

# Building on our strengths

A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria

Summary report

*Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health*

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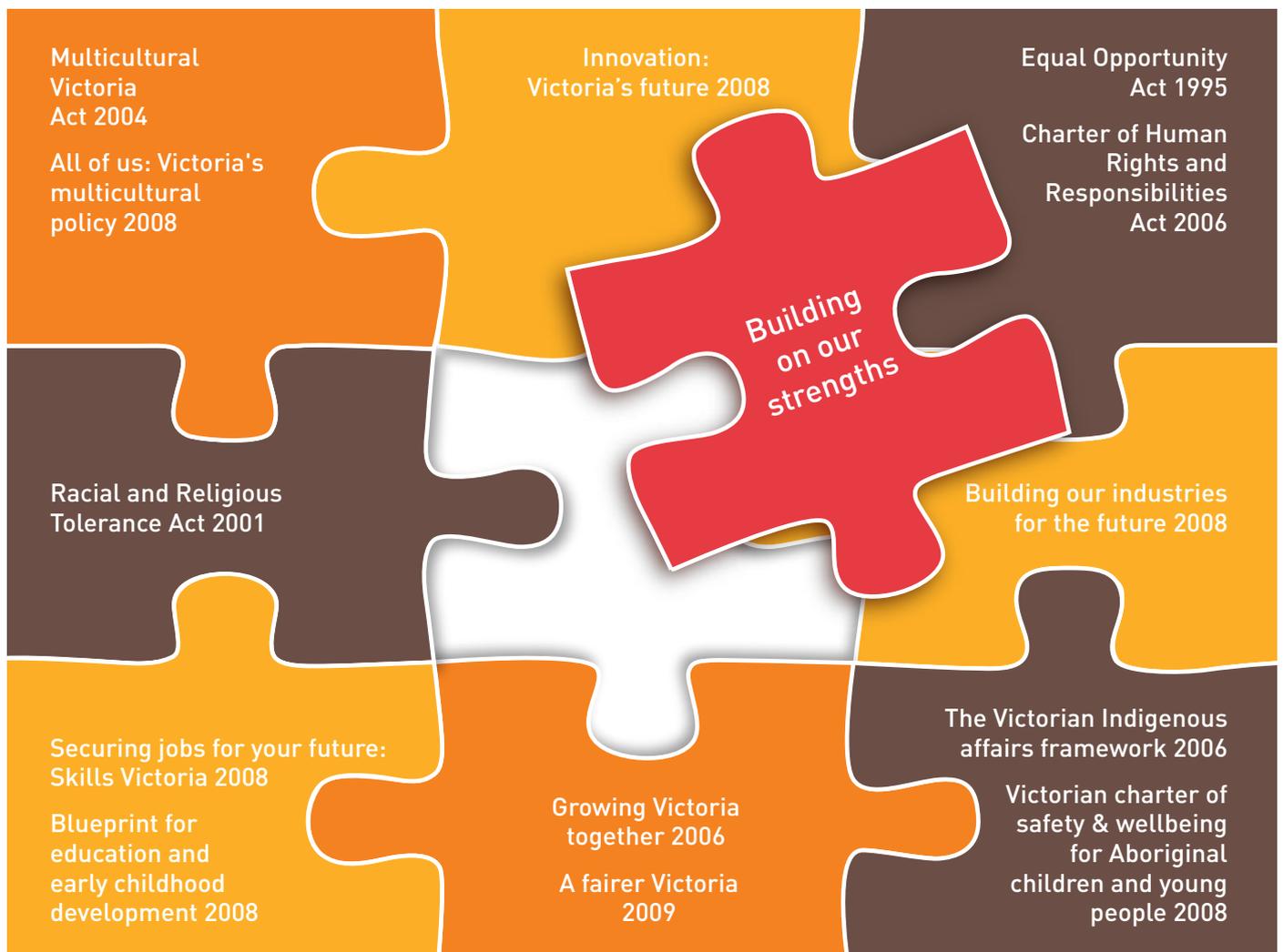
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**I teach that in Australia, you have to be proud to be Australian, this is the country, it doesn't matter blue eyes or green eyes, or whatever, you know? I just tell (my children) to be Australian doesn't mean you have to come from England or something... My children know that, and also to respect other cultures, especially Aboriginal culture...This is really important.**

→ Parent with Arabic speaking background  
(Teaching Diversity 2009)

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**It is not sentiment that makes history; it is our actions that make history. Today's apology, however inadequate, is aimed at righting past wrongs. It is also aimed at building a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – a bridge based on a real respect rather than a thinly veiled contempt.**

→ Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia,  
Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, 2008

## Forewords



### Supporting a fair go in Victoria

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Everyone, whether their family arrived on these shores 40 millennia, 40 years or 40 days ago, wants to live in a fair and safe community, to be happy and healthy and to have a good education and secure employment. We all want to be a part of that famous 'fair go' in which Australians take such pride.

The Brumby Labor Government believes that all these things are inextricably linked: that a strong economy is needed to develop a healthy and strong community and that a healthy and strong community is vital for continued economic growth.

Increasingly we are learning that disadvantage and discrimination affects people's mental and physical health, and in turn their ability to fully participate in the workplace and in the community. This is why the Brumby Labor Government is not only addressing disadvantage and discrimination because it is the right thing to do, but because it makes good economic sense. A community in which all members can participate makes a stronger community for us all.

*Building on our strengths* makes a crucial contribution to our understanding of the impact of discrimination and what can be done to address it. Drawing on the best national and international evidence and practice, it not only explains the ways in which discrimination can occur, but also identifies steps we can take together to ensure that it is replaced with a genuinely fair go. It provides well informed and practical guidance to government and its partners to foster a community that is 'welcoming, embracing, strengthening'.

As the image at the beginning of the report suggests, *Building on our strengths* is one of a number of policies and strategies that promote a fairer and more prosperous Victoria.

I commend the partners responsible for producing *Building on our strengths*. I look forward to working with them and others to make Victoria the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family, whatever your background and whatever your circumstances.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Hulls". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**The Honorable Rob Hulls, MP**

Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Racing

**The starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.**

→ Paul Keating, then Prime Minister of Australia, Redfern Park, Sydney, 1992

## Forewords

### Continued



#### Supporting healthy intercultural relations in Victoria

It was not so long ago that the major threats to public health in Australia were infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, whooping cough and tetanus. Along with emerging problems such as HIV/AIDS, these diseases continue to be associated with significant disease burden in other countries and clearly we cannot become complacent about them in Australia. This is particularly the case among our very disadvantaged populations. However, in this first decade of the new century we face another challenge – that of the rising burden of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, poor mental health and obesity.

As has proven the case with infectious disease, modern medicine is likely to offer an important but nonetheless partial solution. This is because a significant proportion of the chronic disease burden, like the infectious disease burden at the turn of the last century, is attributable to factors in the broader environment, many of which can be prevented. Our challenge now is to get better at identifying and addressing these factors.

One of these factors, as indicated in this report, is race-based discrimination, a problem we know to be associated with an increased risk of anxiety and depression, and possibly associated with diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. In the public health tradition, this report provides a 'road map' for identifying those populations most affected and key approaches to reducing the problem. Though recognising there has been limited rigorous evaluation in this area, the report proposes actions for addressing race-based discrimination drawing on the best available theory, evidence and practice and provides guidance on where efforts are best targeted.

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**Building on our strengths has its origins in a concern about the health impacts of discrimination and the health benefits of supporting cultural diversity. Addressing these issues is also important for promoting human rights and will be critical in creating an optimal environment in which those who are recently arrived in Australia can settle. We know that this will be especially important for those arriving as refugees, many of whom may be suffering from the impacts of discrimination and exclusion in their countries of origin and asylum.**

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In 2008, the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, issued an apology on behalf of the Australian people to Indigenous Australians and committed his government to renewed policy effort to reduce the social, economic and health gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Addressing discrimination and supporting respect Indigenous culture will be an important challenge in meeting this goal.

Making our communities and organisations welcoming and fair for all is not just the right thing to do. It is fundamental to our survival as a peaceful and prosperous society. One in four Victorians are either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas, making us a diverse society by both national and international standards. Victoria has a good record in supporting this diversity. However, recent events, in particular the victimisation of people from Indian backgrounds, suggest that this requires sustained and careful attention.

