to combat the racism faced by international students. It is always promising to see academia working with the community to tackle these pervasive issues.

We have also featured a fantastic piece from one of our members, the Multicultural Communities Council of Gold Coast (MCCGC). The wonderful team at MCCGC launched the Lead the Way youth leadership program in July 2019, bringing together seventeen youths from across the Gold Coast. Many of the young people taking part in the program have faced the unique challenges of building a new life in a new country. The program has been helping them to develop the skills and confidence they need to excel in areas of education and employment.

Finally, I wish to thank our constituents, members, and stakeholders for their continued support of our work. I am continuously encouraged by the passion and dedication our community shows towards ending racism and fostering social cohesion. I hope the following articles and stories will continue to encourage us to call out racism when we see it and know that we are not alone in our advocacy. Happy reading!
Welcome to the Racism and Social Cohesion issue of Australian Mosaic. I have been eagerly waiting for this issue to be published as it will explore an area I am deeply passionate about.

I was 13 years old when my family and I settled in Adelaide. We lived in a fairly diverse part of the city and being a young boy with no visible elements that labelled me as a refugee or migrant, I did not experience the hurtful aspects of racism. However, my experiences were not shared by all members of my family; my sisters both wore hijabs (head scarves) and looked outwardly Muslim. Hearing about their experience being yelled at and verbally abused on public transport going to school, and being discriminated against, greatly shaped my view of the many ways racism can rear its ugly head. As I became older, I grew more and more passionate about the state of racism in Australia, especially as I learn more about our history and treatment of our First Nations Peoples.

We are lucky to live in one of the most harmonious multicultural countries in the world. Our cultural hubs, rich history, and famous cuisines are a testament to the success of multiculturalism, however I believe if we do not address the threat to our social cohesion by tackling racism, all that reputation of being a success will be tarnished.

We must call out racism when we see it. Since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the racist incidents towards our Asian Australian community has peaked. I was pleased to see community organisations condemning that sort of behaviour, and standing in solidarity with those who felt unsafe, especially young Asian Australians who felt unsafe in their country for the first time. We need solidarity in times of crisis, and we must support each other.

The Australian Human Rights Commission noted that formal complaints increased by almost one third since the pandemic began. FECCA heard stories directly from members of the Asian-Australian community telling us how they were at times too afraid to leave their house. FECCA is especially thankful to Dr Alice Chik for sharing her personal experience and the experiences of her students with us.

Now more than ever, we need to see a firm response from our political leaders. Australia needs a national anti-racism strategy. We must develop a national strategy incorporating a whole-of-government approach that addresses racism and discrimination in every aspect of public life. In June, thirty community organisations including FECCA came together to pen an open letter to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition calling for a strategy that will combat racism wherever it manifests. You can read the letter on page 8. The recent protests we have seen across Australian and the world taking a stance against institutional racism are a further validation of the need to have this national strategy. We have acknowledged that racism exists, now let us come together to tackle it.

ADDRESS BY
FECCA CEO
Mohammad Al-Khafaji
The stories and articles featured in this issue of Australian Mosaic acknowledge the wonderful diversity of our country, but also recognise that there is much to be done.

My good friend and NITV’s Executive Editor, Rhanna Collins has shared a powerful piece with us about the protests in Australia sparked by the murder of George Floyd and the #BlackLivesMatter movement. She speaks about her experience as a Palawa woman from Tasmania and how Australia has still not come to terms with the state of its own institutionalised racism. This is a painful reality. The first step to addressing it is acknowledgment.

We have a story from the City of Whittlesea about their ‘Walking in My Shoes’ project that celebrates the diversity of their constituents, allowing them to share their stories their way. Whittlesea’s Multicultural Officer, Fortunata Callipar shared that the aim of the project was to invite everyone to the table to contribute to local policy development and work towards a socially cohesive community.

Shankar Kasynathan, Amnesty International campaigner and Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, has written about the generosity and warmth of his town Bendigo in central Victoria. It was a surprise for me to learn that a small country town in rural Australia was such a thriving and well-connected hub for recent migrants and refugees.

I always look forward to the upcoming issues of Australian Mosaic and thoroughly enjoy reading the range of articles and stories that are submitted. This edition is probably the most important edition for me, as it explores the uncomfortable reality of Australia. However, I am hopeful that through these stories and learnings, we can envision a new future that addresses all forms of racism. We need to foster true social cohesion for all, starting with justice and respect for our First Nations Peoples.

I thank all our contributors for taking the time to open up and share their stories and experiences with us and I hope you enjoy reading the 54th issue of Australian Mosaic.
June 2020

The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP
Leader of the Opposition

Dear Prime Minister & Leader of the Opposition,

IT’S TIME FOR REAL ACTION AGAINST RACISM

We applaud you both for your recent remarks condemning racism in Australia and call on you, as political leaders, to turn great words into great actions. This is both a crisis and an opportunity.

Like you, and the tens of thousands who took action this past weekend, we are deeply concerned about the rise in racist abuse and attacks in Australia and the institutions that perpetuate these practices. This worrying trend threatens the social cohesion of our successful multicultural society.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, we witnessed a horrifying increase in hostile, discriminatory and abusive behaviour, including physical violence, towards Asian-Australians, as documented by the Race Discrimination Commissioner. This is far from unique to Australia, of course.

There will always be people who will find excuses for racism, whether directed at Asian-Australians or Indigenous Australians, African-Australians, Muslims, Jews, or people of other religions and cultural minorities.

As a nation, we need to come up with a strategy both broad and specific to combat racism wherever it is manifest, whether in policing, health care, housing, education or employment. Recent events are both a wake-up call and an opportunity.

We urge you to establish a bipartisan National Anti-Racism Strategy, designed to draw on existing experience and expertise to halt the rising tide of hate and promote social cohesion at all levels of Australian society. Social and religious organisations, businesses, workers and communities all have a role to play.

We are putting up our hands. We are ready and willing to assist in building this strategy. With your bipartisan leadership, we are confident in our collective ability to create a blueprint for change and a positive force for tackling racism now and for future generations of Australians.

Yours sincerely,

Join our call for a bipartisan commitment to an anti-racism strategy at amnesty.org.au/anti-racism

This open letter was sent to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition and published in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age newspapers on 11 June 2020. FECCA hopes that the powerful combination of such a strong and diverse group of organisations, as well as the positive reception the letter has received, will help to progress the national conversation about racism and hope to tackle it in our society.
Many Australians will agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed substantial stress on our society. The pandemic crisis has brought out the best in the community while also challenging social cohesion. Australia is a successful multicultural society. And in the face of COVID-19 my message of inclusion and equality remains unchanged – there is no place for racism, racial or religious bigotry, prejudice, discrimination or hate in this country, or anywhere.

We must draw the line against racism not because it is convenient, or socially or politically expedient, but because it is the right thing to do and because it is the answer to harmony and peace in our society. We do it because, at its very core, it is an Australian value.

We have seen great examples during this crisis of multicultural communities coming together to support vulnerable groups through grassroots initiatives, such as Melbourne’s Moroccan Soup Bar, which has donated meals for healthcare workers, or volunteers from Sydney’s Bangladeshi community who have been feeding international students who have lost their jobs. But COVID-19 has also seen a surge in anti-social behaviour and incidents of racial abuse.

That people are feeling afraid in this unprecedented situation is understandable but the incidents of people turning on their fellow Australians is not just disappointing; it has brought to light underlying prejudice and discrimination. This has been reflected in the data collected through the Commission’s complaints process and reinforced by the stories shared everyday through mainstream and social media.

We must draw the line against racism ourselves, in our families, with our friends, our workmates and colleagues, in our associations and clubs, with our community, our organisations, our workplaces, in the media and government, and with our leaders, elected officials and parliamentarians. We must hold ourselves and each other accountable for what we do and do not do in confronting racism and race hate.

Australia has long struggled to have mature discussions about prejudice and discrimination. Attempts to discuss inequality have often been met with politicisation and defensiveness. This has limited opportunities to develop measured responses to shared problems, or even meaningfully investigate the extent of problems and foster an evidence base for effective policy development. We must be prepared to bring to the public discourse a respectful and genuine conversation about race issues and racism.

I have been advocating for the consistent and centralised collection of data about racial discrimination and abuse in our country. Reliable evidence allows us to better understand and scope the true extent of the problem, identify
effective responses, and measure our progress. It is how we are better able to determine appropriate policies and decide the allocation of resources to the areas of highest need when combating racism.

The Australian multicultural community has long recognised the need for a national anti-racism strategy. National security experts have raised the increasing threat of far-right ideology to not only Australia’s social cohesion but to our national security. There are many experts doing fantastic individual pieces of work, like our state and territory human rights agencies.

As the Race Discrimination Commissioner, I have been fortunate to contribute to some inspirational projects happening in our country. My team has provided support to projects such as the Speaking Out Against Racism (SOAR) project, which has been working with schools and students in Victoria and New South Wales to identify the prevalence of racism in primary schools and develop teaching supports for inclusive schools. Through our partnership with Shark Island Productions and their documentary The Final Quarter, we developed complementary resources to promote conversations about racism.

I have had the opportunity to work with government agencies to support community campaigns, including working with the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner to develop Educational resources for dealing with online hate; working with the Department of Home Affairs to have information on racism and complaints interpreted into 64 languages; and along with the Acting Minister of Immigration, Citizenship, Migration Services and Multicultural Affairs, I met with multicultural leaders to hear from them about the COVID-19 experiences of multicultural communities.

I have also heard and noted the compelling findings of research led by groups such as the Australia Hate Crime Network, which is looking at how police services identify and respond to race hate; the Online Hate Prevention Institute, which is working to strengthen terminology in legislation and improve reporting of race hate; Western Sydney University’s Challenging Racism Project team, who continue to uncover attitudes about racism in Australia; and the Charles Sturt University and Islamophobia Register’s reports into Islamophobia in Australia.

I also have the privilege of working with passionate organisations such as the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network, The Executive Council of Australian Jewry, All Together Now and many frontline community organisations who are researching and advocating for improved outcomes for Australian community members.

Having this broad overview of the many good pieces of work currently happening in our community, I am often frustrated that our experts and frontline organisations are left to compete for the diminished funding available for prevention. Meanwhile, response agencies such as police services are made to take on community engagements that could more effectively be led by community organisations who have established relationships and are therefore well placed to build community trust.

I was heartened to see FECCA’s call for the re-establishment of a national anti-racism strategy. This call mirrored the advocacy I have been undertaking since our National Anti-Racism Partnership Strategy funding lapsed a number of years ago. The evaluation report showed that the previous phases of the strategy were incredibly effective and much needed.

I have been seeking funding for a national anti-racism strategy since I became the Race Discrimination Commissioner, including an emergency budget bid currently being considered. COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on a long existing need, and I hope the current political and community consensus on denouncing and eliminating racism can be maintained into the future.

We owe it to victims of racism to properly record their stories – both to bear witness, and to support efforts to stamp out racism. The collection of empirical evidence and establishing reporting mechanisms would enable a more effective anti-racism strategy. It is only through sound strategic action that we can affect meaningful change.

We owe it to the society, and to our collective wellbeing, to pursue the work that is already done by many in this country, to confront racism and to take a stand against it whenever and wherever it appears. Racism is never acceptable and has no place in Australia or anywhere.
As Tamils fleeing the Sri Lankan civil war in the 1980s, my family and I are not new to a life-threatening crisis. We lived through the early years of an ethnic genocide. We got through the uncertainty of not knowing if we would be able to leave. We found a way out, and we found a new home. We got through all that, and we will get through this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit our neighbourhoods hard, including those who have just moved in, some of whom are refugees. In the days and weeks following the enforced lock down there have been numerous community led responses which have either involved our new neighbours, or which have been in aid of their needs. There are a range of specific needs these newly arrived communities have, such as food and emergency relief for those who have lost income and are not eligible for government payments, such as asylum seekers, support for newly arrived families to understand how to teach their children from home, or health information from trusted sources and in community languages.

Two weeks ago, driving around Bendigo, in Central Victoria, delivering food parcels to newly arrived refugees and other temporary visa holders in need, I was struck again by this mix of vulnerability and resilience. In the car with me was Paw Doh. Paw Doh is a former refugee now studying to be a social worker, from the Karen community. The food we were delivering was part of the Food Exchange, offered by Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, and providing not only food relief but also much needed peer to peer support and information in community members’ own languages. The Food Exchange is a community led initiative developed with a sense of urgency, and is based on two very important premises:

Firstly, that refugees have seen a lot worse than COVID-19 and they will do whatever they can to protect the health and wellbeing of their new homes, including delivering food to their neighbours. As one former refugee put it to me, “last time I was in a life-threatening crisis, I had to leave my home, leave my village, and walk for two weeks with my youngest son on my back. This time we can stay safe by staying at home.”

