![FECCA logo — Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia]

FECCA Position Paper

Best Practice for Countering Racism in Australia

A Community Sector Perspective

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Introduction

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is a proud partner in the government's new anti-racism partnership and strategy, which is core strategy identified in Australia's new multicultural policy – *The People of Australia*. FECCA is one of just two non-government agencies in the partnership, and as such we recognise that we play a critical role in making the voices of consumers heard at high levels of government.

FECCA, as the national peak body representing the interests of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia sees, on a daily basis, the negative and enduring impact of racist attitudes and actions on migrant and refugee communities. Through our consultations, public forums and workshops we speak directly with community members and hear about the impact of both direct and indirect racism and discrimination. Consequently, it is a core objective of FECCA to develop best practice strategy to counter racism in all its forms - to reduce the frequency and impact of behaviours that degrade, demean and disadvantage members of our community, and as such to ensure equity and safety for all our constituents.

This position paper has been developed to aid FECCA, and our partners in the anti-racism strategy, in the development of a *national strategy* to counter racism in Australia. It may also act as a guide for community groups in the implementation of their own strategies at the grassroots level.

In developing this position paper FECCA has looked not only to evidence provided by our constituents, but also to the community sector more broadly- for learnings and best practice models in the field of anti-racism. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the community sector works at the frontline when it comes to challenging negative, harmful attitudes, and that the community sector is instrumental in assisting consumers as they encounter, often institutionalised, racism and discrimination. Consequently those in the community sector have often, as will be evident in this report, developed creative initiatives to counter racism.

When it comes to community sector initiatives we have generally limited this study to an exploration of initiatives implemented/occurring in Australia within the last five years, as the nature of racist behaviours *is not stagnant*, particularly with the emergence of new media, the changing demographics of migrant and refugee communities in Australia, and the changing nature of racism in a world concerned by terrorism.

We have read into the term 'anti-racism strategies' broadly to encompass not only those initiatives that explicitly state they are focused on 'anti-racism', but also those that encourage cross-cultural communication in the pursuit of equity - initiatives which seek to create cohesion and so reduce discrimination [i]

It is FECCA's fundamental belief that successful anti-racism strategy has the capacity to create an equal playing field, and a society which better values diversity.

What is Racism?

Definitions of racism do vary, however a solid definition that will help guide this paper, can be drawn from the Australian Human Rights Commission, a partner in the new Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy.

Racism is a term used to describe:

- a belief that some races are inherently superior to others
- a belief that some groups of people are different and do not 'fit' into the 'Australian way of life'
- aggressive, abusive or offensive behaviour towards members of other races based on those beliefs.

Racism can take many forms, ranging from abusive language to discriminatory treatment to violence motivated by race.[ii]

This definition is apt as it takes racism beyond a person wielding a knife, attacking and hurling racist abuse at their victim - it takes the definition of racism into our boardrooms, where the current profile of our senior executives and public servants is not indicative of our cultural diversity as a nation,[iii] it takes the definition to into the lived experience of our migrant and refugee communities who often cannot access housing or employment because of institutionalised racism and discrimination.

Each year FECCA conducts 'access and equity' consultations with our constituents around Australia. Through these consultations we seek to indentify whether or not government services are accessible to all in equal measure.

On the topic of racism comments of the following nature were raised in our 2010/2011 consultations:

'I find I am faced with a lot of racism from employers who would rather have an Australian 4th/5th/6th generation working for them, than an ethnic person who is Muslim. However, my strong attitude to life is making me persevere no matter what setbacks I may come across, and I still treat my boss and co-workers with respect and with kindness even though they hold such strong racial thoughts.'

'Racist comments at work – HR do not address it, people do not raise it and eventually it is the victims that have to leave the workplace.'

'Because you have lots of kids you can't get a house.'[iv]

Unfortunately Australia cannot deny a sad history punctuated with racial tension and violence. The First Australians were treated, and continue to be treated in an appalling fashion, their experience often ignored while Australia publically declares itself to be a 'tolerant' nation. For this reason it is crucial that the National Congress of Australia's First People's acts as a non-government partner in our national anti-racism strategy, and we are very pleased they have joined the partnership in this capacity.

Our migrant and refugee communities have also long borne the brunt of racism. From the ' 'White Australia Policy' to the 'One Nation Party' to the 'Cronulla Riots', our migrant and refugee communities have borne physical violence, have been shunned and have been denounced for their diversity, which has often not been recognised for the value it brings to Australian society. The reality is that Australia had no multicultural policy between 2006 and 2011, and after a long hiatus, only re-instated a full time race discrimination commissioner in 2011. Thus our protection of our migrant and refugee communities and the promotion of their rights have been sporadic and often severely lacking.