While much work remains, governments as well as the community and business sectors in Australia have made good progress in developing programs to address the consequences of disadvantage and discrimination. Although it is vital that these efforts continue, addressing the systemic barriers and attitudes and behaviours in the wider community that contribute to and compound these problems will also be important. Clearly this must be done in partnership with Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However, the responsibility to support and facilitate this change lies with all of us, and the organisations and institutions of which we are a part. It is with some pride, therefore, that I commend the leadership of The University of Melbourne, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation in preparing this document. I hope that it will contribute not only to improving health and wellbeing, but also to ensuring that Victoria as a whole benefits from the skills and contributions of those among us of Indigenous, migrant or refugee heritage.

**Sir Gustav Nossal**

Patron, Victorian Health  
Promotion Foundation

# About this report

## Leadership on diversity and inter-group relations in Victoria

Since European settlement there have been challenges in achieving respectful and equal relationships between Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants, as well as between longer-standing settlers and those arriving through successive waves of migration.

Racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is now a reality of daily life in Victoria, with:

- more than 200 nations and 120 faiths being represented (VMC 2009);
- more than 200 languages and dialects being spoken (VMC 2009);
- over 30,000 Indigenous Victorians living in the State, representing over 30 distinct Indigenous communities based on location, language, cultural group and extended familial networks (DEECD 2008);
- almost one-quarter of Victorians being born overseas. The majority of these (73%) were born outside of the main English-speaking countries<sup>1</sup> (ABS 2007; VMC 2009);
- one in five Victorians speaking a language other than English at home (ABS 2007; VMC 2009); and
- 133,454 international students enrolled in Victoria academic institutions in 2007 (AEI 2008).

This diversity is one of the state's greatest strengths and there is widespread support for diversity among Victorians. A survey commissioned by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) in 2006-07 found that 90% of Victorians think it is a good thing for society to be made up of people from different cultures (VicHealth 2007a).<sup>2</sup>

## Discrimination and its impacts

Despite support for diversity, discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, culture and religion remains unacceptably high, with:

- nearly 85% of Victorians agreeing that there is racial prejudice in Australia; and
- Indigenous and overseas-born Victorians continuing to report unacceptably high rates of discrimination, both in 'everyday' contexts, such as when shopping, participating in sport or using public transport, and in a range of settings, such as schools and workplaces (Gallagher et al. 2009; Markus & Dharmalingam 2007; VicHealth 2007a)

This is of particular concern given increasing evidence that discrimination impacts negatively on both individuals and communities. Evidence from many studies suggests that exposure to discrimination is a factor in poor health, in particular poor mental health. It also has negative impacts on productivity, community cohesion, social inclusion and the attainment of human rights. At its worst, it leads to individual and community level violence.

**In addition to these impacts there is also clear indication of the links between discrimination and the disadvantage experienced by particular groups. Indigenous Australians and some culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities continue to fare poorly on a number of social and economic indicators, including home ownership, employment, representation in the justice system and educational attainment. Although these outcomes are due to a range of factors, discrimination and intolerance of diversity are among them.**

## Policy development in Victoria

Successive Victorian governments have shown strong leadership in responding to the challenges of diversity. More recent policy and legislative initiatives have included the introduction of the:

- *Equal Opportunity Act (1995)*;
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001)*;
- *Growing Victoria together* framework (2001, 2006);
- *Multicultural Victoria Act (2004)*;
- *A fairer Victoria* policy (2009);
- *Statement of intent to close the gap in Indigenous health inequality* signed by Premier John Brumby (2008);
- *Victorian Indigenous affairs Framework (2006)*;
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*, Victoria being the first Australian state to introduce such an Act;
- review of the Equal Opportunity Act with the aim of strengthening the Act (2007); and
- development of *All of us: Victoria's multicultural policy* (2009), a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to promoting cultural diversity.

<sup>1</sup> The main English-speaking countries (MESC) include the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> This survey is referred to as the 'VicHealth Survey' throughout the rest of this report.

Of potential significance is the Victorian Government's recent commitment to develop a plan to promote greater respect in the community. A key element of the plan is to be school-based initiatives aimed at cultivating personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for self, for others and the community.

These advances are complemented by the promise of considerable policy and funding support from the Australian Government for measures to reduce Indigenous disadvantage and promote social inclusion, along with parallel interest from the corporate sector. To ensure that measures introduced are sustainable, a continued focus on reducing race-based discrimination will be integral to success.

## The Framework

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This is a pivotal time for inter-group relations and equality in Victoria. On the one hand we have a strong policy platform to continue to advance our diverse community. On the other hand we face the possibility of increasing competition between groups for resources in the context of the global financial crisis, housing shortages and the impacts of climate change. This competition for resources creates additional pressures in which discrimination can flourish.

In acknowledgment of the impacts of discrimination, in 2007 VicHealth identified addressing race-based discrimination as a priority. The 2007 VicHealth report *More than tolerance: embracing diversity for health* noted there had been a number of initiatives to address race-based discrimination but that these tended to be 'one-off' activities, with very few including rigorous evaluation. The report identified the need for a better understanding of how to effectively address such discrimination.

On this basis, a partnership was established between the McCaughey Centre and Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, both located within the School of Population Health at The University of Melbourne, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and VicHealth. The focus of this partnership was to undertake a large scale evidence review to support development of a framework to guide cross-sector policy, planning and program delivery designed to prevent discrimination. *Building on our strengths: a framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria* is the result of this work.<sup>3</sup> This summary report draws on this review to document the Framework and describe how it aims to contribute to reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity. The implications of the Framework for policy are also outlined.

The Framework addresses race-based discrimination affecting people of both Indigenous and CALD backgrounds. There is much to distinguish the genesis of disadvantage experienced by these two groups. In particular, Indigenous Australians face the ongoing legacy of dispossession and alienation in their own land. It is vital that contemporary policies and programs to address disadvantage are responsive to these differences. However, when dealing with discrimination as a contributor to disadvantage, the common challenge is to improve the ways in which the whole community and mainstream community and organisational environments respond to people with racial, ethnic, cultural and/or religious traditions distinct from the prevailing Anglo-Celtic culture. The Framework therefore has been developed recognising that there are benefits in addressing discrimination affecting both Indigenous and CALD communities through a common planning framework, while recognising that there are both similarities and differences in the experiences of these two groups.

<sup>3</sup> The full report is available at [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au)

**When a terror attack is perpetrated by militant Muslims, the analysis stops at their Muslim identity. When some other grotesque act of violence is committed by a non-Muslim, such as the Port Arthur massacre or the Snowtown murders, we do not ask what is wrong with us as Australians, we try to understand the individual's motives. It's a double standard.**

→ Waleed Aly, Chair of the Victorian Islamic Council  
(IDA 2007)

## About this report

### Continued

The evidence indicates that the causes of race-based discrimination are varied and complex. However, it also suggests that despite this complexity the factors that contribute to discrimination can be reduced through comprehensive strategies implemented at multiple levels. The Framework therefore identifies key themes, actions and priority settings for activity to address these factors. Implementation of the Framework is expected to result in reduced discrimination with resultant medium- and long-term benefits to individuals, organisations, communities and society.

An effective response to discrimination will require the contribution of a range of stakeholders and disciplines across sectors, making planning, coordination and high-level leadership critical. This suggests that government has a critical leadership role to play in strengthening responses to discrimination and intolerance in Victoria. We trust that in addition to supporting good program planning at the field level, *Building on our strengths* will also contribute to guiding future government effort in addressing discrimination and creating cohesive environments in which all Victorians can flourish.



**Mr Todd Harper**

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# Key definitions and concepts

This report focuses on **race-based discrimination**, which refers to those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion.<sup>4</sup> These behaviours and practices, along with the beliefs and prejudices that underlie them, are sometimes collectively referred to **racism**.<sup>5</sup> This definition of discrimination is broad and is distinguished from a legal definition, which includes only those discriminatory acts that are against the law.

Most people think of 'race' as a biological category – as a way to divide and label different groups according to a set of inborn biological traits (e.g. skin colour or shape of eyes, nose or face). Despite this popular view, there are no valid biological criteria for dividing races into distinct categories (Brownlee 2005; Royal & Dunston 2004). Rather, different cultures classify people into racial groups according to a set of characteristics that are socially significant, including physical appearance, religion, dress, manner, language, accent, biological and social relationships, and self-identification (Office of the Surgeon General 1999). In practice the term race when referred to as a social category overlaps with ethnicity.