Secondly, refugees and migrants are currently experiencing heightened levels of racism and can have difficulty accessing trusted information, especially for those who never had an opportunity to go to school and have not learnt to read in any language. In such circumstances, being able to learn and ask questions, from a trusted community member, in your own language, is invaluable. So is being able to lean on those who share your lived experience, who you know will treat you with respect, and who understand your fears.

LEARNING HOW TO STRIVE IN TIMES OF CRISIS FROM OUR REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

BY SHANKAR KASYNATHAN

Shankar Kasynathan came to Australia with his family seeking refuge from the early years of the civil war in Sri Lanka. He has worked with asylum seekers & refugee communities in Victoria, the Northern Territory and the ACT. He has worked on campaigns with Oxfam Australia and the National Heart Foundation. He has been an adviser to both State & Territory Ministers. He has degrees in Economics and Public Policy. Since December 2017, he has served as the Campaign Manager for ‘My New Neighbour’, a campaign coordinated by Amnesty International. He is also a Commissioner for the Victorian Multicultural Commission.
During the early years of my family’s resettlement in Australia, my mother experienced a physical assault on the 86 tram. Her assailant had been verbally abusing her with racist taunts before punching her in the chest. There had been people standing by, who only intervened when the assault took place. Those people were helpful, but my mother only felt some sense of safety when she got off the tram with a fellow migrant friend by her side. Having a fellow person of colour, who had similar experiences of racism and of being constantly in the minority, gave her a sense of relief. Shared experience and vulnerability brings us closer together.

Devastatingly, front-line organisations such as Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services are seeing increased reports of racism during the COVID-19 crisis. As Rosita Vincent, CEO, shared with me, “We’re seeing increased verbal abuse in public towards community members of Asian descent, but also against others who are perceived as refugees. Unfortunately, racism and ignorance go hand-in-hand, and there appears to be a perception that people of Asian descent or from refugee backgrounds will be more likely to have COVID-19, that they won’t be following social distancing or safe hygiene practices.” And, whether it is via social media and digital news, or via grass-roots community networks, these experiences of racism can be shared instantly, multiplying fear and re-traumatising those with life-threatening experiences of their own.

As Paw Doh and I deliver food parcels, many to families from Paw Doh’s own Karen community, people are visibly relieved to see Paw Doh at the door—someone who looks like them, someone who speaks their language. Some families do not answer when we knock, and it is only when she calls out, or makes a phone call, that they come to the door. She stops at each house to ask after the family, pass on information, make sure people are up to date with the latest advice. The Food Exchange has been an overwhelming success, with more vulnerable families and individuals signing up each week. Crucially, projects like this are not effective only for being delivered by people with lived experience, but also because they are designed by people with lived experience. During this crisis, many people from non-refugee backgrounds or who have been living in Australia for multiple generations are reaching out to help their new neighbours, and initiatives like the Food Exchange need all the help they can get. But it is essential we all take the lead from those with lived experience, walking beside or even behind, those with first-hand experience of racism and forced displacement. And for those of you who want to be allies, it is essential to remember your own power and privilege, and to think of how you can take up less space, to make more room for others.

As we reach for what we hope will soon be the end of this pandemic, let us not forget that Paw Doh or others who are working on the front line of COVID-19, are doing this not to prove themselves, or the value of refugees to anyone. We are here because this is our community. This is our neighbourhood, and you are all our neighbours.
On the 12th of March 2006, I was born to Pakistani parents in north-west Melbourne. It’s one of the most diverse areas in all of Australia, with more than half the people there coming from a non-English speaking background. When I started going to Roxburgh Park Primary school, my class was a mix of kids from all over the world. It was common for most of us to be able to speak another language and for our Harmony Days we would always get a cool mix of food from everywhere in the world. At school, we were always taught that Australia is one big multicultural community and a country that accepts everyone for who they are.

It wasn’t until we had a couple of new students who arrived in year 5, that I realised we are probably not as accepting as we think we are. One of the new kids was from Pakistan and hadn’t been in Australia for very long. I remember some people, including some of my own friends would copy his accent and make him feel bad. I didn’t want him to feel left out, so I made sure he knew that I was going to be his friend. I remember another student, also started in our school and was from Iraq. He used to live close to my house so we became friends quickly. He would get teased for not being able to speak English as well as us and not being able to finish all of his work at school.

I realised that just because I never faced any sort of racial comments or discrimination in school or in public, doesn’t mean that these racial problems don’t exist or happen to other people. I have also realised that as we get older, instead of being more mature and accepting we can sometimes be meaner and less understanding. I’ve seen kids my age being teased and bullied because of the way they speak and even their skin colour. These kids were treated unfairly due to their race and appearance, something which they cannot control. Personally, I don’t recall being teased or bullied for my race or cultural background. I wondered if this is because I don’t ‘look’ Pakistani enough and was taught to speak English before my parent’s language. People are often surprised when they find out my cultural background. I also ended up adopting a lot of Australian culture through TV shows, books, and my friends. But this difference shouldn’t be the reason that one person is bullied and one isn’t.

As a country and as a society, we should all be united with one another. Australia is often promoted as a harmonious and multicultural country. That means we have to respect each other’s race and cultural differences and should inevitably make everyone feel welcomed. We need new Australians to not feel like outsiders but instead a part of our community, a part of our multicultural society, a part of Australia. Racism is something that occurs at anytime and anywhere. The Government and country acknowledge that racism is an issue and that it needs to be resolved. However, I think we still have a long way to go.

Together as a society we need to tackle this issue. Some of us may have never faced any racial discrimination, so we may never know how it really feels. This is why we should have empathy for those who face racism problems, we need to stand up for the people who need help against racism. People are born the way they are, to be discriminated against for something which you had no control over is immature and shouldn’t be seen as a bad thing because everyone is their own unique person, and Australia is a multicultural country. I believe that once we tackle racism, we as Australians can live in a society where everyone is accepted. We can live in a society where people aren’t afraid to express their religious beliefs or cultural practices. As citizens of Australia, we are all as one, we are from different backgrounds, but we are still united as one, as Australians, this is why Australia is a multicultural country. We need to solve racism, we need to be accepting to others and we need to finally unite as a people, as a society and as a country.
On Saturday 6th of June thousands of Australians gathered in solidarity across the country at Black Lives Matter protests. The wave of protests was ignited by the horrific death of African American man George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in the US city of Minneapolis. Mr Floyd’s death – all horrifying 8 minutes and 46 seconds of it – was recorded by people passing by. The recordings showed the officer kneeling on Floyd’s neck despite him pleading that he could not breathe. It is footage that has shocked the world and led to protests across the United States and around the globe.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaking with 2GB said: “...as upsetting and terrible that the murder that took place - and it is shocking, that also just made me cringe - I just think to myself how wonderful a country is Australia.” The reality is, though, that Australia is not a wonderful country for all of us.

The latest data as of 6th June 2020 is that at least 434 Aboriginal lives have been taken in police custody since the 1991 findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody. It is a statistic that should horrify every Australian. If it were a figure specific to any other social group within our society it would be daily headline news, accompanied by immediate calls for action from government. 434 Aboriginal lives. An average of over 14 black deaths in custody per year for the last 30 years!

It seems it is an inconvenient truth for Australia. One that is far easier to ignore than to address head on and achieve systemic change to save black lives. It took the murder of George Floyd for us, in this country, to look at our own reflection and realise we are not so different from the United States.

Our country is built on the original lie of terra nullius “nobody’s land” and 2020 marks 250 years of colonial rule in Australia. 250 years of a system built on the oppression of Aboriginal people and one that continues to oppress Aboriginal people today.

We know that our communities had complex societal structures for over 40 thousand years prior to British arrival on our shores. For centuries, if not millennia, we had established successful systems of trade across the country.
Yet despite such success, 250 years of colonial presence and policies have sought to control Aboriginal people – at best – and at worst, eliminate us. Former US Vice President Joe Biden addressed the death of George Floyd saying that America had never dealt with the original sin of slavery which “still stains our nation today.”

That statement resonates so deeply with Australian First Nations people. We are, after all, living in a country that has never dealt with the original sin of forcible theft of land, waters, children and people. In the last 12 months we have seen two police officers charged with murder for the deaths of Yamatji woman Ms Joyce Clarke in Geraldton in September 2019 and Warlpiri man Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu in November 2019.

Ms Clarke was shot and killed by police in September 2019 when they presented at her door. She was 29 years of age. Mr Walker was shot and killed by police in his bed in Yuendumu in central Australia. He was 19 years of age.

While we did see snap action protests in response to both Ms Clarke and Mr Walker’s deaths, it pales in comparison to the response we have seen for the death of George Floyd. Why is it easier for Australians to react to the situation in America than the deaths in custody we see so regularly at home? Many non-Indigenous Australians benefit from the ongoing oppression of Aboriginal people every day.

On the same day that thousands of Australians gathered to protest black deaths in custody and Black Lives Matter, it was confirmed that another Aboriginal life was taken in custody in Perth, Western Australia. He was 40 years of age. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody provided 339 recommendations to the federal government to prevent any more of our people dying in custody. Many of these recommendations have not yet been implemented. At least 437 Aboriginal deaths in custody in the last 30 years. David Dungay Jnr, Rebecca Maher, Tanya Day, Kumanjayi Warler, Ms Joyce Clarke, Ms Dhu, Wayne Fella Morrison, Cameron ‘Mulrunji’ Doomadgee. These are just some of their names.
Last week, AFL star Eddie Betts revealed that he and other AFL players ‘feel guilty’ about not supporting Adam Goodes enough when the Sydney Swans champion was subjected to racist abuse during his final season in the AFL.

Betts is adamant that players today would offer greater solidarity and support, in the event a player was subject to similar racial abuse. Betts’ frank admission offers a lesson to all of us - that when we see racism, we should not hesitate in offering support to the person suffering from abuse. We must all assume the responsibility of standing against racism, of saying that it stops with me. Ending racism is not simply a question of the actions of individuals - it is a collective responsibility.

I know that the vast majority of Australians value our multiculturalism and feel enriched, not threatened, by our diversity. Most Australians reject racism. Nonetheless, we have to face the facts - racism persists in Australia, it is hurting people and diminishing us all. And there are those, even now, who seek to fan the flames of division and hate. Since the outbreak of coronavirus there has been a rise in racist abuse and xenophobia in Australia, particularly towards Asian-Australians. It seems that barely a day goes by without reports of more Asian-Australians being racially abused.

Racist attacks towards international students in Melbourne and racial abuse of Chinese Australians in Sydney have filled many of our newsfeeds during the COVID-19 period. Shocking footage has shown every Australian something of what it is to be hated.

The Human Rights Commission says that around a quarter of the people who have lodged complaints about racial discrimination in the past two months have been targeted because of COVID-19. An aggressive and unrepresentative minority are using the fear and insecurity so many of us are feeling, to attack Asian-Australians. We must confront this with something more than just words of admonition. Leadership matters. Both for what it does and does not do.

In recent years, the parliament was disgraced by the hateful maiden speech of Queensland senator Fraser Anning, who called for a ‘final solution’ to what he described as Australia’s immigration problem. This was followed by Coalition senators voting in support of Pauline Hanson’s dreadful ‘It’s ok to be white’ motion in the Senate and Hanson’s wearing of a burka into the Senate chamber.

Leadership matters. Both for what it does and does not do.
What government does to tackle racism, matters deeply. By setting an example to the rest of society and by using the instruments of public policy to influence society. By setting a standard. The Morrison Government can do this by funding a new national anti-racism campaign, promoting a zero tolerance approach to racism.

The Canadian government is leading the way by investing $45 million on a national anti-racism campaign. Similarly, the NZ Human Rights Commission is taking strong action with its Give Nothing to Racism campaign, which sends the strong message of: “Coronavirus is not an excuse to be racist and xenophobic”.

The aim should be to help create a culture in our community whereby people are able to identify racism and have the confidence and ability to act when they see it. This is what the Racism – It Stops With Me campaign—established by the Gillard Government was designed to do. That campaign helped raise awareness of racism in the community and galvanise action. And it was working, before it was defunded.

Something like this campaign is needed now. Urgently.

This must be the start of something more than just a campaign. Australia needs a comprehensive anti-racism strategy. A strategy that will enable us to work together to take action against racism, in all its different forms.

Our multicultural organisations clearly have a central role to play in this: we need more diversity in our public life, and we need to be able to have this conversation led by the voices of those whose lives have been damaged and held back by racism.