The Prevalence and Nature of Racism in Australia

It is undeniable that there are racist views held in Australia. In a thought-provoking study, the *Challenging Racism Project: the Anti-Racism Research Project* (2011) - based at the University of Western Sydney, it was found that "Australians are in large part secure with cultural difference. However, there are still pockets of the country that hold on to 'old-fashioned' racist views".[v] Findings in the study suggested that about one in ten Australians have "very problematic views around diversity and ethnic difference".[vi]

The annual Scanlon Foundation Surveys -'*Mapping Social Cohesion*' have provided some of the most compelling evidence on the prevalence and changing nature of racist attitudes in Australia. The 2011 survey revealed that while, in 2009, 10% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination 'on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion' over the previous 12 months, this percentage rose dramatically to 14% by 2010 and stayed at this high level in 2011.[vii] The 2011 study also revealed that while there is now a "large measure of acceptance of groups once stigmatised" such as immigrants from Italy and Greece, there is currently a marked, high, level of negative feeling towards those from countries such as Lebanon and Iraq.[viii]

We must also take care not to oversimplify experiences of racism. The racism faced by our new and emerging communities from Africa, West Asia and South Asia is not the same as that experienced by those coming from Europe after WWII. Today's racism has been described as being premised more around religion [ix] than country of origin. Indeed, the 2011 Scanlon Foundation Survey found that attitudes held towards Muslims were far more negative than those held towards Christians or Buddhists.[x]

The nature of racism is also changing with the emergence of new media, and these forms of racism are in many ways new and unexplored terrain. As the NGO committee stated in their report to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - "The boundaries of the internet are limitless, and consequently, the potential for the dissemination of ideas of racial hatred and discrimination is infinite. Traditional regulatory responses are therefore inadequate."[xi]

Given this landscape it is clear that a national anti-racism strategy is very much needed. FECCA contends that this strategy must be adaptable, multi-faceted, easily implemented at the grassroots level, and must work to not only target overt racism but also work towards creating a culture of appreciation of difference which reaches all corners of Australian society.

Overview: FECCA's 13 Point Plan for a Successful Anti-Racism Strategy

This 13 point plan has been developed as a result of solid analysis of FECCA's own community consultations, an exploration of existing literature in relation to anti-racism strategy, and with reference to the existing strategies that have been employed by the community sector over the past five years in Australia.

FECCA contends that any National Anti-Racism Strategy must:

1. Ensure it has a focus on '**covert racism'**, that is have a focus on racism that is not overt but rather endemic hidden discrimination in areas such as housing, employment and education.

2. Focus on emerging mediums of racism – primarily **cyber-racism** and the misuse of new other new media.

3. Recognise **trends of emerging racism** against some minority groups since September 11 2001. A national anti-racism strategy must recognise that the word has changed and that the targeting of religion rather than race is a dangerous trend in modern racism.

4. Ensure people are given tools to act when they are **witness** to racism and discrimination, be it overt or covert.

5. Consider the **lived experience** of certain groups who are particularly vulnerable – such as 457 visa holders in the employment space and New and Emerging Community groups as they navigate housing and employment services. Representatives from these groups must be given leadership roles for providing input into the national strategy.

6. Focus on **community capacity building** – to ensure our communities can be included in our fight against racism and be better able to strengthen their own communities to undertake positive action in this regard.

7. Work to assist both **communities** who are affected by racism and **individuals** who are affected by racism.

8. Encourage **learning from history** (both at a national and international level) in recognition of how horrendous the outcomes of racism can be.

9. Re-enforce the need for **strong political leadership**, and policy, which both rejects racist behaviours and encourages support and respect for our multicultural nation.

10. **Challenge the myths** around persons from different cultural groups, as well as around areas were misinformation is rife – for instance in regard to asylum seekers and around the effects of population growth.

11. **Encourage open cross-cultural dialogue** between persons from different cultural backgrounds. Such dialogues must be led by people from within these groups, so that they set the agenda rather than assumptions being imposed on them.

12. Take positive action to ensure our diversity becomes **evident at senior levels** across government, business and politics. Our decision makers must be reflective of our population make up

13. Take a position of '**Equality for All'** – that is, focus on encouraging equality within society rather than only discouraging anti-social behaviours. We contend that the

most effective way to combat racism is not with the roles of 'saviours' or 'superiors' but in looking at ourselves as equals, colleagues, friends and neighbours.