**Ethnicity** is self-perceived and can change over time (Ministry of Economic Development 2003). It is a social construct of a group's affiliation and identity. An ethnic group is a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuality and feel a sense of unique collective solidarity.

**Culture** refers to the distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and ways of life of a social group. It is a dynamic concept, which is influenced by environmental, historical, political, geographical, linguistic, spiritual and social factors (UNISA 2004).

**Religion** can be defined as a particular collection of ideas and/or practices that involve issues of personal conviction, conscience or faith that relate to the nature and place of humanity in the universe and/or the relation of humanity to things supernatural, and that encourage or require adherents to observe particular standards or codes of conduct or participate in specific practices having supernatural significance. These ideas or practices are held by an identifiable group who see them as a religion or system of beliefs (HREOC 1998).

Race-based discrimination can be direct or indirect. Under the law, **direct race-based discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion than a person from a different background in the same or similar circumstances. In the broader definition adopted in this report, it also includes any unequal treatment that results in unequal power, resources or opportunities across different groups. An example of direct discrimination is an individual being refused employment on the basis of their religion. Under the law, **indirect race-based discrimination** occurs when a condition or requirement is set that people from a particular race, ethnic group, culture or religion cannot meet and is not reasonable. In the broader definition adopted in this report, it also occurs where equal treatment results in unequal power, resources or

opportunities across different groups. This may occur, for example, where everyone is equally required to wear a uniform that exposes their arms and legs. This requirement may exclude women from some religious or cultural groups from participating.

Efforts to reduce discrimination can also be direct or indirect. **Direct anti-discrimination** refers to equal treatment that results in equal power, resources or opportunities across different groups. **Indirect anti-discrimination** refers to unequal treatment that will result in equal power, resources or opportunities across different groups. Positive discrimination, special measures and affirmative action are all forms of indirect anti-discrimination.

Discrimination can also exist at three interacting levels: interpersonal, systemic and internalised.

**Interpersonal discrimination** occurs when interactions between people result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups. Examples of interpersonal discrimination include bullying, harassment, rudeness, name-calling, over checking, frequent stopping, verbal/physical abuse, providing bad service, following around in shops, hiring/firing biases in employment and jokes and teasing. As blatantly discriminatory behaviour has become increasingly socially unacceptable, discrimination may be expressed in more subtle or passive ways. Although people may not be bullied, they may be ignored or excluded from important events; they may not receive bad service in a shop, but they may not be actively helped either; they may not be called names, but they may find that others avoid sitting next to them at school or in cafes.

<sup>4</sup> The inclusion of religion in a definition of race-based discrimination has been the subject of some debate, and religious discrimination is usually treated as a separate form of discrimination in legislation and international conventions. It is included in The Framework given the increasing tendency for it to be conflated with ethnicity and culture in popular beliefs and culture.

<sup>5</sup> This contrasts with the popular understanding of racism as referring more narrowly to a belief in the superiority of one's own group or the inferiority of another group.

The evidence shows that a relatively small proportion of Australians hold what can be considered 'traditional' or overt racist beliefs, such as notions that some races are inferior to others or that certain groups should be kept separate (Dunn 2003). It appears that more covert or subtle beliefs have emerged or increased in recent times. These beliefs are based on a concept of the 'insurmountability of cultural differences' (Markus 2001). Certain groups are not identified as 'inferior', but rather as 'different' – with this difference being perceived as threatening to the cultural values and norms of the prevailing 'host' society and to social cohesion. This can lead to the identification of some groups as not 'belonging' or 'fitting into' Australia and to discomfort with or resistance to racial, ethnic, cultural or religious difference.

It is easy for people to hold such beliefs without recognising them as a form of discrimination and without realising that they have negative impacts on the groups concerned. For example, although almost 85% of respondents in the VicHealth Survey agreed that racial prejudice exists in Australia, only 12% admitted to being personally prejudiced (VicHealth 2007a). This may explain the apparent contradiction between Victorians' expressed support for diversity and the ongoing discrimination some Victorians experience.

Interpersonal discrimination is reinforced by weak sanctions or discriminatory social norms at organisational, community and societal levels. **Social norms** are the rules of conduct and models of behaviour expected by a society or social group. They are rooted in customs, traditions and value systems that gradually develop over time.

In most cases the attitudes that lead to interpersonal discrimination are unconsciously maintained by individuals and have, over time, become deeply embedded in the systems and institutions of society. **Systemic discrimination**, sometimes called institutional, organisational, societal or cultural discrimination, occurs when requirements, conditions, practices, policies or processes result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups. These seemingly 'normal' ways of doing things may directly or indirectly, consciously or unwittingly, promote, sustain or entrench differential advantage for some people and disadvantage for others (Tator 2005). Where direct discrimination is being progressively eliminated, systemic discrimination is more likely to be indirect.

Systemic discrimination in critical areas such as education, employment and housing can lead to social disadvantage for those experiencing it and in turn contribute to intergenerational disadvantage.

It is important to note that systemic discrimination can persist in institutional structures and policies in the absence of interpersonal discrimination. Its operation may be unintentional and it is often unrecognised by those practising it. For these reasons, systemic discrimination may be difficult to pinpoint. It may also be difficult to disentangle from other contributors to disadvantage.

**Internalised discrimination** is becoming increasingly recognised. It occurs when an individual accepts attitudes, beliefs or ideologies about the superiority of other groups and/or the inferiority of their own group. This can then have an effect on how they regard and behave toward themselves, members of their group, and those from other groups.

**Multiculturalism** is 'an approach that respects and values the diversity of ethnicities, cultures and faiths within a society and encourages and enables their ongoing contribution within an inclusive context that empowers all members of the society' (Rosado 1997, cited in VMC 2009). It involves policies and practices that seek to recognise, manage and maximise the benefits of diversity with the intent of developing a culturally diverse society that is harmonious. This approach underpins the policies of the Victorian Government and is also adopted in this report.

As an approach, multiculturalism contrasts with **assimilation**, whereby minority groups are expected to give up their distinctive linguistic, cultural and social characteristics and become indistinguishable from the majority of the population.

**Multiculturalism, like Indigenous reconciliation, still implies to some commentators and members of the community separatism and favouritism...But multiculturalism and Indigenous reconciliation are not or should not be, about separatism and favouritism – they should be about decency, about equity, about respect and about participation. They should also be about substantive equality so that those who are disadvantaged from the outset have genuine opportunities for advancement or participation.**

→ Tom Calma, then Race Discrimination Commissioner, keynote speech to the International Unity in Diversity Conference, 2008

## Scope of the Framework

### Primary prevention

The focus of *Building on our strengths* is on reducing race-based discrimination by addressing the factors that contribute to its occurrence. Rather than dealing with the consequences of discrimination (including the disadvantage that can result), the aim is to prevent it occurring and to develop environments where diversity is supported. This is often referred to as primary prevention.

Primary prevention is an important part of an overall strategy to reduce discrimination and its impacts. It complements other approaches which, while important, are beyond the scope of this report. These include responding to discrimination once it has occurred (such as complaints procedures or counselling) or dealing with longer-term impacts (such as special education or employment programs). Primary prevention is also distinguished from work designed to help groups known to be vulnerable to discrimination to respond to the problem and cope with its impacts should it occur. This is sometimes referred to as secondary prevention.

### Race-based discrimination in its broader sense

The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act provides that some types of race-based discrimination are against the law. This law applies to public behaviour rather than private conduct. Public areas covered by the Act include accommodation, clubs, disposal of land, education, employment, goods and services, sport and local government (VEOHRC 2007). Race-based discrimination is also against the law under the *Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

Under the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, racial and religious vilification is also against the law. Vilification is public behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group of people because of their race or religion. Incitement is about more than just holding a view or expressing an opinion – it is about taking action to encourage or promote hatred towards others (VEOHRC 2006).

Thus, while it is against the law to refuse to employ someone on the basis of their ethnicity, or to incite others to hate a person because of their religious views, it is not against the law to refuse to sit next to the same person on a tram or not to invite them into your home.