Multicultural organisations already do so much to represent and support culturally and linguistically diverse Australians, but they also help break down barriers in our society, by connecting people and forging greater social cohesion. This is not always appreciated, and nor is the importance of our incredible diversity to the sort of country we are, and the sort of country we could be. Everyone should be able to fully participate in our society and our economy. Everyone should feel that they can do so without the threat of racism hanging over them. It is time that we come together as a country to say no to racism, and it is time for a new national anti-racism strategy.

**IT IS TIME THAT WE COME TOGETHER AS A COUNTRY TO SAY NO TO RACISM, AND IT IS TIME FOR A NEW NATIONAL ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY.**
Last year, newspaper headlines read: ‘AFL apologises unreservedly to Adam Goodes for failure to call out racism’. They went on to say ‘[W]e apologise unreservedly for our failures during this period to call out racism and not standing up for one of our own [which] let down all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players, past and present. Our game is about belonging. We want all Australians to feel they belong and that they have a stake in the game. We will not achieve this while racism and discrimination exists in our game’ (ABC news, 7 June 2019).

On reading this I wondered: Who will apologise to me, countless Australians of ethnic origin, and Indigenous people for the racism we have experienced?

Let me share my story: I arrived in Australia in 1973 as a young woman with a baby and became a single parent soon after due to family violence. Looking for support I went to, and got no help from, Community Services or Police or other agencies. These were the days before women’s refuges were established and the experiences and effects of domestic violence were denied or swept under the carpet.

I found a garage flat, got my daughter into school and aftercare with a neighbour and began work. Finding a typist job at the lowest rate of pay was a feat—a mountain to climb. But I was thankful for the safety and peace of mind. I did the work of three people in my lowly paid administrative job, but my value was not acknowledged. I faced the twin currents of racism and sexism. Promotions to supervisory roles were denied on the basis of ‘workers only respect Anglo bosses’ and ‘I don’t want a woman ‘bossing’ men’.

As my degree from an overseas university was derided, I decided to enter higher education in Australia. This was to be the key. I went to university part-time at night while working full-time by day. I got my first post-graduate degree in Australia at age thirty-five (thanks Mr. Whitlam for your ‘free’ education policy) despite comments by male classmates who said I would never get a professional job. Thanks to a couple of fair-minded men at the top, I got my first professional job and stepped onto the managerial ladder. In the mid-eighties, I became the first ethnic woman manager with a multi-national organisation. I worked to bring in new policies and equitable processes for women and men with my managerial roles, winning awards for my employers.

I got two post-graduate degrees – a Master of Commerce and then a Master of Applied Psychotherapy. The combination of the two allowed me to add value to my later roles in the Executive Suite with ASX 100 and multi-national organisations. I became a Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute.
While my career was off and running, it was not without barriers and obstacles from racist and misogynistic people. I would not let these hold me back. I was resolute in my aims, strong in my performance and wanted to make sense of my life by giving help to others on my journey. Getting to and working on the Executive team was not easy. Discriminatory hurdles were put up everywhere: by recruiters, managers, colleagues, hotel employees, clubs, retailers. At a company sales conference, I was introduced with the words: ‘just look for a black face with white teeth’; I would not be served a drink in an airport lounge; on a company family day I was introduced as ‘the little black typist’; at a posh hotel I would get the mouldy room overlooking the dumpsters and when asking for a change of room told ‘show us your Credit Card first’ even though I was hosting the conference.

Talk of glass ceilings, glass walls, glass floors! The twenty-first century brought a glacial change of equity and understanding. We got Harmony days and the buzzwords of Inclusion and Diversity were heard everywhere. We were inching towards true integration, equality and acceptance.

Hoping to be in charge of my own destiny, I retired ten years ago, started two new businesses and became a tertiary-level educator (Charles Sturt University, Australian College of Applied Psychology). I also found my purpose and voice, becoming active in groups dedicated to women’s empowerment and educating women in many ways: their voting rights, employment advice, and supporting survivors of domestic violence and other crises. I took up leadership roles in not-for-profit organisations: Women Chiefs of Enterprises, Women’s Electoral Lobby, Older Women’s Network Sydney, Indian Crisis Support Agency and Zonta among others.

But did those of us classed as other races escape all forms of racism? No. This continued in various behaviours, ranging from covert, surreptitious, contrived, veiled, furtive, hidden, tangential to overt discrimination. My experiences of racism came in the form of patronisation, condescension and being ‘dismissed’. Many of these behaviours were from well-meaning people, who did not understand that often their words and attitudes camouflaged deep, unconscious beliefs. Remarks (accompanied by some ‘nose-crinkling’) continued: ‘funny name’, ‘where do you come from’, ‘gaudy clothing’, ‘strange headwear’; ‘how often do you go home’ (as if Australia is not my home).

Juxtapose this behaviour against the knowledge, experience, qualifications, skills held by us (people of other races). If we make any attempt to show our knowledge or experience in, say, business writing, psychology, marketing, strategy, workplace relations, risk management and myriad other specialist topics, it is met with either disbelief or ‘dismissiveness’ (really, which book did you read, how do you know this?). We stop and think: Don’t I have the intelligence or capability to work with high level concepts? We are judged before the dialogue starts - by our looks or skin colour (like judging the book by its cover). Their kind but dismissive gaze sweeps over us in a way that makes us believe we are invisible. Condescension, disdain and ‘invisibilisation’ are the new forms of racism – the unconscious or barely hidden bias, the stereotyping that says ethnic and Indigenous people are not as capable and knowledgeable as white people. The relentlessness makes the phenomenon “death by a thousand cuts”.

Social constructs like race are not a thing of the past. It would be like saying homophobia is eliminated because we passed laws to allow same-sex marriage. Racism has ‘morphed’ into new forms – ranging from covert to subterranean. It is entrenched in organisational systems, in racial stereotyping and biases (conscious and unconscious) and deeply held beliefs and unspoken attitudes. This has been shown in research conducted by Anglo-Australian, Indigenous, Asian, and South-Asian academics which shows racism exists at all levels and walks of life, hopefully, by a few individuals and some extremist groups.

Few of us will ever get apologies for the racist slurs we have experienced. Instead we grow a thick skin like the proverbial elephant, becoming impervious to such behaviour. Sometimes, if a comment or behaviour feels egregious enough we call it out and condemn it. Why? Because racism constitutes a waste of human potential and nullifies the combined efforts of First Peoples and all migrants (voluntary and involuntary) into making this a great country.
What if the leader of a religious group addressed a public rally in Australia and called for the murder of people of another faith? Unlikely in our democratic society, where we abide by the rule of law? Could not happen in this greatest of countries, where 200 cultures live overwhelmingly in peace and respecting each other’s right to be different?

Think again. It did. An outpouring of hatred and abuse, warning the target of his venom about the fury and wrath – and violence – which would be heaped on them, supposedly in the name of truth and justice. And the most disturbing aspect of this display of bigotry and incitement to violence against fellow-Australians? The law turned its back. Worse – by failing to act, it effectively told the preacher he was free to do it again. We at the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies felt that if the law which should have applied was powerless in such a clear-cut case, then it was worthless and left all our communities dangerously exposed. We lodged a complaint with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, and when we saw that there was no traction, we realised it was important for as many communities as possible to come together, as this was a whole-of-society issue.

A total of 34 ethnic community organisations duly combined forces under the banner Keep NSW Safe. Ranging from A to Z, the coalition included Armenians, Chinese, Greeks, Copts, Kurds, Indians, Koreans, Philippines, Assyrians, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Vietnamese and more; I was born in Zimbabwe, which gave us the Z. We convened for the first time in Room 815 at NSW Parliament House on August 10, 2016. Our objective was far-reaching, yet simple: to ask the NSW government to make incitement to violence on the basis of race, religion, gender or sexual preference, plus various other categories, a crime.

The problem was that the existing law, S20D of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, was so convoluted as to be unworkable. The result was that not a single prosecution had occurred since the law was enacted in 1989, despite attorneys-general from both sides of the House referring 12 matters for investigation. We were calling for the law to be simplified, to make it an offence to incite violence against people on the basis of any of the above categories, and for the offence to be placed in the Crimes Act.

The Power of a Community Campaign

By Vic Alhadeff

Vic Alhadeff is spokesperson for Keep NSW Safe and Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.
What we saw next was the power of community. Over the next three years we held approximately 200 meetings with politicians of all persuasions and conducted about 50 media interviews. There was opposition from free-speech champions, but we kept going.

On November 29, 2017, I received a call from NSW Attorney-General Mark Speakman’s office, informing me that he would take the proposed bill to cabinet the next day. The following evening I received another call – this time to inform me that the cabinet had thrown it out.

Over the next six months we recalibrated our campaign, and in June 2018 Speakman took the bill back to the cabinet. It passed unanimously through the cabinet, through the party room, through the Legislative Assembly, and through the Legislative Council. On Wednesday 27th June 2018 it became a crime in NSW “for a person, intentionally or recklessly, by a public act, threatening or inciting violence towards another person or a group of persons on the grounds of race, religious belief or affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status or HIV/AIDS status”. The new crime carries a maximum three-year sentence and a fine of $11,000, or $55,000 in the case of a corporation.

It was unprecedented for such a broad and diverse coalition of communities to come together for a specific political objective and to achieve such a massive goal - legislative reform. That is a remarkable achievement in any language, for any group, in any country, and a gratifying demonstration of what can be achieved when communities come together, cast differences to one side and focus on their ultimate objective.

The Keep NSW Safe (keepnswsafe.com) coalition still exists, the friendships still exist. What we demonstrated was that every one of us can make a difference. We have a vehicle which we can utilise to combat bigotry and threats to our respective communities. The campaign was a real-life application of the principle which Lord Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of the Commonwealth, describes as side-by-side - where the focus is not on talking to each other about our differences, but on working together on what we aspire to achieve together. Side by side.

The new law, S93Z of the NSW Crimes Act, stands to the benefit of our children, our grandchildren, our communities. Ideally, it is a law which should be replicated nationally.

Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it best: “Always take sides,” he said. “Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”
In July 2019, MCCGC launched our Lead the Way youth leadership program, bringing together seventeen youths from across the Gold Coast. They came from different cultural backgrounds around the world including South Africa, Sudan, the Netherlands, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Eritrea and Australia.

Many of the Lead the Way youths are refugees and have faced the unique challenges of building a new life in a place where they did not know the language and faced obstacles to education and employment. As the youths shared their stories with us, we heard about the highs and lows of their lives in Australia and that racism was something they had all experienced or witnessed. Whether it was being told to go back to their country or hearing comments about the way they dressed, racism had impacted each member of the group in some form.

The goal of the Lead the Way program was to bring together a diverse group of youths to share their cultures with one another and learn from a variety of community organisations. These experiences were designed to build their skills and confidence to empower them as community leaders. We wanted them to find their voice so they could advocate for what they believe in and lead the way for the next generation.

MCCGC’s vision is of an inclusive community that values cultural diversity. We have been working in the Gold Coast region for over 35 years to ensure people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have equal access to appropriate and inclusive services, a high quality of life and independence.
Over several months, the Lead the Way youths went through a series of workshops with different community organisations. They learned about volunteering, networking, public speaking, social media, storytelling, employment, mental health, and more. They spoke at national conferences, led the annual Walk Together event, joined in on community networking events and continually stepped outside of their comfort zones. All this learning and growing was supposed to culminate in a final event, planned by the youth for youth to share what they had learned on their journey. After much deliberation and brainstorming, they decided the theme for their event would be racism. One of the most impactful sessions they had experienced was with E-Raced and they wanted to start conversations with other youths to help combat racism.

After a lot of planning, everything was set for a youth camp to bring people together to talk about racism and how youths can collectively raise awareness. The venue was booked, promotions had begun, and the team was getting pumped up to share everything they had learned over the last several months. They had arranged an Indigenous welcome, story telling workshops, sport sessions, dance lessons and craft workshops, all centred around the theme.

Alas, the week before the camp was to take place, Australia went into lockdown for COVID-19 and our youths had to learn another important life lesson: how to be flexible during a time of change. They took this in their stride and put their heads together to come up with another way to spread their message. Since they could not meet in person, they decided to take things online and start a digital group to promote kindness and share cultures in an effort to bring people together. Gold Coast Change Makers is now live on Facebook and the youths are posting regularly to share inspiring messages, tell their stories, teach about their cultures, and create a safe and diverse online space for other youths to connect.

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COMMON
PEOPLE
COMMON
DREAMS
WALK
TOGETHER

IF WE'RE ALL
PEOPLE
WE'RE ALL
EQUAL

WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA
FOR THOSE WHO CAME ACROSS THE BUSH
The more we learn about different cultures, the better we can understand one another and celebrate our differences. Building an inclusive community leaves no place for racism.

We asked our Lead the Way group what advice they had for other youths on how to be a change maker and have a positive impact in your community. Here are their words of wisdom:

“Actively assist and encourage your community. Take action! An inch of movement will bring you closer to your goals than a mile of intention.”