In the sections to follow we will explore the rationale behind each of these 13 points, giving an overview and analysis of community initiatives which engage with these propositions, where possible.

*We note here that we do not have access to evaluations of the programs discussed.

Discussion - FECCA Contends that any National Anti-Racism Strategy must:

1) Focus on 'Covert Racism'

While racism can be overt, involving for example "Muslim women experiencing racism though being insulted, pushed, spat at, assaulted and having their hijab pulled and interfered with",[xii] and these forms of racism must certainly be addressed in any national strategy, the strategy must also ensure that it recognises that racism can be far less overt - ingrained in our institutions, and determining, for example, whether or not someone is hired or promoted.

Covert racism may be very difficult to address. While we do have an array of anti-discrimination laws across states and territories and at the national level, these laws can be very difficult to utilise, particularly for persons from non-English Speaking Backgrounds. [xiii]

FECCA therefore contends that a national anti-racism strategy, which has a focus on covert racism, should focus on initiatives such as pushing for more accessible anti-discrimination protections, employer education, better recognition of overseas qualifications to encourage employment, cultural competency training, and countering stereotypes.

The community sector has often sought to counter both overt and covert discrimination and racism by promoting tolerance and appreciation of our multicultural society. Indeed, **identifying positive commonalities and diversities**, and **addressing racism structurally/institutionally** are a key anti-racism strategies highlighted in the *Challenging Racism Project*.[xiv]

Community Model (Current): Building Harmony in the Growth Corridor – Windermere Child and Family Services

The project aims to build the capacity of children and young people from diverse backgrounds in the Growth Corridor-Officer to live harmonious and productive lives. This project will facilitate partnerships between the various government and faith schools in Officer to develop strategies in order to further raise cross cultural awareness and understanding in the Growth Corridor. This project is in partnership with the Cardinia Shire Council, Monash University and Windermere Child and Family Services.

Three highlighted components of the project are:

- Provide information/orientation session to families of children and young people to raise their awareness of diverse faiths and showcase good practice harmonious relationships of children and youth at the different schools within the area.
- Identify migrant/refugee community members, who will be trained as peer educators and mentors for at risk children and young persons, and who will work with local services such as Windermere and others in delivering the social and educational programs within and across schools.
- Implement cross-social and educational programs between the Muslim, Christian and other faith schools and activities aimed to create racial harmony, understanding and tolerance between children and youth. [xv]

This project model demonstrates a 'whole of the community' approach which is seeking to make harmony and tolerance a prevailing community attribute.

2) Focus on Emerging Mediums of Racism- i.e. Cyber-Racism

The CERD NGO group's report to the CERD committee offers a solid definition of this emerging threat - it states that "Cyber racism refers to material published on the internet which offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates people of a certain nationality. Offensive material can be in a number of forms, such as images, blogs, videos and comments on web forums like Facebook".[xvi] Indeed, while the internet, and social media have created very useful new means for advocates in the cultural diversity sphere, they can also very much be misused.

FECCA also notes that we often receive hateful responses, expressing violent and threatening views, to our online articles and opinion pieces. Many of these comments seem to be an orchestrated response indicating that there is an organised and highly visible racist cohort online. Similar responses also swamped the submission process to the national Inquiry into Multiculturalism (2011). The prevalence of discriminatory and racist submissions was disproportionate to the known levels of intolerance in our society. However, the sheer numbers of such submissions meant that the committee found itself having to address such submissions. Thus such forums create high levels of visibility for what could be marginal voices and threaten to skew discussions and debates.

Attention is increasingly turning to cyber-racism and other misuse of new media. Dr Andre Oboler, Director of the Community Internet and Engagement project at the Zionist Federation of Australia, for example, is working to establish a website - *Fight Against Hate* which will allow for the reporting and monitoring of online hate.

FECCA contends that what is needed in this arena is stronger regulation, monitoring, as well as education that cyber-racism is intolerable

Formal initiatives in the cyber-racism space do at present seem to be concentrated in the Government/statutory body space. The Australian Human Rights Commission has provided online guidance for the victims of cyber-racism (http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/publications/cyberracism_factsheet.html), which includes links to government led initiatives including *Cybersmart* (a resource for children and parents) and *Racism No Way* (a resource for teachers).