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**Forms of race-based discrimination that are not against the law can still impact on people's health and wellbeing, constrain future 'life chances' and, in some circumstances, infringe upon their human rights.**

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*Building on our strengths* therefore takes a broad approach to discrimination, being concerned with behaviours and practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion irrespective of whether these behaviours are against the law.

### A whole-of-community approach

*Building on our strengths* focuses on strategies to build positive attitudes and behaviours in the whole community and on reorienting the cultures, policies and procedures of organisations within it.

This approach recognises the complexity of living in a culturally diverse society. In this context, race-based discrimination may be practiced not only by those who are part of the so-called dominant culture but also by those from racial, ethnic, cultural or religious minorities, some of whom may be affected by discrimination themselves. A whole-of-community approach recognises that discrimination has the potential to do harm regardless of who perpetrates it.

Nevertheless, within this whole-of-community approach it is recognised that decisions about where interventions can most effectively be targeted should take account of the particular potential for discrimination to cause harm when it occurs in mainstream organisational environments and when it is practiced by people who are relatively more powerful than those being subject to it.

### Discrimination affecting Indigenous Australians and CALD communities

The research indicates that those most likely to experience race-based discrimination are Indigenous Australians and those from CALD communities (including temporary migrants and refugees). The Framework therefore focuses on reducing discrimination affecting these groups. Among CALD communities, the highest levels of discrimination are experienced by those of Middle Eastern, African and Asian heritage. Although research is limited, there is evidence that people from India and its neighbouring countries are also increasingly affected by discrimination.



In Australia, work to address discrimination and disadvantage has tended to maintain a distinction between Indigenous groups and people from CALD backgrounds. This is because patterns of race-based discrimination affecting Indigenous Australians are both similar to, and distinct from, those affecting people from CALD backgrounds (see, for instance, Pedersen, Clarke et al. 2005). It is also a recognition that the circumstances affecting Indigenous Australians, as the original inhabitants of the land, are in some ways different to those facing CALD communities. As a planning framework that aims to have an impact on the whole community (as opposed to targeting only those affected by discrimination), it is appropriate to have a common approach that is applicable to addressing discrimination affecting all groups. However, it is recognised that when it comes to specific strategies, it may be important to tailor them to address discrimination affecting a specific group or groups.

### **Organisational change to minimise the impacts of historical disadvantage**

In some cases, unequal outcomes in institutional settings may occur because a person or group has experienced discrimination earlier in their life.

Experiences of discrimination in the past (for instance, in education) may put individuals at a disadvantage in the present (for instance, when seeking employment). The impact of historical discrimination on Indigenous Australians is particularly pronounced.

*Building on our strengths* is based on the understanding that institutions have a positive obligation to address disadvantage caused by historical experiences of race-based discrimination, which may involve additional or special measures.

Organisations can do this by:

- adjusting the way they operate so that equal outcomes are more likely; and/or
- developing a specific program or initiative designed to rectify disadvantage caused by historical discrimination.

Both approaches are vital to address the unequal contemporary outcomes caused by past discrimination. However, in keeping with its aim of addressing the factors contributing to discrimination, the Framework focuses on the first of these, that is, strategies for reorienting organisational cultures, policies and procedures.

### **Interventions with the primary purpose of reducing discrimination and supporting diversity**

Levels of race-based discrimination are determined to some extent by underlying economic and social forces. In particular, there is evidence of a link between higher levels of education and more tolerant attitudes toward diversity and difference (e.g. Paradies 2005). This is especially the case where approaches to education that encourage complex and critical thinking are adopted. Similarly, more tolerant attitudes have been found to be associated with non-authoritarian parenting styles (Paradies 2005). There is also some evidence that race-based discrimination increases in conditions of heavy competition for resources such as jobs and housing (Putnam 2007; Sherif 1958).

The importance of these factors and efforts to modify them through broader social policy initiatives is recognised. However, the Framework has a focus on interventions that are specifically focused on reducing discrimination and supporting diversity.

## The case for action

### Victoria's diversity

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As stated earlier, the Victorian community is made up of people from a wide range of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

The complexity and challenges associated with this diversity can be expected to increase. Some of the factors contributing to this include:

- skills shortages and population ageing

As the population ages, Victoria will have an increasing need to ensure that all members of the community realise their potential, especially in education and employment. This will require removal of any barriers caused by race-based discrimination. Our international standing on cultural relations will also influence the choices of both prospective skilled migrants and international students, in turn affecting Victoria's ability to attract the people with the skills it needs and the viability of the international student market.

- new arrivals settling in a wider range of areas

Although the most ethnically and religiously diverse local government areas of the State continue to be located in middle and inner suburbs of Melbourne, increasing numbers of new arrivals are settling in outer suburban, regional and rural areas. This is in part due to government policies supporting regional development. Communities and organisations in these areas may have had limited contact with diverse groups in the past and so new challenges are expected to arise.

- climate change and the global financial crisis

During periods of intense competition for resources (including jobs), tensions are likely to rise. Further, those who are already vulnerable may be more likely to be affected by reduced access to scarce resources such as jobs and housing. Significant effort will be needed to ensure particular groups are not made scapegoats for wider socio-economic problems or are disproportionately affected by them.

### Attitudes towards diversity

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**Research has shown considerable support for diversity among Victorians and within Australian society more generally. As stated earlier, the VicHealth Survey undertaken in 2006-07 reported that 90% of Victorians think it is a good thing for society to be made up of people from different cultures. In a 2008 national Scanlon Foundation Survey, 69% of respondents agreed that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' (Markus & Dharmalingam 2007).**

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However, around 1 in 10 Victorians hold views that would be regarded as blatantly discriminatory, including views that 'not all races are equal' or that 'people from different races should not marry one another'. About 36% of Victorians believe that there are certain groups that do not fit into Australian society and 37% agree that 'Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways'.

### Experiences of race-based discrimination

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People from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds continue to report high rates of discrimination.

For example:

- Indigenous Australians

Although there are no specific data on Indigenous Victorians' experiences, recent studies in South Australia and the Northern Territory suggest that race-based discrimination against Indigenous Australians is commonplace across a range of institutional and everyday settings. Gallagher et al. (2009) concluded that only 7% of the Indigenous people surveyed had never experienced race-based discrimination in any of the settings included in the study. Paradies, Harris and Anderson (2008) found in a review of studies on race-based discrimination and Indigenous health that around three out of four Indigenous Australians regularly experience race-based discrimination.

- CALD communities

In the Scanlon Foundation Survey, 47% of respondents born in countries where English was not the main language reported experiencing discrimination because of their ethnic or national background at some time in their lives; 14% reported discrimination due to their national, ethnic or religious background in the last 12 months; and 10% reported discriminatory experiences at least once a month (Markus & Dharmalingam 2007). These rates were far higher than for migrants from English-speaking countries and for the Australian born.

**The speeches (to mark the finale of the Harmony Day Walk) were stirring. The bipartisanship admirable and inspirational. That's what we want from our leaders... Just over a decade ago it was 'fine' to call an Aboriginal footballer in the AFL a 'black c---' and think it was a bit less than sporting if they retaliated. Then the football world led by Michael Long and Nicky Winmar, who were quickly supported by all fair thinking people and the leadership in the AFL, said "No more". Racial vilification is a thing of the past and to indulge in it is to become a pariah.**

→ Eddie McGuire, President of Collingwood Football Club (Herald Sun, July 18 2009)

## The case for action

### Continued

Evidence from the VicHealth Survey also indicates unacceptably high levels of race-based discrimination against people from non-English speaking countries in a range of settings, including at sporting or other large public events, in the workplace, in restaurants and shops, and in educational settings (VicHealth 2007a).

- International students

In a 2004 study, half of the international students surveyed reported experiencing race-based discrimination. The labour market and private rental market were the two main sites where this occurred (Deumert et al. 2005).

Outcomes for Indigenous Victorians and for certain CALD communities remain poor across a range of social and economic indicators, such as employment, housing, educational attainment, income and representation in the justice system (ABS 2007; DPCD 2007; VMC 2007).