“We can overcome anything together when we encourage each other to raise positive thoughts and share them with each other.”

“Everything is possible if you have got enough nerve. A girl with a dream becomes a woman with a vision.”

“We can be change-makers by helping others and working with passion as a team.”

“We are all human at the end of the day. We breathe the same air and we have the same blood. There is no need for racism in this world, let’s all love and respect each other.”

“You can lead the way by being a positive leader to other youths.”

If you would like to follow the rest of the Lead the Way journey, please join our Facebook Group ‘Gold Coast Change Makers’.
Keeping multicultural Queenslanders connected

I Speak Your Language is a free telephone support program in Queensland that connects participants with friendly volunteers who speak their language.

- Enjoy weekly chats in your own language
- Feel supported and make new connections
- Find reliable information on COVID-19

I Speak Your Language is delivered by Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast and supported by the Queensland Government. It is a free program available to anyone in Queensland.
SPREADING POSITIVE ACTIONS, NOT FEAR:
ECCV’S ANTI-RACISM CAMPAIGN NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

BY ZULEIKA ARASHIRO

A few months ago, none of us would have imagined that our lives could change so quickly and significantly as they have since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In times such as this, where our global shared challenges are undeniable, we are required to reflect on what it means to be human, in all our vulnerabilities and strengths.

To this backdrop, FECCA’s decision to dedicate the current issue of Mosaic to racism deserves to be praised. Racism, like a virus, can remain dormant in society until it finds the right environment to flourish. When fear and a sense of fight for survival dominate, racism can receive the social fuel that it needs to grow.

A year ago, when the main targets of racism and discrimination in Australia were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, African Australians and Muslim communities, it was unlikely that a conversation about a resurgence in anti-Asian racism would attract serious political attention. For many Australians, though not necessarily for Asian Australians, claims of racism against Asians in 2020 Australia would more than likely to be dismissed as an exaggeration. After all, the White Australia policy was abandoned decades ago, and the politics of fear of Asian immigrants that still resonated in some circles in the 1990s, has not countered the growing Asian influence in our society.

However, since the pandemic began, open verbal and physical attacks against Chinese, Chinese Australians, and individuals of ‘Asian appearance’ have increased across our communities. A survey released in early April by the community group Asian Australian Alliance recorded 288 reports of COVID-19 racist related incidents across the nation in less than a month, with 65 percent of reported assaults coming from women. There were 83 registered cases in Victoria alone.

Faced with this additional threat to our social fabric, we as citizens and our institutions, have a choice. We can remain silent, imagining that racism will somehow quietly go away or we can use our spaces of influence, community and political power to speak up against racism and highlight the positive actions that individuals and institutions take every day to build communities in which all can be truly safe and thrive.
It was the awareness of how waves of racism can happen suddenly and spread quickly throughout communities that motivated the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV), with support from the Government of Victoria, to lead a state-wide anti-racism campaign. ECCV’s All One Together campaign was launched in December 2019 and has, at its core, the premise that racism hurts us all, as members of an interconnected community. Consequently, any response to it must invoke the commitment of all sectors of society.

In line with this vision, ECCV set the ambitious goal of using the campaign to build a coalition of organisations that crossed the divide between mainstream and multicultural Victoria, to show the potential of collaborative actions by different sectors to address racism.

In the process of engaging communities and institutional stakeholders, we have found out that most Victorians continue to be proud of our cultural diversity and oppose racial discrimination. However, openly talking about racism remains a challenge, and any dialogue seems to also require guidance on what can move people to action and inspire them on the path for change.

Through the All One Together campaign (www.allonetogether.org.au), we have used the power of stories to connect; research data to communicate facts; and a positive attitude to highlight the power of organisations to lead change. Our seven initial Victorian Campaign Ambassadors (Australian Conservation Foundation, Capire Consulting Group, Moreland City Council, Think HQ, Yarra Valley Water, 

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Welcoming Australia, and Victoria University, have demonstrated this.

ECCV’s approach to campaigning against racism, which calls to action a diversity of institutions with the capacity to reach out to broad segments of our society, is something that should be explored at the federal level as part of a national anti-racism campaign.

As we gradually move out from the current state of emergency and plan our recovery from COVID-19, we will only be successful if we heal together. Through allyship and solidarity, we can build a different narrative of what it means to be good Australians, living in communities in which the values of mateship and fairness are effectively extended to all, regardless of skin colour, ethnicity or religion.
SOCIAL COHESION AND THE WORK OF MUSLIM WOMEN AUSTRALIA IN 2020

The past days and months of 2020 have really highlighted the discrepancies that exist between the different parts of our society. While we often emphasise the notions of community harmony and social cohesion, we need to ensure we are moving past that mere rhetoric. Collectively, we need to work on establishing authentic relationships and genuinely creating opportunities for women to give voice to what they need.

Muslim Women Australia (MWA) – formerly Muslim Women Association – has been a pioneer in serving the Australian Islamic community, and to women generally, for nearly four decades. From our early work in supporting the victims of family violence, establishing the first and only crisis centre for Muslim women in the country, through to our more recent advocacy work in response to issues of Islamophobia, the incitement of hate against Muslim women and, unfortunately, the ever present social tragedy of violence against women and children, the MWA has been at the forefront of responding to the needs of women generally and Muslim women in particular.

Over the space of nearly 40 years the community has grown and evolved as has its challenges and needs. MWA has kept apace with that progress itself. While we have been principally NSW focused, MWA has always played a national policy role and, in recent years, the work of MWA has expanded through building networks and supporting women’s groups across the country. Amid the rising concerns surround the COVID-19 pandemic, MWA was able to launch the next evolution of the organisation by formalising its national role under the brand of Muslim Women Australia.

As Muslim Women Australia we continue our function as a representative body for Muslim women working to enrich humanity, advocating for equality and the rights of all women, through authentic leadership based on our Islamic principles. We have, for a long time, been supporting women and women’s organisations on the ground across the country. Formalising this allows us to bring our faith, sincerity and open hearts to that work in a more structured and sustainable way.

BY MAHA ABDO OAM

Maha Abdo OAM is a passionate advocate for social justice and uses the common language of faith to clarify in the community how Islam regards justice and equality. She works in Sydney’s southwest as the head of the Muslim Women Association (MWA), a community-based organisation that caters to the educational, religious, social, recreational and welfare needs of Muslim women from all backgrounds. Maha knows the migrant experience firsthand having moved from Lebanon to Australia with her family in the 1960s. She could barely speak English but has gone on to study at university completing a Bachelor of Social Work followed by a Masters in Social Science, then a Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution. Today Maha represents and gives voice to Muslim women abroad as well as in Australia. She advises government on policy, services and strategies to create a harmonious community for Muslim and non-Muslim women. In 2016 Maha was the NSW Seniors Week Ambassador as well as the Breast Screen NSW Ambassador. In 2015 Maha was a finalist for the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Human Rights Medal, and in 2014 she was the NSW Human Rights Ambassador for 2014-15.
Amidst the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, MWA identified that the twin health and economic crises was going to have a perverse and multifaceted impact on Australian communities. The clientele that MWA supports and the users of our services and programs, in particular persons experiencing domestic and family violence, homelessness and CALD women and aged persons were acutely impacted. Social distancing measures alongside changes to methods of service delivery increased barriers to access; as well as exacerbated the need for factual communication and particularly the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate service provision and information.

MWA utilised existing communication and case management processes, prioritising our teams checking in with clients and users. This process was crucial to keeping a sense of connection and social interaction amidst social distancing and physical isolation measures. This was imperative to providing a sense of calm and connection.

It was identified that there was a need for data collection in order to capture the narratives, experiences and trends families and communities were experiencing as a result of COVID-19 in a more coordinated way. Data collection played a major role in two ways; firstly, in guiding our caseworkers, supporting their role in providing consistent, quality care whilst working to better inform our communications strategies and service delivery, from an organisational and service standpoint. Secondly, to understanding the physical, social, emotional, financial, familial and spiritual impacts on individuals, families and communities, more broadly.
Muslim Women Australia is committed to continuing its work of building the capability and capacity of grass roots women’s organisations across the country and to support local initiatives wherever possible. As well as working with Muslim women, we also highly value the importance of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to enhance the learning about the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders culture, achievements and their existing contribution to Australian society. This also includes how each individual within the community contributes to achieving reconciliation in Australia through respect for the nation’s people and land. We, at MWA, acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the Land on which we stand, and pay our respects to Elders, past and present and emerging, in all of our interactions and activities.

As the world begins to open up and COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease, we are seeing that things will not be going back to normal. We hope that as a society we are able to take lessons from all that we have gone through, and continue to go through, together and individually, and implement new responses and practices with authenticity and sincerity.
The catchphrase, we are ‘In This Together’ symbolises the enormity of the impact COVID-19 on humanity and our unified response against the virus. However, even in the face of this universal health crisis, inequalities continue to haunt us. The kind of racism that has inspired #IAmNotAVirus highlights some of the deep prejudices that plague Australian society.

Australia has a long history of racism, beginning with the myth of Terra Nullius. Racism against minority communities has woven itself around various Australian laws, institutions, public and political discourse. Sometimes, it rears its head in overt forms, such as the 2005 Cronulla riots. Other times, it is covert, such as when politicians debate whether migrant communities are ‘hurting’ Australian workers by taking away jobs, creating unnecessary divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Not surprisingly, the Australian media, although free and plural, reflects the ongoing inequalities and prejudices in Australian society. From choosing to focus on certain stories, presenting the viewpoint of certain communities or focusing on certain aspects of current events, the Australian media actively shapes the racial attitudes of their audiences. Wiradjuri commentator Jack Gibson describes this phenomenon as ‘the supremeness of whiteness: media representations that preserve white privilege in society at the expense of First Nations and other culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

MAINSTREAM MEDIA’S DEPICTIONS OF ‘US’

BY USHA RODRIGUES, PRISCILLA BRICE AND JENNIFER MCLEAN

Usha Manchanda Rodrigues is a Senior Lecturer in Communication, with expertise in Journalism practice and scholarship, at Deakin University, Australia. She is the co-author of three books including two significant works, Indian Media in a Globalised World (2010) and Indian News Media: From Observer to Participant (2015), published by Sage Publications. Usha has also undertaken several studies in journalism, social media and political communication, diversity and the media, globalisation and new media technologies impact on journalism practice, and citizen and community media enterprise. Presently she is investigating representation of #metoo movement in the mainstream media, and racism in fake news circulated on various media platforms.

Priscilla Brice is the founder and Managing Director of All Together Now, an Australian racial equity organisation. All Together Now produces creative projects that educate people about racism and compel people to take action. Priscilla has a Masters of Business Administration (specialising in Social Impact) from the University of NSW. She was awarded a Churchill Fellowship that enabled her to visit and learn from antiracism NGOs in Europe and North America during 2014. Priscilla has worked in the NGO sector for more than 15 years, including roles at Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) and Oxfam Australia.

Jennifer McLean is the Project Manager for All Together Now’s Media Monitoring Project. She has a Bachelor of International and Global Studies (Honours) from the University of Sydney, where she majored in Arabic Language and Cultures. Jennifer is currently completing a Master of Laws (Human Rights Law and Policy) at the University of Sydney. She has several years’ experience working with refugee and migrant communities in Australia and abroad and is committed to advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum.
The plurality of Australian media means there are some fantastic examples of great storytelling that represent Australian diversity fairly and inclusively. But the dominant news coverage and commentary remains negligent, dismissive and racist in its articulation.

A media monitoring report by All Together Now found that 57% of opinion pieces in the mainstream media were racist. The report, Social Commentary and Racism in 2019, examined 281 opinion pieces from mainstream Australian newspapers and most-watched current affairs programs. The research found that social commentators expressed racist views in both overt and covert ways, deploying a range of tactics such as dog-whistling, decontextualisation and irony to target racial minorities. Muslim Australians were the most frequently targeted, with 52 articles specifically discussing Muslims and Islam in a negative way. Scholars such as Rodrigues, Niemann and Paradies argue that some of the media’s business model directs this skewed coverage. In a tightening media market, mainstream commercial newspapers struggle to retain audience interest, driving the sensationalisation of news. Their study found that, in addition to commentary pieces, news articles reporting current events were also skewed against culturally diverse communities. A third of the news coverage, often claimed to be objective and fair, presented these communities in a negative way. Importantly, the study found that people from diverse backgrounds were rarely consulted to give opinions on key issues that affected their communities.

Racism not only has an adverse impact on our social fabric, but research shows that repeated negative coverage heightens anxieties within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Scholars such as Paradies and others have demonstrated how racism both has an economic cost, and actually makes people sick. We also know that racism kills. We can look at the recent tragic events in Yuendumu, Christchurch or Hanua in Germany, as devastating evidence of this.