As the recognition of cyber-racism grows it is likely that community groups will begin to engage more actively in anti-racism strategy in this space.

3) Recognise Trends of Emerging Racism against Some Minority Groups

It is imperative that any national strategy recognises that the focus and nature of racist behaviour does not stagnate. This trend has been discussed in depth in a UTS study around anti-racism strategy, entitled *Whose Responsibility? Community Anti-Racism Strategies after September 11, 2011*. As author Tanja Dreher identifies: "Muslim, Arab and Sikh communities in New South Wales have experienced an increase in racism, discrimination and harassment since September 11" and she highlights "documented racially motivated incidents producing a climate of fear and insecurity which continues to impact on experiences of citizenship and belonging among the communities targeted."[xvii]

Fear and insecurity are likely the result of both overt and covert racism and discrimination affecting many facets of everyday life. For example, as the CERD NGO report highlights, many Muslim women feel that can't equally access employment because of their religion. [xviii] This premise is also backed up by comments made at FECCA's 2010/2011 access and equity consultations.

I keep a positive attitude although am faced with racism. I keep my religion hidden from colleagues.'
– Access and Equity Survey respondent[xix]

Dreher's study also reveals that there is a great deal of community action, spearheaded by the very communities who are increasingly experiencing racism. These initiatives often take the form of volunteers from targeted communities reaching out to the rest of the community through activities around interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue.[xx]

Community Model (Current): Lakemba Mosque Open Day

The Lakemba Mosque in Sydney has been opening its doors to encourage a better understanding of Islamic practice and philosophy. The annual event encourages attendees to take tours of the Mosque and have their questions about the Islamic faith answered.

"When people have a bad idea about you, you need to give them the right idea - we don't want to lie, we want them to understand who we really are and what our religion is about," – Sheik Yahya Safi as quoted in *the Daily Telegraph*- http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/mosque-at-lakemba-opens-door-to-sydneys-mind/story-e6frf00i-1225837111285

Racism can often be the result of misinformation, misunderstanding and perpetuating stereotypes passed on through families. Opening doors can mean opening minds and encouraging unity and diversity.

In this space it is important that we do not compare and equate experiences of racism across communities and history. For example there has to be recognition of the specific and unique experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Australians in this regard. In a similar manner,

we have to avoid glib comparisons of the experiences of European migrants with those of the migrants who are more recent arrivals to Australia. FECCA's Access and Equity consultations reveal that people of African descent for example speak about their "visibility" as being different. It must be noted in this regard that racism based on colour and religion is enduring as can be seen in the experiences of African Americans in the USA and of inter religious tensions in many countries where significant religious groups exist.

4) Ensure People are Given Tools to Act When they are Witness to Racism

The importance of those who are witness to racist behaviours standing up and speaking out cannot be overemphasised. When there is silence in the face of racism this only works to 'normalise' abhorrent behaviours. Indeed studies have found that people tend to feel that others share the same beliefs unless shown otherwise. [xxi]

Any anti-racism strategy must therefore *empower* both communities and individuals to act when they are witness to injustice. As the community model below demonstrates – as single person, distressed by what they see, can inspire a movement of people standing up in defence of our diversity.

Community Model (2010): Vindaloo against Violence

Please see: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-01-29/aussies-urged-to-vindaloo-against-violence/313792

An initiative spurred on by one woman to counter racial violence, and demonstrate support for the Indian community in Australia. The initiative took the form of encouraging all Australians to visit their favourite Indian restaurant at a designated time in support.

More than 17,000 people registered to participate in the campaign which was promoted across mainstream and social media. http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/national-vindaloo-against-violence-protest/story-e6frfku0-1225834052826

5) Consider the Lived Experience of Certain Groups who are Particularly Vulnerable including 457 Visa Holders and New and Emerging Community Groups

While here we make reference to two particular vulnerable groups there are many other vulnerable groups not discussed here, including persons from a CALD background with a disability, women from a migrant or refugee background, international students and culturally diverse youth.

457 visa holders can be particularly vulnerable as they are at the mercy of employers and can often therefore face exploitation and discrimination. With their status in Australia of a temporary, precarious nature, 457 visa holders are less likely to know of, or pursue their rights when they face racism, either overt or covert, in the workplace. FECCA's work has highlighted that the potential for labour abuses may also be due to the perception that foreign workers are undermining Australian wages and conditions, thereby potentially fuelling community backlash against migrants generally and creating social divisions.