While these outcomes cannot be attributed entirely to race-based discrimination there is evidence that it is a factor. For example, a study conducted in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in 2007 that submitted 5000 job applications with fictitious names showed the existence of race-based discrimination in hiring practices. The study found that applicants with Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indigenous and Italian sounding names had to submit 68%, 64%, 35% and 12% more job applications respectively to get the same number of interviews as an Anglo-Australian applicant with equivalent experience and qualifications (Booth, Leigh & Varganova 2009).

This confirmed the results of an Australian study conducted in 1986 in which virtually identical job applications from fictitious applicants with Greek, Anglo-Celtic and Vietnamese names were sent to employers. The study found that Vietnamese and Greek applicants had to submit 38% and 10% more job applications respectively to get the same number of interviews as an Anglo-Australian applicant with equivalent experience and qualifications (Riach & Rich 1991).

A further example is evidence that Indigenous Victorians are three times less likely to be cautioned and 23% more likely to be remanded in custody after being charged than other Victorians (DPCD 2007).

Given that factors such as employment and access to justice in contribute to intergenerational cycles of disadvantage, reducing race-based discrimination is important for both current and future generations.

### Impacts of race-based discrimination

#### On health

**There is strong evidence of a link between race-based discrimination and ill-health. In particular, there is a risk that targets of race-based discrimination will develop a range of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Paradies 2006; Pascoe & Richman 2009; Williams & Mohammed 2009).**

The reasons for discrimination affecting health include:

- restricted access to resources required for health (such as employment, housing and education);
- increased exposure to risks to health (e.g. unnecessary exposure to the criminal justice system);
- affected individuals internalising negative evaluations and stereotypes of their own group, leading to poor self-esteem and psychological wellbeing (Williams & Williams-Morris 2000);
- stress and negative emotions having negative physiological and psychological effects (Harrell 2000; Mays, Cochran & Barnes 2007; Williams & Williams-Morris 2000);
- individuals disengaging from healthy activities and coping by engaging in behaviours that impact negatively on their health (such as smoking, excess alcohol consumption and drug use); and
- race-based discrimination ultimately manifesting in violence, which is associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (Krug et al. 2002).

Race-based discrimination can have a particularly strong impact on the health and wellbeing of young people as it has the potential to negatively affect their psychological adjustment (Brody et al. 2006; Caughey, O'Campo & Muntaner 2004; Mossakowski 2003; Wong, Eccles & Sameroff 2003).

# The case for action

## Continued

In contrast, there is evidence to suggest that conditions in which diversity is supported are associated with better health outcomes (VicHealth 2007a). There are clear benefits for all of us (including those in the majority group) in being able to relate competently across cultures. Similarly, it is important that people from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds are able to access and negotiate 'mainstream' resources and systems. There is evidence to suggest that there are health benefits in people being able to do this at the same time as retaining a positive ethnic identity and connections to their cultural communities and institutions (rather than simply blending in and adopting all of the ways of the prevailing culture) (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001).

Both cultural community support (Harrell 2000; Noh & Kaspar 2003) and a positive ethnic identity (Caldwell et al. 2004; Greene, Way & Pahl 2006; Mak & Nesdale 2001; Mossakowski 2003; Szalacha et al. 2003; Wong, Eccles & Sameroff 2003) have been shown to provide people with a 'buffer' against the health impacts of discrimination.

While contemporary race-based discrimination, in particular systemic discrimination, may be less obvious than the more direct and blatant discrimination common in earlier decades, this does not necessarily mean that it is less serious. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that, in some situations, subtle forms of race-based discrimination may have a more detrimental effect on health than blatant discrimination (Bennett et al. 2004; Noh, Kaspar & Wickrama 2007; Salvatore & Shelton 2007). This is understood to be because action can be more readily taken when behaviours and practices are unambiguously discriminatory; with

evidence suggesting that taking action can help to reduce the risk of suffering negative health consequences (Paradies 2006).

Experiences of covert discrimination are also more likely to be dismissed by others (Sechrist, Swim & Stagnor 2004, Stangor et al. 2002; 2004). This denial may lead an affected person to question their observations and perceptions, which in turn may be stressful over and above their original experience (Brosschot, Gerin & Thayer 2006).

### On the economy

**There is evidence that cultural diversity is associated with improved productivity (Perotin, Robinson & Loundes 2003; Putnam 2007), including increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share and greater relative profits (Herring 2009). Diversity has also been associated with creativity and innovative thinking (Adler 1997; Burton 1995; McLeod, Lobel & Cox 1996; Richard 2000), greater employee commitment and market share and better customer satisfaction (Bertone & Leahy 2001).**

Race-based discrimination can impact on individual productivity, with consequences for achievement in both education and employment (Nicholas et al. 2005). For example, research shows that members of certain groups experience lower rates of employment and higher rates of unemployment than others (DPCD 2007) and are over-represented in low-end jobs with less favourable rates of pay, types of work and working conditions. People from refugee backgrounds are allocated the lowest-level jobs, regardless of their formal qualifications or skills and work experience (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury

2005). In the first two years after arrival, 47% of all highly qualified migrants to Australia are in low or medium skilled jobs – compared to 23% of Australian-born workers. This rate is still 40% after five years (Liebig 2007, cited in Berman & VEOHRC 2008).

Although there are no Australian studies quantifying the financial costs of race-based discrimination to society as a whole, they are likely to be substantial. Reasons for this include:

- reduced organisational productivity, increased absenteeism and reduced overall workplace morale (Nicholas et al. 2005). An estimated 70% of workers exposed to race-based and other forms of discrimination take time off work as a result (EOC NSW 1999);
- higher rates of staff turnover and the associated costs of recruiting and inducting new staff (Blank, Dabady & Citro 2004);
- the high costs of responding to grievances through formal complaints mechanisms; and
- the considerable resources required to deal with the consequences of discrimination through health care and social services (VicHealth 2007a).

There are also direct economic costs associated with increased unemployment, early school-leaving, poor educational outcomes and involvement in the criminal justice system (Dusseldorp Skills Forum & BCA 2005).

## On social inclusion

Race-based discrimination has a broad impact on understandings and experiences of social inclusion and exclusion by individuals and groups, profoundly affecting their sense of belonging. Affected individuals can feel and be excluded from social participation, the economy and civic participation.

In general, race-based discrimination impoverishes and socially deprives people who are subjected to it. Poverty and social disadvantage are sometimes then cited as evidence to confirm and justify pre-existing race-based prejudices. Statistics on crime, ill-health, illiteracy and so forth are often used as evidence that particular groups are less capable, or are responsible for their predicament. The role of race-based discrimination in creating that predicament is often ignored.

## On inter-group harmony and community cohesion

Over many years successive Victorian governments and others have worked hard to ensure Victoria is a community where people from many diverse backgrounds can live and work together in harmony. Race-based discrimination can undermine positive inter-group relations and so reduce community cohesion. Discrimination and intolerance are serious manifestations of the breakdown of respectful relationships between people from different backgrounds, and may contribute to anti-social behaviour among those affected. Among young people it has been linked to peer violence (Refugee Health Research Centre 2007).

At its worst, it can lead to large-scale community conflicts, as seen in the case of the December 2005 'Cronulla riots' in Sydney, NSW (Poynting 2006). Internationally, there are numerous examples of situations where race-based discrimination has led to extreme violence – as in the cases of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust.

## The potential to reduce race-based discrimination

Interventions to reduce discrimination and support diversity have been developed and implemented across a range of settings. This suggests it is possible to implement such initiatives and that they are broadly acceptable. Although very few of the interventions have been rigorously evaluated, a strong body of theoretical work has been identified, along with a large number of studies conducted in laboratory or other tightly controlled conditions. Considered together, these sources of evidence suggest there are strong prospects for reducing discrimination and supporting diversity.

This will have positive outcomes for both the individuals involved and the wider community that will benefit from improved social cohesion, civic participation and economic productivity.

## Victoria's commitment to 'closing the gap'

In 2006 the Victorian Government launched its Indigenous Affairs Framework to improve life expectancy and quality of life for all Indigenous Victorians. Its aim was to end the situation where Indigenous Victorians

die younger and experience a greater concentration of trauma and hardship over their lives than other Victorians. An Aboriginal Inclusion Framework is also currently being developed in pursuit of improved outcomes for Indigenous Victorians that seeks to reshape the relationship between government service providers and Aboriginal communities and people.