The lingering menace of Australian racism has been visible in recent months with racist attacks against Asian-Australians, particularly of Chinese descent, leading the hashtag #IAmNotAVirus to trend on social media. Looking back, it is not difficult to trace a growing Sinophobia in media representations of people of Chinese descent buying up land in Australia, and the use of dog whistles and decontextualisation to whip-up anxiety and fear. These messages deepen prejudices in Australia and lead to the kind of overt racism we are seeing now.

A number of groups including All Together Now, Media Diversity Australia and various scholars have been working with communities and the media to improve representation of cultural diversity in the Australian media. Considering that, according to the 2001 Census, more than 49% of Australians were either born overseas or had a parent born overseas, the mainstream media is significantly lagging in its diversity of representation. In their 2016 research, PwC described the average media worker as a 27-year-old, white, male inner-city hipster. The media not only needs to negate the circulation of misinformation and disinformation about Asian-Australians, but also demonstrate a genuine commitment to multiculturalism in Australia.

As a society, we need to do more to ensure that all Australians feel at home, and the Australian media represents all Australians in a fair and balanced way. When the majority of news and commentaries remain biased, or at best neglectful, tokenistic positive stories about minority communities do little to support social cohesion or racial equity. Of course, the media is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to dismantling racism in Australia, but it is certainly an important one. The media industry has an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the reformation of Australia as a place that is genuinely safe and inclusive for all people.

For a list of references, please contact All Together Now: info@alltogethernow.org.au
City of Whittlesea’s Building Respect Strategy was developed to address discrimination of race, religion, culture and ethnicity that is a common occurrence for many members of our community. The aim was to invite everyone to the table, where diverse voices are sought and in turn contribute to local policy development that is about creating a socially cohesive community.

Research that was conducted in the City of Whittlesea with Melbourne University and VicHealth as part of the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity grant, led to the development of the Strategy, found that:

- 97 per cent of those surveyed from the Victorian Aboriginal community had experienced racism in the previous 12 months and over 70 per cent had experienced 8 or more racist incidents
- Nearly two-thirds of those we surveyed from our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities [CALD] had experienced racism in the previous 12 months, with 40 per cent experiencing 6 or more incidents
- The majority of Victorians (95 per cent) believe it is important that people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds are treated fairly
- 84 per cent of people surveyed across the City of Whittlesea agreed that something should be done to reduce discrimination experienced by people from racial or ethnic minority groups in Australia.
In response to this, City of Whittlesea developed a strategy to:

- raise awareness and understanding
- create places free from racism
- build a workplace environment that is fair, welcoming, inclusive, and free from racism

The Sharing Stories - Walking in My Shoes project is an action of the Building Respect Strategy. It demonstrates positive messages that promote anti-racism. It also touches on personal experiences of racism, including stories of migration through object identification. Its purpose is to raise awareness, understanding and foster positive attitudes and behaviours towards Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities.

The Walk in my Shoes project sought stories from the local community that focused on a precious object rather than the physical appearance of a person. These are poetic stories of cultural, social and individual identity and are beautifully photographed so that they also become works of art that focus on the visual beauty of the object. The black and white images create a sense of nostalgia, whilst also visually unique, the images encourage us to look more deeply. The online exhibition uncovers the discourse of racism as one that is often seen in ‘black and white’ terms. Working with arts facilitators Ondru, Walking in My Shoes is an arts project that tells stories of cultural, social and individual identity through personal objects and symbolism. It focuses on providing a voice of personal expression for Aboriginal and diverse communities within the City of Whittlesea.

Sharing Stories of Walking in My Shoes, deliberately omits a person’s physical appearance, focusing on the story through the photographed object. The artefacts are culturally significant and, whilst at times iconic for cultural representation, far from stereotypical, and therefore unveil something that intrigues and invites us to appreciate the journey of the object and the migration story. Our history then journeys to the present. We focus on its significance in defining the culture reflected in the narrative.

There is a story of a fire stick:

“My kids see it, they ask questions, What is it? Where did it come from? What does it mean? I want them to know everything because I didn’t know as much as they know now at their age, and they can keep sharing this with their children and their generations to come.”

Another story about a Turban Cloth tells of migration and self-acceptance in a new place. The journey of finding and revealing the true self. The Turban Cloth is a symbol for many Sikhs and then in telling the story reveals its true meaning for the storyteller in a way that is their journey as much as it is the journey of those who come to embrace the beauty of the diversity it reveals.

“I do feel this is part of my body now, I don’t feel separated from it anymore. I wouldn’t look at myself as the same person (if they were taken away), even in the mirror, I would feel as if some body part was cut, incomplete.”

When we focus on the object and tell the story, we are demonstrating culture through a precious item that has meaning and significance to the one who reveals the story. It is as if we are showing and telling, whilst embedding the personal story within something that we hold precious and dear to our heart.

Ondru Walking in My Shoes, is an online exhibition. To find more stories go to: http://ondru.org/walking-in-my-shoes
I STOPPED PURSUING MY ARTS CAREER

In my previous career, I was doing performance art practice, trained as an actor from the American/Russian European tradition. This was at a time when multiculturalism was probably experiencing its heyday of the 1990s. In my first Adelaide International Festival and doing acting at TAFE, I got to see an excellent Japanese outdoor performance that centred on Japanese street language. This contrasted to the European centric learnings I got when doing a Directing and Theatre Studies degree by being introduced to Laban, Stanislavski, Commedia dell’arte, Aristophanes, Grotowski. In fact in my six years of higher dramatic arts schooling, not once did I get a major role, not once did anyone give me a chance to direct a show, and not once did we examine a play script written by a person of colour, from the Global South or the diaspora. It was then I knew there was no place for disabled Vietnamese-Australian actor in the mainstream.

After finishing an honours degree on Asian-American performance arts I joined Vietnamese Youth Media (VYM) for five years. Here I did performances and videos with young Vietnamese Australians, I did my show on inter-country adoption and finally got to curate art by artists of refugee background for RISE (Refugees Survivors and Ex-detainees) a few years back. Vietnamese Youth Media was based at a community arts centre in Footscray, inner Western Metropolitan Melbourne. Home to Vietnamese, Indian, Africans, post-war migrants, and international students. I remember being told by senior staff when I attended a staff meeting not to make suggestions, I was only there to observe. I remember when the Artistic Director of the centre told off the WM founder for ‘complaining’ to Australia Council about the lack of diversity on its senior staff and board. She threatened us with eviction, claiming we are invited tenants despite all the auspice funding, and new audiences we brought. From when I started there in 2000 to now, there has never been a non-white Artistic Director or CEO of the arts centre in Footscray. This is despite the suburb’s highly diverse demographic; Footscray is home to large Vietnamese, Chinese, Sudanese, Ethiopian and Indian community.

This is the racism I have experienced as a Vietnamese Australian performer. Now that I have moved to the social welfare disability sector, the top of the tree is Anglo-Saxon centric. Be it arts, deans of universities, parliamentarians on ALL three levels of government, major non-government organisations, department heads, or Australian corporate companies, the vast majority are white. This is what race studies academics call white supremacy. This is what social science and race scholars call white supremacy. Two reports support this view. First is the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Beyond the Pale: Cultural Diversity on ASX 100 Board states that “75% of CEOs are of Anglo-Celtic heritage, 18% have European heritage, 5% are from a non-European background and no CEOs whatsoever have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage”. Second is The Diversity Arts Australia
Join our production - we'll show you the ropes

As Annie Bui Omg producer Tony Le Nguyen (rear) looks on, designers Yen Le has director Huu Tran (left) and assistant director Dinhoc Hong Duc Golding tied up in knot. Picture: Matthew Murphy.

By Michael Sinclair

Budding Footscray director Huu Tran is calling on local performers and production people to join a vibrant new Vietnamese-Australian community theatre project, Annie Bui Omg.

The project, to be staged at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, is supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Reichenberg Foundation. It explores the issues of greed, power, sexuality and the use of young people as objects and products in a combination of drama, music and dance.

"It's exploring relevant issues," Mr Tran said. "It's a great way for people to learn how to look at different social aspects.""Mr Tran wants actors, singers and dancers aged between 16 and 26, from diverse multicultural backgrounds in the western suburbs, to take part in the local production. No experience is necessary and informal audition will be held.

The Footscray director, who had a film produced as part of the Yaring Festival last year, said the project was a great opportunity for both non-Vietnamese and Vietnamese people to work together and learn about each other's culture.

In present-day Australia, Annie Bui Omg is the story of a man who sets up a new business after visiting Asia, providing a service to both middle and high-class people. The production questions how entrepreneurs can get away with things they shouldn't.

Footscray actor Tony Le Nguyen, who starred in Romper Stomper alongside Academy Award-winner Russell Crowe, has co-written the play with Mr Tran and is helping with the production.

Anyone wishing to take part in Annie Bui Omg can contact Huu Tran or Tony Le Nguyen at the Footscray Community Arts Centre on 9085 5677.
Shifting the Balance: cultural diversity in leadership within Australian art, screen and creative sectors conclude that CALD Australians comprised:

- 10% of CEOs and equivalents (under-represented by 29%)
- 14% of creative directors, including artistic directors, curators, senior editors, and screen heads of production (under-represented by 25%)
- 12% of senior executives

I can name numerous high art spaces that are run by white men or women of Anglo or European background. They are the gatekeepers of what is seen as respectable art and who is an artist. From my experience in the community cultural development sector, artists of the diaspora, unless they demonstrate ‘dissident’ Chinese artist or European aesthetics, are just not counted. I had an Anglo curator of a well-known gallery in Melbourne’s CBD, known for showcasing Asian arts, say that Asian Australian art is not of interest because they do not come to the same high standards of Asian artists and was not even interested in a proposal for a group show of Asian-Australian Melbourne artists. In another instance, I was physiologically stonewalled by a senior male curator at a famous state gallery, who would not look at me as I tried to explain our RISE art project. I was treated with disdain and not even worthy of polite coffee sit-down conversation.

Racism is not just an aggressive individual abusing you on the train, on the street giving you ‘slanty’ eyes, it is structural, invisible and it is class/merit-based discrimination. In the theatre, it is just as brutal but couched in a collaborative spirit. I have been involved in numerous playwriting workshops where my semi-biographical work on the diversity of living in a rooming house was seen as ‘too difficult’, ‘hard to believe you can have that much diversity’ all by white theatre directors. Time and time again it is the ethnic centred personal story that gets supported, especially if it follows western naturalism in the narrative of the story and reaffirms degrees of Otherness or when a major musical theatre production of The Mikado, Miss Saigon or Madama Butterfly is saying it is okay to do yellow face.

Australian racism is about exclusion, it is also about power, the power to decide what stories and art are worthy to get funding.

Australian racism is decolonising the collection but not the corporate executives of the creative industry.

Australian racism is when the art and media establishment say that ethnic drama is covered by SBS and the Harmony Day Festival.

Australian racism is when diasporic artists need to beg to be invited to have a seat at the table.

Australian racism is when multiculturalism is defined through a European/Anglo centric lens, and ethnics can only hold ethnic posts like being the head of multicultural commissions or portfolios

Australian racism is rural cities having a one page multicultural strategy (like in my hometown Mount Gambier) or none at all, despite the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) and migrant settlements.

The conversation around racism in Australia needs to extend to recognise the prevalence and normalisation of white supremacy. This may be asking for a lot, since racism itself is hardly acknowledged in the first place. It is surprising to me when people, especially European and Anglo Australians, respond to the topic of racism and discussion around white supremacy with dismissiveness or outright anger. If acknowledging the existence of a systematic problem makes you feel uncomfortable, you are likely part of the problem. I can draw very relevant parallels to the ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Me Too’ movements. Acknowledging the additional barriers and dangers faced by black people, women, people of colour does not minimise the experiences of others. These movements highlight that some people are privileged because they will never be discriminated against or feel vulnerable due to their sex, ethnicity or skin colour.
My father was a fit and active 75-year-old when he presented at a public hospital in Brisbane with an obstruction in his bile duct. The condition was entirely treatable yet a few weeks later, he died in the Intensive Care Unit. His untimely death was referred to the coroner because a man of his fitness and age, should not have died. My mother withdrew his case from the coroner as she did not want a protracted investigation to delay his funeral. Both my parents are immigrants to Australia and are from non-English speaking backgrounds. My family and I are certain that what killed him was not the condition per se, but the cultural incompetency of the hospital that caused mistake after mistake and mismanagement of his condition. I have no doubt that had he been a white, English speaking, articulate man, he would be alive today. In my personal and professional experience, which is backed by research, organisational cultural incompetency and institutional racism are responsible for health inequity, health injustice, iatrogenic complications and injury, and even death.