Our institutional structures uphold the myth that 457 visa holders are not in need of advocacy and support as they are here for short term periods. This belies strong anecdotal evidence that FECCA consistently receives that most 457 visa holders have plans of applying for permanent residence. This makes them acutely reliant on their employer's support in order for this pathway to be realised. Non recognition of this reality provides an excuse to permit significant amounts of discrimination and exploitation of 457 workers.

New and Emerging Community Groups can also face significant racism and discrimination in many facets of their lives. New and Emerging Communities are defined as being small in number and newly arrived with an increase in numbers over the past five years. They are often from a refugee background and can be at a significant disadvantage due to language barriers and lack of family and community support. As humanitarian entrants from New and Emerging Communities from Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia often more visibly different in appearance and culture to more established migrant communities this may result in heightened levels of racism and discrimination.[xxii]

It is imperative that the experiences of these vulnerable groups are not discounted in any national policy. To this effect they should be given leadership roles within the partnership framework and be regularly consulted. Rather than being spoken about, they have to be given opportunities to speak for themselves and to determine what strategies will best work based on their lived experiences.

The community model below is an initiative which sought to 'build bridges' between new and emerging communities, and between new and emerging communities and with other Australians more broadly. Aside from actively engaging communities the model demonstrates and awareness of the importance of *evaluation* which is a necessary part of any anti-racism strategy.

Community Model (2011): Universal Stories of Healing from Depression: Where Ancient Storytelling Meets the Digital Age.

Story below from FECCA's August 2011 E-newsletter

The 'Universal Stories of Healing from Depression' - combining the ancient art of storytelling with modern technology to create stories in the cultural worldview and language of peoples from Afghanistan, Burma and Sudan - was launched nationally by Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, at the International Unity in Diversity Conference on 19 August 2011 in Townsville. The stories were launched online throughout the world on the same dates at www.italklibrary.com.

The cultural communities involved in this project are each conducting their own launches during August and September 2011. This will enable the stories to be shared and provide opportunities for the creation of a cultural bridge between cultures. **The stories encourage cultural communities to have conversations around differing cultural forms of distress, such as depression, and culturally appropriate options for healing within Australian society. It is also an opportunity for mainstream Australians to understand and learn from differing cultural perspectives on healing from suffering.**

The collaborative efforts of isee-ilearn, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) and beyondblue: the national depression initiative has resulted in an innovative mental health approach.

Investment in this project by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) has occurred due to the innovative approach of the project and its potential impact for service delivery and education to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities throughout Australia.

Using the storytelling form as the mode of education, isee-ilearn, have through their innovative project management, combined the ancient oral traditions with contemporary forms of storytelling. Using DVD's, mobile phones and online formats (see www.italklibrary.com), people are able to view these stories in English as well as in the languages of Dari (Afghanistan), Karen (Burma) and Sudanese Arabic (Sudan). **Besides the aim of increasing awareness and access to mental health information amongst CALD communities in Australia, this project also has the intention of increasing greater cross-cultural understanding and alternative perspectives on mental health and well-being.**

Beyondblue will continue to support this valuable resource through a 12 month evaluation of the resource with community members and service providers to determine the effectiveness of the tools and their relevance for education with Afghan, Burmese and Sudanese community groups.

Communities must not be denied a voice. Not only are they best placed to highlight racism and discrimination as it occurs, but they are also therefore well placed to develop strategies and initiatives to counter-racism.

Community Model (2009) - National Conference: People of African Descent - Recognition, Social Inclusion & Capacity Building

In September 2009 a National Conference, collaboratively organised by African Women Australia Incorporated in partnership with the Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Human Rights Commission and several African and African Descent Community Groups around Australia, was held. The National Conference: People of African Descent - Recognition, Social

Inclusion & Capacity Building provided an excellent opportunity for all members of the community, including government agencies and service providers to come together to learn and share. The Conference had the stated objectives of:

1. Celebrating and acknowledging the presence of people of African descent in Australia raise awareness of the challenges facing people of African descent. It is hoped that the conference will foster discussions that will generate proposals for solutions to tackle these challenges.
2. Explore the collective depths of the delegates' expertise and skills in order to inspire strategies for change that can advance the recognition for the people of African Descent.
3. And showcase contributions, explore issues and canvass strategies for the way ahead.