In February 2008 the Australian Prime Minister made a commitment to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians to 'close the gap' in health and social and economic status between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This commitment has since been formalised in Australian Government policy (FaHCSIA 2009). The Victorian Government is similarly a signatory to a formal statement of intent to 'close the gap' in health outcomes and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Victorians by 2030 (Brumby, Calma & Mohamed 2008). The statement recognises that this will involve action on social and economic factors influencing health.

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**Taking action to reduce discrimination affecting Indigenous Victorians and its health, social and economic consequences will be key to realising and sustaining these commitments. For example, the Australian Government recently committed to creating 50,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians. The sustainability of these jobs in the long term will depend on workplace environments being safe and welcoming for Indigenous employees.**

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**One youth worker who approached a school to accept an Australian-Sudanese client was asked by a teacher at the school, “Is he going to be a lot of trouble like the other Sudanese young people? I don’t think we are equipped to cater for that young person, why don’t you try another school?”**

→ Youth worker (VEOHRC 2008)

**I went for a job and was told, “(I’m) wary of employing Sudanese as they are always late”.**

→ Australian-Sudanese man (VEOHRC 2008)

## The case for action

Continued

### Victoria's commitment to multiculturalism

In 2008 the Victorian Government released its multicultural policy *All of us*. The policy reaffirms the Government's commitment to multiculturalism as an approach that advances equality and human rights; supports cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; fosters unity; promotes community harmony; and boosts our economic advantage. Racial and religious discrimination is identified as a barrier to multiculturalism, with one of the objectives of the policy being to continue to work to reduce such discrimination in Victoria.

### Other policy agendas

The Victorian Government is investing approximately \$200 million toward health promotion in workplace settings in the coming five years through the WorkHealth initiative. Workplace stress has been identified as a problem to be addressed through this initiative. Efforts to reduce discrimination will be an important part of an overall strategy to reduce this problem.

In its February 2009 Annual Statement of Government Intentions, the State Government announced a plan to promote respect. Prompted by concern about the rise in binge-drinking, violence and inappropriate behaviour, the agenda is targeted particularly to young people. Among the strategies identified are school-based programs, recognising the important role that schools play in teaching young people to value themselves, their families and communities. Strategies to promote inter-group respect and reduce discrimination have considerable potential to integrate into this and other aspects of the Respect Agenda.



Building on our strengths: diversity, equality, productivity

**Our neighbours are racist; when people visit us our neighbours abuse them and have even put a water hose on our friends.**

→ Girl with Australian-Sudanese background (VEOHRC 2008)

**People (in shops) are always watching you and watching what you're doing and...now I just go and show them my bag anyway, as I'm walking out...even if they don't ask.**

→ Indigenous woman (Gallaher et al. 2009)

## Framework overview

The Framework is based on the understanding that there is a relationship between deeply held stereotypes and prejudices, race-based discrimination in the form of everyday acts and race-based discrimination reflected in organisational, community and broader societal structures and cultures. Accordingly, efforts to reduce such discrimination need to be targeted at all these levels. This approach accounts for the complex factors contributing to race-based discrimination and supporting diversity. It emphasises the need for many different types of action and for moving away from single-factor explanations and interventions. It highlights the value of working at multiple levels and across settings.

The Framework consists of six layers:

- key factors contributing to race-based discrimination;
- themes for action;
- actions to reduce discrimination and support diversity;
- settings for action;
- intermediate outcomes; and
- long-term benefits.

The individual, organisational, community and societal **factors contributing to race-based discrimination** outlined in the Framework are those that are amenable to change through the implementation of interventions focused primarily on reducing discrimination and supporting diversity.

The eight **themes for action** to address the factors identified in the Framework are:

- increasing empathy;
- raising people's awareness of their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours
- providing accurate information;
- assisting people to recognise incompatible beliefs;
- increasing personal accountability;
- breaking down barriers between groups;
- increasing organisational accountability; and
- promoting positive social norms.

The third layer of the Framework outlines seven broad **actions for reducing discrimination and supporting diversity**. These actions have been widely deployed

in relation to other significant health and social issues. A number of strategies have been identified under each of these actions that have a sound theoretical basis and have been implemented. Some, though not all, have undergone rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness. Others have shown promising results in the less rigorous evaluations that have been undertaken.

Based on where discrimination has been reported and the potential for interventions to have an impact, a number of **settings for action** are also identified.

The **intermediate outcomes** identified in the Framework, grouped at the individual, organisational, community and societal levels, provide a way of understanding what changes are expected to result from implementing the Framework. They will be a useful basis against which progress can be monitored and measured and serve as a starting point for the design of evaluations of individual programs.

The final layer outlines the **long-term benefits** that could be achieved through implementation of the Framework.



# Reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity\*: A framework for action

## Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health

### Key factors contributing to race-based discrimination

Individual	Organisational	Community	Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief in racial hierarchy and racial separatism</li> <li>• Belief that some groups do not fit into Australian society</li> <li>• Fear, anxiety, discomfort, avoidance or intolerance of diversity</li> <li>• Denial that discrimination occurs and/or that it is serious</li> <li>• Negative stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>• Failure to recognise own negative attitudes/behaviours and/or a belief that they are 'normal'</li> <li>• Poor conflict resolution skills</li> <li>• Limited positive inter-group relationships and interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational cultures that do not recognise discrimination or value diversity</li> <li>• Organisations that support or have weak sanctions against discrimination</li> <li>• Policies, practices and procedures that favour the majority group</li> <li>• Inequitable recruitment, evaluation, training, remuneration, turnover or promotion of staff</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for positive inter-group relationships and interactions</li> <li>• Leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited relationships and interaction between people from different groups</li> <li>• Neighbourhood, family and peer cultures that are supportive of, or have weak sanctions against, discrimination</li> <li>• Resource competition</li> <li>• Local demography, historical context and community identity</li> <li>• Leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional, media, cultural and political support for, or weak sanctions against, discrimination</li> <li>• Limited connections between people from different groups</li> <li>• Impacts of colonisation</li> <li>• Inequitable distribution of material, informational and symbolic resources</li> <li>• A national identity that excludes certain groups</li> <li>• Leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity</li> </ul>

### Themes for action

- Increasing empathy
- Raising awareness
- Increasing organisational development
- Communications and social marketing
- Providing accurate information
- Recognising incompatible beliefs
- Increasing personal accountability
- Breaking down barriers between groups
- Increasing organisational accountability
- Promoting positive social norms

### Actions to reduce discrimination and support diversity

- Legislative and policy reform
- Direct participation programs
- Community strengthening
- Advocacy
- Research, evaluation and monitoring

### Settings for action

Academic	Education	Hospitality and retail	Media and popular culture	Sports and recreation	Public sector	Arts and culture	Housing
New technologies	Public space	Public transport	Corporate	Workplace and labour market	Justice	Health and community services	Local government