Around the time these events took place, I was part of a group of health professionals who founded a multicultural health social enterprise, World Wellness Group, that seeks to create health equity, particularly for multicultural populations. We started with no capital but social capital and established the clinic as a social enterprise – earning our own money on our own terms. Since that time, we have seen thousands of vulnerable people predominantly from non-English speaking backgrounds, and today we have a workforce of more than 100 who collectively speak more than 60 languages. We have unique health programs that are not found in other medical centres as we deeply understand the needs of our clients. We have a Health Justice Program that provides legal advice and representation to people whose legal problems are literally making them sick; we provide low cost traditional medicine services; we use a co-therapy model in our mental health programs whereby Multicultural Peer Support Workers are part of the therapeutic team to provide cultural safety and culture mediated engagement; our medical staff routinely use interpreters in Australia professional

BY MARINA CHAND

Marina Chand is the co-founder & Director World Wellness Group. She has worked in the community and public health sectors for 30 years. With tertiary qualifications in applied science in health promotion, she has worked for many different organisations and her areas of expertise are in culturally inclusive program design, data collection, health promotion and policy. She was one of the founding directors of World Wellness Group, an award-winning multicultural health social enterprise in Brisbane which serves thousands of vulnerable people from non-English speaking backgrounds each year. She is also a qualified homeopath, meditation teacher and runs the Sai Saileshwara Temple in Brisbane with her husband, has two kids and a cheeky Labrador.

RACISM IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH
MARINA WITH HER HUSBAND IN THE TEMPLE NEXT TO THEIR HOME

MARINA SPEAKING AT THE MINDBODYSPRIT FESTIVAL
interpreters are used for people with low English proficiency in less than 1 in 100 cases (0.97%); and we have a Nurse Advocate specifically dedicated to working with people seeking asylum. All this frontline work is incredibly important, but equally important work happens behind the scenes – it is the advice and advocacy that is done with the Health Department and other stakeholders to break down the structures of institutional racism and cultural incompetency that perpetuate the health inequity experienced by people from CALD backgrounds.

The line between cultural incompetency and institutional racism is blurry and not well defined. The New Zealand understanding of institutional racism is “having the power to have one’s prejudices embedded in the institutions and systems of a society, thus disadvantaging one group and privileging another”. This definition is very similar to this neat summary about the efficacy of mainstream or ‘universal’ health services for meeting the needs of diverse populations: “While the appeal of universal healthcare services is that they appear to deliver equal health care to all, they in fact systematically advantage those whose values most closely fit with the dominant social norms” (Fuller, 1997). Whether we call it institutional racism, cultural incompetency or universal mainstream healthcare, the result is the same and it occurs at a population-wide level and it costs people their health and even their lives.

Like many immigrants in Australia, I too have experienced racism at a personal level. It is easier to identify and call out than institutional racism which is more insidious. In my experience, the impact of institutional racism is much greater and far reaching. I give you an example: my husband is a spiritual leader and we have a temple next to our home in Brisbane. A few years ago we had a lot of racist abuse screamed at us when we were outside our home, we had eggs and food thrown at
us as we stood in our driveway in traditional attire, and we even had rocks thrown through the glass panel on our front door in the middle of the night. Most of these ‘incidents’ took place in a short period of time when racism against people from Indian backgrounds was high in Australia. It was an unsettling time particularly for our children. However, these incidents were not as impactful as the institutional racism that was levelled at us by the City Council which was ‘investigating’ our temple after complaints from one resident in the neighbourhood. We were not allowed to have visitors to our home in the evenings, teach our children yoga on a Sunday in our own temple, nor have visitors in our temple on Sundays – the day for rest in the Christian tradition. The Council’s investigation actually stopped us from having visitors to our home and temple, interfering with our right to practice our religion and our freedom to have a social life. The ‘investigation’ was abruptly withdrawn when we wrote directly to the Lord Mayor suggesting that Council invest in a cultural competency framework and that the Anti-Discrimination Commission would be interested in our experiences with Council.

Institutional racism impacts whole communities and makes them feel that they are somehow guilty or to be blamed for their lifestyle, attributes or religion. At its worst, such experiences can lead to internalised racism - where a person incorporates attitudes, beliefs and/or ideologies within their world view that serves to maintain or exacerbate the unequal distribution of power. People in our community started to question whether there was something inherently wrong with getting together weekly to meditate or hold a spiritual program. We challenged that thinking and pointed out that others in the community get together weekly to have a BBQ or have a party and this is not the business of a local government authority.

Racism is one of the determinants of health that is not well researched in Australia. The fact that no Australian meta-analysis has been conducted on racism as a determinant of health is an indication of the institutional racism in Australian health research. American researchers have comprehensively shown that racism is not only associated with poorer mental health, but also poorer general and physical health. One Victorian study in 2017 found that Aboriginal Victorians and Victorians who speak a language other than English at home, but not of Northern European or North American origin, are likely to experience racism; that racism is a significant health risk factor for both mental and physical health; the strength of association between frequent experiences of racism and mental ill-health is much greater than the strength of association between the lifestyle risk factors of smoking and obesity and mental ill-health; and that the strength of association between frequent experiences of racism and physical ill-health is similar to the strength of association between smoking and physical ill-health. In Australia, 13% of the population smokes on a daily basis, and 20% of the population has experienced racism in the last 12 months. If we did not have an inherent bias in our health system that renders CALD populations largely invisible, we would have anti-racism programs just as we have smoking cessation and lifestyle modification programs delivered across the country. Given this data, don’t you agree it is incredible that we do not? At World Wellness Group we will continue to put racism and particularly institutional racism back on the agenda and continue to challenge the push for ‘mainstreaming’. We would love to hear from other multicultural health organisations who would like to join us in this work as collectively we could achieve great things for our multicultural communities. We would welcome hearing from you.

For a full list of references, please contact: marina.chand@worldwellnessgroup.org.au

MARINA CHAND AND MP JOE KELLY, WITH THE WWG TEAM

MARINA OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE THAT ADJOINS HER HOME
I have worked in several countries and contexts in the last twenty years as a humanitarian and an international development practitioner and have experienced racism several times. Every time I experienced it, I named it. I called it out. I refused to be shut out and made invisible. Racism became evident early on in my career in international development. I remember the first time it happened. My first international assignment. And how effortlessly the Anglo-Celtic woman in my team, appropriated my idea and it became legitimate because it came from her!

Over the years, I have felt all kinds of emotions, with anger remaining constant – when local “partner organisations” always had to have their capacities built because they lacked capacity; when people whose skin is not what is called “white” are always assumed to be less qualified and have lower credentials than whose skin is the one that is called “white”; when they always got overlooked for promotions and pay rises.

I came to live in Australia in December 2016, after living the life of a vagabond in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. I came to a country where the international NGO sector was completely ‘whitewashed.’ Every executive team and Board – filled with people who looked just like themselves – zero diversity. Zilch.

In one of the largest international NGOs which I joined in 2017, I was asked by the person who was its CEO then, “what’s your ethnicity?” This was her first question! Not, ‘Hi, I’m X and am so pleased you have joined us…’. I blinked twice before responding thinking that perhaps she was not feeling well. Else why would anyone ask anybody that kind of question the first time they met! No surprises, the Executive Leadership team and the Board of that organisation were completely devoid of any sort of diversity. That in itself spoke volumes. Later I learnt how rife nepotism and favouritism was – and how tolerant that organisation was of mediocrity!

The next year, I was briefly part of another international NGO, one whose core business was “girl’s empowerment.” I was hired to shape their ‘Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment’ program portfolio. Within a few days of taking up my role, I started asking questions: ‘What is the composition of your Board? Why is it totally Anglo/Caucasian dominated? Why is there an Anglo male as the program manager for the Australian program working in Indigenous
Communities when there are skilled and awesomely smart Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around? The usual response was, “Oh we tried. We just didn’t find anyone!” I left this organisation within six months because its values, policies and practices did not align with mine at all.

Leaving the ‘humanitarian and development sector’ in 2019, I moved to a ‘corporate-ish’ one as a ‘Diversity & Inclusion’ (D&I) lead. Before taking up the role, I had made it clear that my take on D&I is not managing cultural events and feeling fabulous; that I would be looking deeply at structural issues, and questioning bluntly systemic issues that prevent equality, diversity and inclusion to become the norm rather than an exception. Over the last several months, I have been interacting with D&I peers in the country and was struck by how non-diverse the field is!

I have largely been seeing and hearing of people from the dominant cultural group in the country. What a paradox! Never mind Australia is a thriving multi-cultural country with about 45% reported having at least one parent who has born overseas. Racism in Australia is palpable. It is in the way you are looked at, talked about, assumed, discussed. It is in the way you get offered lower salaries, lower designations. It is in the way you become the photo-op in cultural celebrations and in brochures to show how ‘diverse’ an organisation is. It is in the way your name is pronounced, and you are made to feel guilty to have such a name! It is in the cliques in the workplace. It is in how your experiences on workplace racism gets discounted, or not acknowledged.

Oh, yes! Racism is alive and it is thriving.

I remember one incident clearly that happened with my daughter a couple of years back. She was 6 years old. It was the day I went to pick her up from the after school care around 6 PM. I found her colouring, sitting by herself at a table. I let her finish what she was doing. Next to her was another table with one carer and 4 kids. I saw another carer, an Anglo woman, going round with a plate of food. She passed my daughter’s table - not offering her any. She went instead to the other table and offered the food to them. On our way back, my daughter remarked, “She was rude, was she not, Mamma. Why did she do what she did?”

I acknowledged her feelings and told her I do not know why she did what she did, and if she wanted, we could return to the facility and ask the person. My daughter was tired. All she wanted was to go home, have her dinner and for me to read her a story as she went to sleep. I respected her decision and encouraged her to speak to that person the next day.

I went to pick her up the next day before 5.30 PM, hoping to speak with that person. Not seeing that person, I instead spoke to the one who was in-charge of the child care centre. At first, there was disbelief, and then there was an inability to name that action for what it was – an act that was unacceptable and biased - and lastly sympathy and an attempt to ‘explain.’ I told her that I did not want to explain anyone else’s action when my daughter asked me why that person did what they did, and neither should anyone else. I was told that person has gone on leave and will be back the following week.

I told her that my husband and I are teaching our daughter some basic human values. One of them is to always speak up if she feels something is unclear, unjust or unfair. We have told her that speaking up also helps the other person become a better version of themselves - when someone has asked them a question or given them a feedback. I told her that I wanted that person to speak with my daughter and explain why she did what she did. I want my daughter to know it is not about her. I want my daughter’s sense of self and her agency to be validated.

To say she was surprised is an understatement. To say my daughter was proud of me is to put it mildly.

I followed up my meeting with an email the next morning. Before sending that email, I read it out to my daughter, and she said, “Thankyou, Mamma!”

Why am I telling you my stories? It is because I want us all to know:

1. Do not ever let go of an opportunity to name the demon. Be bold and unapologetic about naming the bias. Name the prejudice; name all oppressions. The world gets muckier when we just shrug it off or suck it up.

2. Do not ever let anyone tell you to “pick your battle.” When you are speaking out, you are using your voice to ask, seek clarifications, clear doubts, know. When you are speaking out, you are making yourself and your experiences real and visible. It is not a fight. So, there are no battles.
I was at a train station in South West Sydney late one morning. I was going to Sydney CBD to study. At the station platform, I walked all the way to the end of the platform. I placed my heavy backpack on the floor and pulled out a book and leaned on the fence at the end of the platform meant to stop people from going beyond that point. The fence was about a metre high.

I am not sure how long I had been there for when I felt someone lurching away from me. I immediately dropped down to secure my backpack in place wondering if it had moved causing someone to lurch. I then stood up straight about to apologise to the lady in front of me. I was holding on to the fence with one hand. When my eyes locked with this lady’s, she turned her head to the right leaned over the little fence and spat contemptuously. I was taken aback!

‘You Africa,’ said the lady. ‘Go, Go.’ As she was speaking these words, she was pointing at the fence and my hand. When my eyes locked with this lady’s, she turned her head to the right leaned over the little fence and spat contemptuously. I was taken aback!

‘You Africa,’ said the lady. ‘Go, Go.’ As she was speaking these words, she was pointing at the fence and my hand.

I thought to myself, this is another racist. I appreciated that she was annoyed by my leaning on the fence. However, that reaction was blatantly racist. My heart was already racing, and I began to sweat. I told myself that I needed to be calm and have a decent conversation with this person.

‘Sorry?’ I said calmly.

The lady spat again in the same manner this time more forcefully for everyone to notice. ‘You Africa,’ she said. She then looked at the sky with both hands holding firmly on her chest whispering something. Then she looked at me with some relief in her face and voice, ‘You devil. This is Australia. Go back. Go hell.’