* More recent conferences with a similar focus have since been held including the *International Year of People of African Descent Conference* (2011) – Please see: http://www.africanwomenaustralia.org/events

6) Focus on Community Capacity Building

FECCA asserts that it is imperative a national anti-racism strategy has a focus on *empowering* community groups so that they may also engage in the fight against racist behaviours. Certainly, this does not mean that the community at large does not have a responsibility to fight against racism, it does mean, however that community capacity should not be undervalued.

Community Model (2009- present) – Community Leadership, Advocacy and Skills Workshops

FECCA has long had a focus on community capacity building. Indeed, over the past few years we have run Community Leadership, Advocacy and Skills Workshops (CLASP) with community members around Australia. The goal of these workshops is to help community groups, in particular new and emerging community groups to strengthen their organisations and so become stronger advocates, able to work with their communities to ensure they are able to actively engage with all programs and services, and are able to live happy, healthy lives in Australia. CLASP workshops have traditionally focused on advocacy, governance and grants management but community leadership training could certainly have a focus on inspiring communities to speak out against racism, and if so possible, actively join the fight against racism through grass-roots initiatives.

Further information about the CLASP program can be found at: http://fecca.org.au/publications/clasp

7) Work to Assist Both Communities who are Affected by Racism and Individuals who are Affected by Racism.

As discussed above, the role of communities is imperative. However, empowerment of individuals to stand up against racism is also critical. Persons from vulnerable groups may shy away from

pursuing their human rights, for example their rights to employment, housing and cultural expression, for fear of retribution. Rights based training must therefore form a core part of any national strategy.

Community Model: The Northern Territory Working Women's Centre

The Centre is a community-based, independent organization that provides information, advice and support to low income women about workplace problems. The Centre services the whole of the Territory and its workers make regional and remote visits. The Centre's objectives are to provide accessible information, referral and support services that not only increase Northern Territory (NT) women's knowledge of their workplace rights and entitlements under the law, but also improve those rights and entitlements for all NT women through individual and systemic advocacy.

The services provided include:
- workplace rights education to community groups and organisations including bicultural delivery in collaboration with members of the cultural communities

- community education sessions using visible and tangible modes of training that address specific cultural preferences

- use of role plays and lived experience narratives in training

- supporting women at their own pace by embracing their own readiness to act or change

- using focus groups to identify unmet needs as well as ideas to address them

- ongoing evaluation

While this service is not specifically for CALD consumers, it does have a significant client base from a CALD background.[xxiii]

Community Model (2011): Workshops to Demonstrate How You can Advocate for your Own Rights

In 2011 the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) facilitated workshops on human rights of people from non English speaking background (NESB) with disability. The workshops were targeted at people who were born in a non English speaking country with a disability and people born in Australia but who identify as culturally, ethnically or linguistically diverse and who live with a disability.

The workshops sought to inform on human rights for people from NESB with disability and to demonstrate how human rights can be achieved in every day live.

This is an excellent example of rights based training at a grassroots level.

8) Encourage Learning from History (both at a National and International Level).

It is very often said that if we don't learn from history we are bound to repeat it. It is therefore imperative that any national strategy has a focus on history, both Australia's history (which has certainly sometimes been shameful when it comes to recognising and appreciating diversity), and world history more generally.

Racism has been the cause of numerous conflicts, including WWII, which saw millions killed because of their religion or race. As identified in the *Challenging Racism Project*, anti-racism initiatives can certainly work to 'leverage emotions'- that is to reduce prejudice by encouraging people to feel empathy for others. [xxiv] A consideration of the horrendous affects of racism could certainly be a means to encourage an emotional shift when it comes to one's contemporary prejudices.

Community Model: B'nai B'rith – Courage to Care program

The B'nai B'rith – Courage to Care Program "encourages individual acts of courage, social activism, action against apathy, a sense of empathy, a better understanding of history."

The program takes the form of an outreach program and a travelling exhibition. It is run by volunteer guides, Holocaust survivors who speak of their own experiences, and educators.

As explained on the B'nai B'rith website:

"Courage to Care directly confronts racism and intolerance in Australia, initially through celebrating those courageous individuals who put their lives on the line to save Jews during the Holocaust, bringing home the reality of the Holocaust and the crimes against humanity perpetrated against the Jewish people. Through "Living in Harmony" workshops, the education program extends this message to issues of contemporary relevance to all visitors, and promoting understanding and harmony among minority groups."

Thousands of people have been involved in the program to date.