### Intermediate outcomes

- Individual
- Organisational
- Community
- Societal

<p>Individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the prevalence and impact of discrimination</li> <li>• Have accurate knowledge about and are comfortable with people from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Believe that people from varied backgrounds are equal as human beings</li> <li>• Recognise the benefits of cultural diversity, support multiculturalism and feel pride in a diverse community</li> <li>• Interact with people from varied backgrounds in respectful and just ways</li> <li>• Respond constructively to conflict</li> </ul>	<p>Organisations that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have policies, practices and procedures to reduce discrimination and ensure fair and equitable outcomes for clients and staff from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Have strong mechanisms for responding to discrimination when it occurs</li> <li>• Are accessible, safe and supportive for clients and staff from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Have strong internal leadership in the reduction of discrimination and support of diversity and model this to other organisations and the wider community</li> <li>• Model, promote and facilitate equitable and respectful inter-group relationships and interactions</li> <li>• Respect and value diversity as a resource</li> </ul>	<p>Environments that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and facilitate positive relationships between people from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Recognise the potential for discrimination and inter-group conflict and have strong mechanisms for reducing and responding to it</li> <li>• Respect and value diversity as a resource and demonstrate pride in a diverse community identity</li> <li>• Are welcoming, safe and supportive for people from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Have strong leadership in the reduction of discrimination and support of diversity</li> </ul>	<p>A society that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has strong legislative and regulatory frameworks and appropriate resource allocation to reduce discrimination and support diversity</li> <li>• Demonstrates pride in a diverse population and promotes diversity as a national asset</li> <li>• Recognises and takes action to address the legacy of historical discrimination</li> <li>• Has policies, programs and resource allocation to facilitate positive contact between groups from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Has strong and proactive leadership in the reduction of discrimination and support of diversity</li> </ul>
<b>Long-term benefits</b>			
<p><b>Individual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced experiences of discrimination and improved sense of belonging for people from varied backgrounds</li> <li>• Improved health outcomes</li> <li>• Reduced socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>• Increased productivity and participation</li> <li>• Improved quality of life</li> <li>• Positive racial, ethnic, cultural and religious identity for all</li> </ul>	<p><b>Organisational</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved productivity and creativity</li> <li>• Improved health outcomes</li> <li>• Improved organisational outcomes</li> <li>• Organisations that reflect a diverse community</li> <li>• Reduced discrimination and inter-group conflict</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved health outcomes</li> <li>• Reduced discrimination and inter-group conflict</li> <li>• Reduced social isolation and improved relationships and interactions between diverse groups</li> <li>• Improved distribution of power, resources and opportunities between diverse groups</li> <li>• Support for strong, distinctive and interconnected racial, ethnic, cultural and religious communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Societal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved health outcomes</li> <li>• Strong societal norms against discriminatory behaviours and institutional practices</li> <li>• Improved productivity and creativity</li> <li>• Improved international relations and international trade</li> <li>• A society that acknowledges and values the unique contribution of Indigenous people and culture</li> <li>• An inclusive, welcoming and tolerant national identity</li> <li>• Improved distribution of power, resources and opportunities between diverse groups</li> </ul>

\* The use of the word 'discrimination' should be taken to mean discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, culture and/or religion. The same grounds are implied when the terms 'diversity', 'group' or 'background' are used. Acceptance of diversity encompasses recognising and valuing the contributions and heritage of Indigenous Australians.

**For my generation, as mothers, we do understand the discrimination and the context of it, but our children don't. When they hear people shouting "Go home" it is confusing for them because Australia is the only home that they have known and it is their home.**

→ Focus group member (IWWCV 2008)

## The Framework in detail

### Factors contributing to race-based discrimination

The Framework highlights a number of factors at individual, organisational, community and societal levels that contribute to race-based discrimination and that are thought to be amenable to change through interventions that focus primarily on reducing discrimination and supporting diversity.

At the **individual** level, the key factors understood to be associated with race-based discrimination are:

- belief in racial hierarchy and racial separatism;
- belief that some groups do not fit into Australian society;
- fear, anxiety, discomfort, avoidance or intolerance of diversity
- denial that discrimination occurs and/or that it is serious;
- negative stereotypes and prejudices;
- failure to recognise own negative attitudes/behaviours and/or a belief that they are 'normal';
- poor conflict resolution skills; and
- limited positive inter-group relationships and interaction.

At the **organisational** level, the key factors are:

- organisational cultures that do not recognise that race-based discrimination exists or value diversity;
- organisations that support or have weak sanctions against discrimination;
- policies, practices and procedures that favour the majority group;

- inequitable recruitment, evaluation, training, remuneration, turnover or promotion of staff;
- limited opportunities for positive inter-group relationships and interactions; and
- leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity.

The key factors at the **community** level are:

- limited relationships and interaction between people from different groups;
- neighbourhood, family and peer cultures that are supportive of, or have weak sanctions against, discrimination;
- resource competition;
- local demography, historical context and community identity; and
- leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity.

Those at the **societal** level are:

- institutional, media, cultural and political support for, or weak sanctions against, discrimination;
- limited connections between people from different groups;
- impacts of colonisation;
- inequitable distribution of material, informational and symbolic resources;
- a national identity that excludes certain groups; and
- leadership that supports, fails to recognise or has weak sanctions against discrimination or does not value diversity.

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**The evidence indicates that factors at one level may have an impact on those at another. For example, an organisational culture that has weak sanctions against discrimination may contribute to a person's failure to recognise their own negative attitudes and behaviours and encourage them to believe these views are 'normal'. Likewise, an individual who denies that discrimination occurs may not recognise organisational policies, practices and procedures that favour the majority group.**

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### Themes for action

The following eight themes for action are based on theoretical work and experimental research.

#### Increasing empathy

This involves strategies encouraging people to 'walk in the shoes of the other'. Studies show that empathy is positively associated with lower levels of bias and there is some evidence that building empathy can bring about attitudinal change.

#### Raising awareness

This involves encouraging awareness and discussion of memories, attitudes or beliefs that relate to prejudice, and encouraging people to identify positive alternative views of different groups.

# The Framework in detail

## Continued

### Providing accurate information

This involves strategies addressing inaccurate beliefs or stereotypes about different groups (e.g. the belief that refugees receive overly generous welfare support). Research demonstrates that such beliefs often co-exist with discriminatory attitudes and that addressing these can help to shift negative evaluations.

### Recognising incompatible beliefs

Race-based discrimination may be challenged by drawing attention to the incompatible beliefs individuals may hold. For example, some people who are outwardly committed to fairness and believe prejudice is wrong may still have negative views about a particular group. Challenging this prejudice may involve highlighting the contradiction between such negative views and, for example, the notion of the 'fair go'.

### Increasing personal accountability

Asking people to provide concrete reasons for their prejudices is understood to reduce these prejudices (Paluck & Green 2009). People who have to justify their behaviour or who believe they will be held accountable to peers also show reduced levels of discrimination (Bodenhausen, Kramer & Susser 1994; Dobbs & Crano 2001). Personal accountability can be fostered by invoking social norms, increasing accountability for actions within organisations and/or by legal sanctions.

### Breaking down barriers between groups

Sustained personal contact between people of different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups can result in friendships and acquaintances that help break down rigid boundaries between groups.

There are four ways such contact can have an impact on prejudice between groups:

- individual identity comes to be seen as more important than group identity (i.e. people are seen as individuals rather than as members of a minority group);
- people from different groups come to be seen as part of one overarching group (e.g. Christians and Muslims may be 're-categorised' as 'people of faith', instead of separate religious groups);
- people become aware that they share common membership of at least one group (e.g. even though they are from different racial groups they are all parents); and
- experiences of positive contact with individuals from particular racial, ethnic, cultural or religious groups are generalised to the whole group as well as other groups (e.g. positive interaction among co-workers from various groups leads to more positive evaluations of other people with similar backgrounds both within and beyond that workplace) (Paluck & Green 2009).

It is important to emphasise both commonality and diversity between groups (Gaertner & Davido 2002). In emphasising commonality alone there is a risk of communicating that people from certain groups will only be accepted if they become like the majority culture.

### Increasing organisational accountability

Increasing organisational accountability is important for achieving shifts in social norms and for reducing inequalities in power and resources within organisations. 'Organisation' is defined broadly in the Framework to include workplaces, providers of services (e.g. schools, libraries, health services, local governments, banks), and formal structures for a community of interest (e.g. a sports club).

### Building positive social norms

Research has found that prejudice and race-based discrimination are powerfully influenced by social norms (Crandall & Stangor 2005). People's prejudiced attitudes are not likely to translate into discriminatory actions unless they feel these attitudes and actions are supported by those norms (Terry et al. 2001, cited in Pedersen & Barlow 2008). For this reason many experts believe that focusing on changing discriminatory behaviours is likely to be more effective than focusing on attitudinal change in the hope that behavioural change will follow. As social norms are constantly changing, harmful social norms can be shifted and more positive norms reinforced (through, for example, organisational policies and practices or social marketing campaigns).

People who are prejudiced are more likely to think their views are the norm and shared by people around them (Hartley & Pedersen 2007; Pedersen, Griffiths & Watt 2008). Such a belief helps to justify their views. This can be challenged by convincing people that their negative attitudes are not normal for their peer group (Stangor, Sechrist & Jost 2001). Blanchard et al. (1994) found that simply hearing somebody speak out about race-based discrimination can lead people to express significantly stronger anti-discriminatory opinions.