The train pulled over at the platform. We all rushed inside the train. I was breathing fast. My heart was beating faster than ever before. I was sweating. My day is ruined. I have been reminded that I did not belong. I was reminded that it did not matter that I was a citizen of this country and a taxpayer like most people. I pay for that fence. I was not only told I was not Australian, and I should go back, I was also going straight to hell for being African. Not to mention the spitting. The contempt in that spittle could burn your skin. That is something of the movies. Only that in a movie, the gates of hell would have opened and two angels with swords made of fire would have accompany me home to the eternity fires.

It seemed to me that the woman had some European background. Her English was broken and she would have been in her sixties or seventies. She was possibly from that generation of migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1960s and had spent most of her life working hard looking after family. It sounded like she felt that she did her bit to earn her place in Australia. I would not be surprised if she had successful second-generation children who own businesses or run the bureaucracy. Her grandchildren would have been born into a decent middle-class family. This woman worked hard to build Australia. She has earned her place in Australia.

What was shocking to me was that this strong reaction I got was over me leaning on a fence! People do it all the time at train stations with no consequence at all. Racism, although the undercurrent in this reaction, does not explain this strong reaction. You can be racist but still share a train with someone whom you think is racially inferior to you socially and culturally.
I AM DISAPPOINTED WHEN PEOPLE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS RACISM IN AUSTRALIA.

Sometimes, racism can translate to sympathy—help the poor refugee from a third world country settle in Australia as long as they don’t insist on their barbaric backward culture and behaviour. As long as these racially, socially and culturally third world people show that they are trying hard to be like us in mainstream Australia we should help them and embrace them. They can build Australia and work hard for Australia and one day we wouldn’t mind them being around since they would remind us about how good we are—because we have taken a racially inferior human with abhorrent social and cultural background and transformed them into a model Australian in social and cultural terms.

These lines above could have been easily taken from Ghassan Hage’s book The White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society. I read that book recently. It made me realise that the European lady was engaged in what Hage referred to as nationalist practices. That hand that reaches out to pull off the head covering of the Muslim women was not an act of racism but an act in nationalist practice. Hage explains that nationalist practices are underpinned by three assumptions. First, Australia is imagined as a national space. Secondly, the nationalist, who is white, imagines him/herself as the master of this imagined space call Australia. Finally, the ethnic/racial other is imagined to be a passive object that can be controlled.

The European lady at the station saw herself as the white nationalist manager of this space called Australia that we were sharing. I was the racial other who must be taught to behave. My leaning on the fence was not an acceptable behaviour on a train station platform. She took it upon herself to let me know of her disapproval in the most contemptuous way possible. My leaning on the fence could be damaging to the fence and therefore damaging to Australia. It was her duty to act. She earned it through hard work and through the success of her children and grandchildren.

I felt lonely on the train. I was seeing every white person on the train through that experience. When I arrived at my destination, I avoided white people. If I had to talk to them it was business. It took longer than usual to get the café to take my order and for my coffee to arrive. At the information desk at the library, I was made to wait. The white girl who was supposed to serve me ignored me until someone pointed out to her I was waiting for service. I was furious because I am actually experiencing hell on earth already. The European lady did not need to send me there.

I am disappointed when people do not believe that there is racism in Australia. What worries me more is that nationalist practices are normalised and promoted as the right thing to do. They are not and we all need to be on the lookout for them.
Ibrahim came to Australia at 3 years of age from South Sudan with his single mother. He is now 16 and big for his age. He left school in the middle of term 2, while he was in Year 10. His secondary schooling, unlike his primary schooling, had not worked well. Ibrahim says he wanted to learn, but teachers were not encouraging and were judgmental. He says he was treated unfairly, and that there was racism, discrimination and bullying at school.

After being suspended from his secondary school sometime in 2016, Ibrahim was involved in an incident in central Melbourne where the police were called. He was not a major participant in that incident. But when he returned to school after the incident, his mental situation deteriorated with everyone talking about him. He was under stress and he could easily get angry, even at his mother. His

BY DR BERHAN M. AHMED

Dr Berhan M. Ahmed (Shiday) was made a refugee at the age of 14 years old and arrived as a refugee at the age of 23 with nothing in Australia. He was Victorian Australian of the year 2009, current CEO, of African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services, ex-co-chairperson of the expert Panel group of the Australia Africa University Network; funder and ex-Chairperson of the African Think Tank and current Adjunct Professor at the university of Melbourne in Australia and is well-known to many Africans residing in Australia, through his commitment to numerous community issues via main stream media. First African Australian Senate Candidate for federal election 2004 for Victoria, Dr. Ahmed is ex-Board member for AMES 2007 – 2016 and ex-board member of Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre (2015-18). Dr Ahmed is motivated by five core principles - social justice, sustainability development, Aboriginal reconciliation, building stronger and dynamic communities and applying democracy in action. His current leadership role is exploring new ways of engaging Africans in participation, decision and eliminate the culture of cover up and continued hostility and lack of co-operation among community members. To also encourage African Australian communities to engage and inspire with other mainstream communities to create harmony and good image of the Africans Australian youth in Australia and to provide guidance, role model and support youth and women to break the cycle of bad image.
misbehaviour at school increased and he was suspended again. Not long afterwards, he simply quit school, feeling threatened by accusations and not being able to respond. The school principal did not give his mother a chance to speak when his expulsion was being considered.

As a result, he was home for almost 4 months, his mother unable to find another school for him. Unfortunately, when he moved to another school, Ibrahim found it no better. He went absent for 8 days, was feeling unwell. He believes that gave the school an excuse to make him leave.

Since 2016, he has been out of school, trying to keep busy and out of trouble by making music, playing sport and going to the gym. Ibrahim and his mother hope to find him a school so that he can finish Year 12 and perhaps combine it with a design course at Victoria University in Sunshine.

But, beyond further education, Ibrahim faces another problem with the law. In 2017 he was unwittingly caught up with some acquaintances which resulted in a car chase by police and unlicensed driving. Ibrahim was among those charged and he says he was bashed by police. He has missed two court appearances because of illness or moving house. When the incident took place, his mother was not informed even though Ibrahim is still a minor and it is the police’s duty to inform the parent. Ibrahim and his mother also say that records of interview have been changed; with the police incorrectly claiming that they involved his mother (as they should of according to law).

The court case is still to come, but Ibrahim and mother have not been told when. Ibrahim wants to go down the good path, but he is not receiving any encouragement to do so. He has become stressed, forgetful and subject to mood changes. What is needed for Ibrahim and those in similar situations is a better and more encouraging learning environment, including policing that does not discriminate or pick out youth who are ‘different’ at random.

Australia’s current learning environment is not encouraging African students or other migrant students to actively participate in the school system. If this trend continues, we will face very serious societal challenges of children at an early age feeling rejected and not wanted in society.

At AAMEYS, we are working with families and children supporting access to schools for the children suspended and/or expelled to continue their study. Unfortunately, majority of the school children attending AAMEYS office for support are between 11 – 14 years of age. It is very hard for the family and children to keep the child at home, and the child reaches boredom and starts repelling parenting rule. According to the feedback received from the parents and children, the school environment discourages refugee children from reaching their potential. According to some parents, there are perceived ‘attitudes’ towards African and Muslim refugee children that they have lower IQ that the other students.

AMMEYS suggests an alternative solution for the Department of Education and the state government; they should consider supporting school environments that are accepting and encouraging of African/Muslim refugee students, and refrain from suspending or expelling children from schools.
Recent articles (Doughney, 2020; Morris, 2020) have documented the major contribution made by international students to the Australian economy. Morris (2020) indicated that in 2019 there were over 750,000 international full fee paying students in Australia, half of them living in rental accommodation and working in low paid jobs in hospitality, retail, food delivery etc. Hurley (2020) indicated that for every $1 of revenue brought by international students, they spent $1.15 in the economy. They also paid taxes, both direct and indirect. Now with the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, international students are being told that if it gets difficult for them, they have the option to go home (Prime Minister Scott Morrison, ABC TV News, 3 April 2020). Many of them have lost their jobs since the temporary demise of large parts of the sectors they worked in due to the introduction of strict government restrictions. Since international students have no access to Centrelink payments, wage subsidies or public health care, their situation could get difficult indeed.

Anecdotal evidence suggests it can be even tougher for students to return home, given that many countries have closed their borders, flights are infrequent and airfares have skyrocketed. Stranded in a difficult situation, facing potential eviction (Morris, 2020) and poverty, students are turning to charities and universities for handouts just to feed themselves (Deakin University, CQUniversity, La Trobe, Monash being some which are providing grants and food assistance). Migrant communities and ethnic grocers are also reaching out to the international students from similar ethnic background through social media or relevant religious charity networks to provide food supplies and assistance.

In this context, we ask: Is the federal government’s approach of offering no financial assistance to international students either fair...
or strategic? Sometime in the future, Australia will reopen its borders and seek to restart the international education trade. Student sentiment and perceptions about how they have been treated when the crisis hit will undoubtedly circulate among home country communities and tarnish our international reputation.

Some widely circulated and shared videos in the social media made public by distressed international students have attracted negative reactions to the apparent lack of compassion, and accusatory tone (e.g., that students had signed financial solvency declarations covering their study years) in the formal briefing by the Prime Minister. There is also a sense of abandonment being inflicted on the ‘once valued customers’.

The Council of International Students Australia (CISA) has been critical of the government’s lack of acknowledgement of international students’ direct and indirect contributions to the Australian economy, the lack of process about returning to home countries or assurance of distributive justice about paid fees and health insurance. Such sentiments may have a lasting impact on the branding of Australian education.

Many international students may have had a sincere financial plan to support their study in Australia and now that their financial sources are no longer available, they are stuck in a hard place (Merani, 2020). While the federal treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, cites lack of funds as the main reason for denying calls for government financial assistance to international students, it is worth exploring other factors which lie behind this policy gap.

We suggest there are four unspoken, populist sentiments underlying the apparent disregard by government for the plight of the international students. These undercurrents connect with long held historical myths and fears around foreigners and immigration in Australia documented in academic research literature and the popular media (see, for example, Goot & Watson, 2001; Markus, 2014). Four of the most likely themes, some of which are already evidenced in recent anti-Asian incidents, include:

- International students have imported COVID-19 into the country (see recent media coverage of violent attacks in Melbourne against Asian students).
- International students have lowered university standards and become a cash cow for greedy universities – this has been a matter of contention for many years in Australia, with the ABC Four Corners program in 2019 exposing some questionable manipulation of entry standards by Murdoch University and other universities.
- International students exploit university and vocational education places to access employment and permanent residency – this view has been supported by the Australian government’s ‘two step migration’ policy which allows students to stay and work full-time for 2-4 years after graduation and apply for permanent residency while offshore.
- International students take scarce jobs that should go to Australians – this sentiment, sparked by the sudden and catastrophic levels of unemployment created by industry shutdowns in the past month, is one which links to age old fears about foreigners taking Australian jobs (Goot & Watson, 2001; Markus, 2014).

Where some or all of these factors are at play, the plight of international students stranded in Australia becomes devilishly tangled, as they become the scapegoat for previous systemic weaknesses in university administration, government migration policy, racism and other negative community sentiment towards foreigners.

To punish the remaining students who have not left the country (as thousands have) is neither fair nor strategic. A retributive strategy towards the alleged malpractices of a few universities through the apparent abandonment of Australian international students, will potentially harm not only the Australian higher education sector but also the linkage industries on the other side of post-COVID-19 crisis. International students not only contribute to the Austrian higher education (HE) sector but also to the tourism, hospitality, retail, insurance, transport and real-estate industries through their labour and purchasing patterns. The bad press may also have a negative impact on Australia’s export industry and labour market in future and result in the need for damage control to revive the post-COVID-19 Australian economy.

The Australian higher education quality assurance argument is also negated by the real possibility that many students admitted to public university programs may now seek places at less expensive and loosely regulated private higher education business colleges just to survive their financial shortfall during the COVID-19 crisis. This trend was already prevalent in the education sector, creating more questions about assurance of quality education in Australia rather than providing solutions.

International students who continue with their studies in Australia should be assisted financially so they can complete their courses and continue to make a positive contribution to the Australian economy and society. Any issues with entry standards, migration policy or job scarcity need to be tackled explicitly by government reforms and job creation programs. Making individual students suffer for these systemic issues or pushing the burden of financial assistance on the universities without government assistance is both unethical and counterproductive.