Please see: - http://www.bnaibrith.org.au/content_common/pg-courage-to-care-home.seo

9) Re-enforce the Need for Strong Political Leadership

The importance of strong political leadership cannot be undervalued when it comes to shaping community views and attitudes. Indeed, having 'clear and unambiguous leadership' is identified by Dreher as key to any effective anti-racism strategy.[xxv] The unfortunate truth is that "some political

parties support racism by either overtly or covertly espousing it, or by taking no action actively to reject it,"[xxvi] and this in turn leads to normalising discriminatory behaviour.

Notable community initiatives have involved encouraging people from CALD backgrounds to involve themselves in politics and so encourage the support of political leaders, who wield much influence.

Community initiative – Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) – The Youth Parliament (as outlined in FECCA's e-newsletter in 2007)

In 2007 eight young people from new and emerging communities, nominated by the MRCSA, were accepted into the Youth Parliament of South Australia.

This program provided a great opportunity for young people, aged 12-25 years, to advise South Australian politicians and decision makers on issues affecting young people and the wider community. The participants were trained in parliamentary procedures, voting procedures and etiquette, public speaking and public relations amongst other activities.

The young people were also provided with the opportunity to meet with and talk to policy makers and lean first-hand how the Government and Parliament operate.

Advocacy initiatives are also regularly undertaken by community organisations such as FECCA and our state and territory members – to ensure our leaders are well aware of the difficulties facing our diverse communities. We also undertake activities to encourage positive political engagement. One such project is the *Teaching Democracy – Political Extremism: Global Lessons for Local Educators* workshop series which is being run by FECCA in conjunction with the Herbert & Valmae Freilich Foundation though the support of a *Building Community Resilience Grant* from the Australian Government acting through the Attorney-General's Department. The workshop will explore the ideas of political action, radicalism, extremism, terrorism and revolution in the context of current geo-political global situations.

10) Challenge Myths

'Dispelling false beliefs by providing accurate information' is a strategy identified by those who have explored best-practice anti racism strategy (i.e. *Challenging Racism Project*), and while attitudes may be hard to shift, challenging the stated causes or racism may nonetheless have some positive effect.[xxvii]

Inaccuracies are certainly rife when it comes to, in particular those who seek asylum on our shores. The 2011 Scanlon foundation report found that less than one in four respondents have an understanding of the number of asylum seekers who reach Australia by boat, and most are ill-informed about our total immigration intake.[xxviii] Ill-informed views in this area may certainly spur on racist behaviours.

Unfortunately, it is very often the media that perpetuates myths about our CALD communities. For example African communities are often stereotyped as having a high involvement in crime by the mainstream media. [xxix]

Nonetheless, the *Challenging Racism Project* cautions that "while false beliefs are dispelled, in many instances prejudice remained high. Thus providing accurate information is not a standalone activity and be used in concert with other anti-racism activities".[xxx]

Community Model (2011): Vision in Action - Survivors Defend Human Rights in War and Conflict

Vision in Action was a panel/forum held to allow the wider community to meet local refugee and migrant community groups, to learn about their work to defend human rights and promote peace in their countries of origin, and to hear the discussion on innovative ways for humanitarian agencies to collaborate more effectively with activists in armed conflict.

Community Model (2010) - Oxfam Australia's Refugee Realities Project

Canberrans were invited to participate in a project designed to educate the Australian public about the rights of people affected by conflict and the experiences of migrants and refugees around the world.

Participants were encouraged to experience a 'simulated journey' covering the hurdles faced by refugees fleeing their homes to the daily hardships of life in a refugee camp.

As was reported in FECCA's e-news (2010):

"Refugee Realities comes at a critical time. Poor education about displaced people has led to distrust of refugees across Australian communities, inadequate support for humanitarian efforts and a lack of understanding of human rights. Refugee Realities aims to change this by educating through experience and providing the necessary tools for participants to take critical action on refugee issues in their local communities. It is hoped that the project will also empower former refugees and strengthen support in their communities by increasing empathy for the experiences of people affected by humanitarian crises".

11) Encourage Open Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Many community initiatives are focused on the objective of creating a forum for cross-cultural dialogue.

We contend that cross-cultural dialogue has the power to break down barriers, highlight the value of diversity and allow people to indentify commonalities and so remove the 'us' and 'them' distinction. Cross-cultural dialogue is key to nation building in a multicultural society.

What is clear from existing literature on anti-racism is that a one sided dialogue will be ineffectual. People need to be given the opportunity to be heard, voice their concerns, and be engaged in an interactive manner. Creating safe spaces for cross-cultural dialogue should therefore be an imperative part of any national strategy. [xxxi]

Community Model (Current): Human Library Program

The Launceston Human Library has been working to challenge prejudices and break stereotypes. The program engages community members in conversations about our differences and commonalities by allowing community members to share their stories as 'living books' and then allowing the 'reader' to ask questions and share their own experience.