As a minimum, the government should extend the Centrelink Special Benefit to the students still in Australia who meet certain eligibility requirements, together with full access to Medicare and rental assistance. To do otherwise could lead to further public health dangers arising from poverty, overcrowding, malnutrition and homelessness as the COVID-19 crisis continues while doing nothing to enhance our international standing.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF RACISM:
A CITY OF RYDE AND MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

BY DR ALICE CHIK, DR ADELE GARNIER, DR MICHAEL CHANG, PROFESSOR PHIL BENSON
AND JONATHAN NANLOHY

Dr Alice Chik is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and Associate Director of Multilingualism Research Centre in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Macquarie University. She migrated to Sydney in late 2014, and has since focused her research on urban multilingualism, literacy and language education. Her recent works included Multilingual Sydney (Routledge, 2019) and Languages of Sydney: The people and the passion (Candlin & Mynard, 2018).

Dr Adele Garnier is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University. Her research investigates migration and refugee policy in a comparative perspective, with a current focus on refugees’ participation in the labour market, the governance of refugee resettlement and the local integration of international students.

Dr Michael (Hsing-Chung) Chang is a senior lecturer in spatial information science at the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science and Engineering. Michael’s research mainly focuses on using remotely sensed data with the aid of geographic information systems (GIS) for monitoring both natural and man-made environment. His research interests also include applying spatial information science on demographic data and social activities.

Phil Benson is Professor of Applied Linguistics and Director of the Multilingualism Research Centre at Macquarie University. He has more than thirty years of experience working with language learners and teachers from diverse backgrounds. His current research interests are in international students language learning environments and the geographies of multilingualism in Australian cities.

Jonathan Nanlohy has been the Community Projects Coordinator at the City of Ryde for the past 10 years. He has 27 years’ experience in local government, community and education sector, working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, refugees and asylum seekers. His work has focussed on community and cultural development, capacity building, advocacy, social inclusion, prevention of racism and domestic and family violence.

The City of Ryde and Macquarie University have initiated a collaborative project to combat racism against international students. Australia is a major destination for international students, and the City of Ryde (New South Wales) is a particularly attractive choice. In 2019, 18,000 international students were studying in Ryde, amongst a resident population of about 131,200, the majority (72%) in higher education. More than 20% (8,600) of Macquarie University students are international students. The wellbeing of these students is a key concern for the City of Ryde.
While the poster incidents were examples of occasional aggression, as a nation, we only have very limited knowledge of the everyday experience of discrimination and racism of our international students, especially at a local level. We need information on local safe and ‘hot’ spots to inform the wider communities. We also understand that the best advocates of an inclusive city for international students are other students. The Macquarie University research team (Dr. Adele Garnier, Dr. Alice Chik, Dr. Michael Chang and Professor Phil Benson) and the City of Ryde, Community Development Team (Jonathan Nanlohy) designed an innovative project carried out by Macquarie University undergraduates through the Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program.

In 2019, 13 PACE students conducted 400 street survey interviews and seven focus group interviews with 20 international students in order to investigate international students’ understanding of racism, and the types and locations of racist incidents they might have experienced. The PACE students also produced a report of their findings for Ryde Council, and several students took the opportunity to present preliminary findings to the Council’s Multicultural Advisory Committee. All PACE students were trained in research ethics, survey and focus group methodology, data collection and data analysis.

The international student respondents were young, multicultural, multilingual and most had spent less than two years in Australia. 47.1% identified as male, 49.7% as female, 0.52% as other and 2.6% preferred not to say. Most respondents were under 24-year-old, and 51.8% are pursuing a Master’s degree. Most were born in Asia. The top five countries of origin were China (31.7%), India (13.3%), Vietnam (5.5%), South Korea (4.4%) and Bangladesh (4.4%). 41% of the students reported no religion, compared to 30.5% of Ryde residents. The top four religious affiliations were Christianity (15%), Hinduism (12.7%), Islam (11.6%) and Buddhism (10.1%). In contrast, among Ryde residents the top four affiliations are Christianity (50%), Buddhism (4.1%), Hinduism (3.8%) and Islam (2.4%).

Our student respondents were multilingual. 74.4% spoke one language in addition to English, 18% spoke two other languages and 6.1% spoke more than two additional languages. The top three languages were Mandarin (39.4%), Hindi (14.2%), and Cantonese (7.3%). Our student respondents also reported a high level of proficiency in English: very well (34.6%), and well (48%). 15.2% reported speaking English ‘not very well’. These could be non-degree ELICOS students who are in Australia to learn English. Generally speaking, this respondent profile aligns with the enrolment figures provided by the Australian Government.

Macquarie Park also hosts numerous international corporate headquarters, making Ryde one of the most diverse cities in Australia. Almost half of the Ryde population (47%) is born overseas and 48% of households speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). However, Ryde is not immune to racism, and in 2018, residents were alarmed by racist posters plastered near the Top Ryde Shopping Centre and Ryde Public School. While Council acted swiftly to take down these posters and released a strong statement against racism and in support of multiculturalism, Council staff, members of Council’s Multicultural Advisory Committee and academics from Macquarie University also united to formulate strategies to make Ryde a safer city for residents from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The City of Ryde does not tolerate racism. Since becoming a ‘Racism. It Stops with Me’ campaign partner in 2014, Council has actively promoted community awareness and developed community and institutional partnerships to address racism. In 2015 the City Council funded the ‘Unified Ryde’ film, a partnership project with the Salvation Army and Macquarie University that explored issues of race and racism in Ryde. That partnership has led to ongoing anti-racism research and resource development project partnerships between the City of Ryde and Macquarie University.

The City of Ryde also promotes anti-racism messages through its website and social media, and at community events. It also provides community members with the skills and resources to combat racism. In April 2020 City of Ryde included ‘Racism. It Stops with Me’ information and links to resources in its Your City newsletter, which is sent to ratepayers and available online. Council actively follows up any reports of racist incidents and materials in public spaces.
The main findings of the study were:

1. Students are not certain of the definition of racism and are not familiar with reporting mechanisms.
2. From their experiences in the City of Ryde, our respondents are less likely to assert that racism is prevalent.
3. Most of the respondents have never interacted with the Council, NSW Police Force, and the student organisations and the counselling services on campus.
4. Our respondents generally have more positive attitudes towards people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds than the broader population.
5. 90% of the respondents have not experienced racism in Ryde (but might have racist experience outside of Ryde), and the number of racist encounters depends on length of stay.
6. Verbal abuse is the most frequently reported racism experience.
7. Our mapping of student-reported incidents shows a higher concentration in shopping areas and on campus.

To provide safety information, we produced a heat map of students’ reported racist encounters, which can be viewed in the image below.

Based on the findings, we recommend:

1. Community education on the definition of racism, and reporting mechanisms
2. An information kit for international students about support networks provided by the NSW Police Force, the City Council and other community organisations
3. Promotion of multicultural events to international students
4. Promotion of multicultural inclusiveness in the City of Ryde.

To convey and disseminate the research findings to international students and the wider CALD communities in Ryde, the Council is supporting Phase 2 of the project to produce an information kit (both digital and printed). Macquarie students are currently producing a student-oriented information and support kit. And the final product will be multilingual and adapted for the wider CALD communities in Ryde. Altogether 15 PACE students contributed to the project, and among them only three were international students. The domestic students reported an awareness raising experience, as many of them did not realise that racism is an issue. This project showcases a pathway for local government, university and students to use evidence-based research to better inform and enhance the wellbeing of the communities.


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Fostering Social Inclusion Through Community Broadcasting

BY SAHANA SEHGAL

Sahana Sehgal is an Independent Researcher and has conducted research on the lack of engagement amongst Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in Australia and the its effects on the state of multiculturalism and social cohesion. She currently works in the community broadcasting sector, at Canberra Multicultural Service (FM 91.1) as the Development Manager. Having studied Journalism and International Relations, her key areas of interest are migration studies and multiculturalism, politics, design thinking and building sustainable social systems. She is originally from India.

Over a decade ago, between 2007-2010, there were multiple reports of racially motivated incidents against Indian students and other Indian origin individuals in major Australian cities. Multiple protests and rallies were held in Australian cities and a few protests were also held in Indian cities as well. Some political and community leaders in Australia noted that incidents were being exaggerated in the Indian media. Many reports also concluded that not all attacks were racially motivated and that attackers might have been from other minority communities as well. While frequent incidents did occur, it is difficult to state how many incidents were racially motivated and how many of them might have been a result of other factors.

Nevertheless, these incidents resulted in a drop in the number of Indian students choosing to study in Australia, making the US, Europe or New Zealand better options for international students. However, over the past few years, the situation has improved and international students have flocked to Australia, at least partly because of favourable visa conditions and a more welcoming environment. Racism and racial discrimination are still very much prevalent in Australian society, demonstrated recently through racist attacks against Asian Australians fuelled by COVID-19. However, we are now more conscious of racism and its forms. More often than not, people will call out bigoted remarks and support victims over perpetrators. There is an abundance of literature available and structures in place to report racially motivated incidents. However, that does not seem enough. Therefore, we can also avail the safe spaces and institutions for discourse within the community where one can find support and there is potential for healing. This article will highlight one such institution that fosters social inclusion and belonging - community broadcasting.

Three years back when I was planning to move to Australia, many people back home still thought Australia to be unwelcoming. However, my experiences with inclusion and racism have been quite different since arrival, partly because of the city I chose to live in - Canberra. Granted, I have had a few incidents where I have encountered racial insensitivity but for the most part I have felt included and respected. A conscious effort has been made here to differentiate between racism and racial insensitivity and/or prejudice, racial anxiety, and racial ignorance. For example, when I was serving a group of mainly white women at the restaurant where I worked, one of the women commented on my English
fluency stating that I spoke English really well for someone who had mostly lived in India. She went on to ask ‘if I had been promised to anyone back home?’ According to American Philosopher, Lawrence Blum, if I were to call this particular woman ‘racist’ without deliberation, it would cheapen the moral weight and consequence attached to the term. Perhaps, this woman was more likely to be ignorant about other cultures and races, and was operating under stereotypes. Blum uses ‘manifold linguistic resources’ to differentiate the many moral ills in the racial domain part from racism itself, and this provides a more nuanced discussion about racism and racial relations, both for academic, policy and practical purposes.

Moving on from this quick sidelight. Upon further reflection, I gather that my mainly positive experience in Canberra was due to the connections established within and among different communities. Furthermore, the commitment to multiculturalism and the social institutions built around the concept have also promoted a culture of inclusion and respect. One such institution available and thriving across Australian cities is community broadcasting, specifically ethnic language programming. Canberra is home to the Canberra Multicultural Service [FM 91.1], a community radio station which has been in operation since the 1970s. I have lived in the city for three years and until recently, I was not aware that Canberra had a community radio station. I am quite sure many people are unaware of the community radio station in their city. Almost every major Australian city houses a local radio station that offers ethnic language programming- 1CMS (Canberra), 4EB (Brisbane), 3ZZZ (Melbourne), 5Ebi (Adelaide) and 2TripleO (Sydney). This kind of programming is different from SBS programming, in the sense that it is deeply local and specific to the community it serves, within a particular state. Community broadcasting contributes to ‘communicative democracy’. It allows for agency and empowerment within local populations. As broadcasters and producers are mainly volunteers from within the community, there is a sense of shared ownership, much like other community organisations, yet with the power to seemingly communicate with the entire community and beyond.

Incoming migrants burdened by the shock of moving to a new country, looking for employment and navigating the way of life in Australia often find a safe space in community broadcasting. This is truer for new and emerging communities than communities that are already large in number and established. Perhaps, community and ethnic radio stations could become a formal part of the settlement process. Community broadcasting, for example, community radio provides migrants who are negotiating and restricting their identities with a sense of belonging and an anchor to their ‘homeland’, if they so require.

It is imperative to note that the absence of racial incidents does not mean that one necessarily feels included. Social inclusion can be derived from social connections within and amongst communities who have access to mediums of mass communication. Researchers, (Foxwell-Norton, et al.) have termed community broadcasting as a ‘quiet revolution’ where the barrier between the producer and the audience is blurred. Furthermore, it has been found that mainstream media does not always address racial issues responsibly. Community owned media can combat that, if it chooses to do so, and address racial relations locally for the community it serves. As a start, ethnic programming could differentiate between incidents of racial insensitivity from outright racially motivated incidents, and provide a space for a more nuanced discussion about racial relations as perceived by the community. It would be possible to change the perception around certain racial stereotypes from outright racially motivated incidents, and provide a space for a more nuanced discussion about racial relations as perceived by the community.

So, maybe next time you feel like you need a piece of homeland or want to get in touch with the community or just listen to some ethnic music, tune in to your local radio station. Better yet, go over or become a community broadcaster!
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FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We provide advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism. FECCA’s membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders. For more information and to read more about FECCA’s policies and program, please visit our website: www.fecca.org.au. Alternatively, please contact the FECCA office on (02) 6282 5755, or email: admin@fecca.org.au.
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<td>$650 + GST</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarter page</td>
<td>$350 + GST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>