Website: www.launcestonhumanlibrary.com.au

Celebrations of cultural diversity are also incredibly important when it comes to showing support and respect for our diverse communities, and the culture and traditions they have brought with them to Australia. Events celebrating diversity can create excellent spaces or cross-cultural dialogue.

Some of the strongest work in this arena has happened through the arts. The role of the arts in enabling intercultural relations and understanding is grossly underestimated. Cross cultural arts enjoyed strong support in the nineties but has since been systematically disenfranchised by a lack of recognition and funding in Australia. Where cross cultural art is supported it is often led by people from mainstream cultures and art forms thereby denying leadership to other cultures and reinforcing hierarchy. Currently, community development initiatives focus on globalised forms such as Hip hop and Bollywood thereby ignoring the significance of traditional art forms as symbolic transmitters of identity, cultural values and change. Some organisations such as Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) have realised the significance of art in addressing issues of discrimination and social transformation and their projects provide a valuable space for creating equal dialogues between cultures led by people from within these cultures. For example their project "African Parenting Stories" explored identity and transformation through a series of radio plays. (http://ice.org.au/project/african-parenting-stories/)

Community Initiative (present): "A Taste of Harmony"

An initiative spearheaded by philanthropic organisation the Scanlon Foundation.

This initiative encourages all workplaces to celebrate diversity by coming together over a lunch which allows the sharing of foods from many cultures.

 Please see: http://www.tasteofharmony.org.au/about

12) Ensure our Diversity becomes Evident at Senior Levels

It is a sad reality that our diversity as a nation is not reflected on our boards, in our governments or at senior levels in business. [xxxii]With almost 25% of Australians being born overseas and almost one in two being born overseas or having a parent born overseas, our diversity should be better represented across all industries at the decision making level. If our diversity is reflected at high professional levels it will pave the way for more equitable practices in employment for all workers from diverse backgrounds.

Covert racism may very well be the cause that we do not see better representation, with negative views held about overseas qualifications, the capability of workers from some ethnic backgrounds and a general reluctance to promote those from a diverse background being key causes of this notable disparity in representation.

FECCA has highlighted the issues around workplace cultures and values and of how these are communicated to new arrivals and migrant workers. We note that the value laden framework of this assessment assumes a universality which is exactly what cultural diversity advocacy challenges. For example, how does an Indian understand the expectations of the Australian workplace culture? If he is to be judged by other than quantifiable outcomes in terms of his job, what is our responsibility in terms of communicating these expectations to him?

Therefore, any national anti-racism strategy must have a focus on ensuring that workplace culture changes, to allow for career development and promotion in equal measure for all people. Covert racism in the workplace must be challenged and never tolerated.

Initiative (2000-present): Diversity@Work Awards

The awards recognise the efforts in supporting diversity of small and large companies across the spectrum of corporate Australia, not for profit organisations as well as many federal and state government departments.

http://www.diversityatwork.com.au/diversity-at-work

Organisation– Diversity Council of Australia

Description as drawn from the Council's website - http://www.dca.org.au/about-dca/what-we-do.html

The Diversity Council Australia Limited (DCA) is the independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity advisor to business in Australia. In partnership with their member organisations, their mission is to:

1. Develop leading diversity research, thinking and practice;
2. Enable diversity management in a dynamic environment;
3. Drive business improvement through successful diversity programs; and
4. Lead public debate

13) Take a Position of 'Equality for All'

In 2010 FECCA produced a key report – 'Different but Equal' – FECCA's National Multicultural Agenda'.

At the heart of this submission was the fundamental assertion that there is equality of all cultures and that equal dialogues must be created in the public sphere.

An anti-racism strategy that creates a 'host/guest' or 'saviour/victim' dichotomy is likely to only re-enforce a hierarchy in our society, which cannot work to create a culture of equality.

FECCA contends that the national strategy must not only focus on countering negative behaviour but also on creating a positive national culture which invites all people to participate and contribute.

Conclusion

FECCA has been pleased to develop this position paper, including our 13 point plan for a contemporary national anti-racism strategy that reflects the realities of our current diversity. We look forward to working as part of the National Partnership and Strategy, and to implementing practical solutions to ensure racism and discrimination are no longer a part of the Australian landscape.

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