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**Organisations and organisational cultures, exert a powerful influence on the behaviours of individuals and groups. People spend a large proportion of their time working in organisations, and also come into regular contact with them as clients. Through their practices, organisations can impact upon social norms and society more broadly. Accordingly, organisations can play an important role in reducing race-based discrimination by modelling and enforcing non-discriminatory standards.**

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## **Actions to reduce discrimination and support diversity**

A number of effective or promising strategies for reducing discrimination and supporting diversity have been identified. These are summarised in Table 1. These strategies have been grouped according to the seven actions discussed below.

### **Organisational development**

This approach is based on the understanding, discussed earlier, that organisations and organisational cultures have a powerful role in influencing the behaviours of individuals and groups as well as on experiences and outcomes across ethnic groups. Organisational development involves the application of a formalised approach to identifying improvements in the structures, functions and cultures of an organisation. As a result, more equal outcomes are achieved and the organisation reflects the diverse contributions of various groups. Building the skills and understanding of key workforces is a critical organisational development strategy.

### **Communications and social marketing**

A broad range of media can be used in anti-discrimination and pro-diversity initiatives, including television, radio, print, the internet and the arts. These media are vivid and popular couriers of many kinds of social and political messages (Paluck & Green 2009). Communications and social marketing strategies can raise awareness of race-based discrimination, impact directly on attitudes and behaviours, and contribute to the development and strengthening of positive social norms.

### **Legislative and policy reform**

Policies and laws send a message to the community about a society's values, norms and standards of acceptable behaviour. They also can also play proscriptive, prescriptive, deterrent, remedial and punitive roles (Jones 1997).

Although many activities in relation to legislative and policy reform take place at the State and Federal levels of government, local governments can also play an important role – both by advocating higher-level policy change and by implementing local-level anti-discrimination policies and plans.

The impact of such reforms is likely to be challenging to measure, and no studies were identified that had attempted to evaluate the impact of policy or legislative reform in reducing race-based discrimination. However, a recent report by the UK Home Office (Knott, Muers & Aldridge, 2008) suggests that norms and behaviours can be changed through policies that enable and encourage individuals to switch behaviour and clearly and consistently engage with and exemplify the desired behaviour.

### **Direct participation programs**

These are programs that directly engage individuals in activities to challenge race-based discrimination (e.g. school curriculum activities, cooperative learning activities). They can operate within, or outside, organisational contexts.

Direct participation programs are important because they provide important contexts for promoting inter-group contacts. There is also evidence that attitudinal change is more likely when people have the opportunity to be engaged in dialogue and discussion rather than simply passively receiving information (Pedersen et al 2005).

### **Community strengthening**

Communities are important for locally-based efforts to address race-based discrimination because they:

- are where people live, work and meet, both physically and virtually;
- are where children grow up and make friends;
- are sites of learning and decision-making about people's lives and environment;
- shape people's identities and sense of belonging and provide the security and freedom for them to shape their futures;
- provide other people to turn to for support and advice;
- provide a place to contribute to; and
- encourage network building to foster relationships that help people feel happier and healthier and improve their lives.

**My daughter who is six years old was playing with other children. One woman called her daughter over to her and told her in a loud voice, “Don’t play with that girl, she’s Muslim.” I was so shocked.**

→ Focus group member (IWWCV 2008)

**(A) young person reported racism by another player in a basketball game to her coach. (The) coach told her not to worry, she will get used to it.**

→ Youth worker (VEOHRC 2008)

## The Framework in detail

### Continued

Community strengthening activities involve 'sustained efforts to increase connectedness, active engagement and partnerships among members of the community, community groups and organisations in order to enhance social, economic and environmental objectives' (Considine 2004, p. 5).

Anti-discrimination and pro-diversity activities are more likely to be effective and sustained when community members are engaged. Involvement of members of affected groups is important to ensure their views are reflected in initiatives. Involvement of the broader community is also crucial to ensure development of a commitment to and sense of ownership of anti-discrimination initiatives (DCLG 2007).

### Advocacy

Advocacy involves building collective activity around an issue such as discrimination. It requires the mobilisation of people and resources with the intent of encouraging action to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity.

In many local communities groups already exist that take a public stand against race-based discrimination and mobilise networks to lobby for change (for example, Rural Australians for Refugees and Reconciliation Victoria).

These groups have challenged attitudes toward minority groups and helped build new social norms. There are currently no evaluations of the effectiveness of such advocacy, although there is some

evidence in relation to other social issues that there may be merit in encouraging people to take action at the individual or inter-group level when they observe discrimination occurring.

### Research, evaluation and monitoring

Research, evaluation and monitoring underpin activity in the other six areas by informing action, improving the evidence and knowledge base for future planning and enabling efforts to be effectively targeted and monitored. Research findings are also important for advocacy and awareness raising activity.



# The Framework in detail

## Continued

The following are effective and promising strategies identified within these broad actions.

**Table 1: Effective and promising strategies\***

<b>Organisational Development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projects that seek to assess or 'audit' a range of organisational functions to identify and address discrimination and value diversity</li><li>• Projects that implement new organisational policies, plans or operational processes</li><li>• <b>Diversity training for key workforces</b></li><li>• Training and resource development to improve the capacity of key workforces to address discrimination/promote diversity in the course of their roles (e.g. teacher professional development resources, guides for journalists)</li><li>• Organisational leadership – initiatives that model and promote good practices to a wider community/constituency</li><li>• Conflict resolution</li><li>• <b>Activity to identify and strengthen opportunities for constructive inter-group contact within organisations**</b></li></ul>
<b>Communications and Social Marketing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Whole-of-population advertising/social marketing initiatives specifically designed to prevent discrimination/support diversity (TV, radio, print, new technologies)</b></li><li>• Integration of pro-diversity/anti-discrimination messages into existing media</li><li>• Development of materials dispelling myths and stereotypes, raising awareness and increasing empathy (e.g. factsheets, brochures etc.)</li><li>• Community arts projects aimed at raising awareness, dispelling myths or promoting positive imagery</li></ul>
<b>Legislation and Policy Reform</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development and implementation of policies, plans and strategies relating to diversity/discrimination</li><li>• Incorporation of objectives pertaining to diversity and discrimination into existing plans and strategies</li><li>• Development of monitoring mechanisms for existing plans and strategies</li></ul>
<b>Direct Participation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Strategies to promote sustained contact between people from different groups**</b></li><li>• <b>Strategies to engage people from different groups in cooperative learning</b></li><li>• Community or school-based awareness-raising or education programs (e.g. addressing issues through school curriculum or community workshops/seminars)</li><li>• <b>Deliberative polls (polling people before and after involving them in hearing about and discussing an issue)</b></li><li>• Media literacy programs (programs to improve people's ability to ignore or resist anti-social messages or reduce the negative impacts of anti-social messages on them)</li><li>• Initiatives to improve conflict resolution skills</li></ul>

### **Community Strengthening**

- Strategies designed to support the development of leadership in affected communities on issues associated with discrimination and inter-group relations
- Strategies designed to support the development of leadership within the broader community, focusing on respected/prominent community members who can champion this cause
- Strategies designed to build sustained networks and partnerships between different groups and their organisations/agencies
- Community based activities that promote sustained forms of inter-group contact (e.g. joint development of community arts installations)\*\*
- Community identity building activities (e.g. activities that acknowledge the presence and contributions of a range of groups in the built environment through, for example, local architecture and signage, and that encourage ways of communicating about places that include all groups and their contributions)
- Community cultural development (involving artists working in collaboration with communities to achieve artistic, creative, educational, economic, social or community development impacts)
- Conflict resolution

### **Advocacy**

- Bystander education programs (encouraging and equipping people to take action against discrimination when they observe it)
- Local advocacy groups (e.g. Rural Australians for Refugees)
- Local leadership in advocating higher-level policy change

### **Research, Evaluation and Monitoring**

- Research to use as a basis for planning, advocacy and awareness raising
- Monitoring of the experience of discrimination and outcomes for affected groups to serve as a basis for advocacy
- Evaluation to build knowledge to improve practice and policy

\* Strategies shown in bold have been shown to be effective in rigorous evaluations. All other strategies have shown promising results in less rigorous evaluations or have been implemented and have a sound basis in theory and experimental research.

\*\* Measures to increase inter-group contact are effective providing that certain conditions are met. These are discussed on p. 50 and in more detail in the full report.

**The clearest need is for national leadership, to say “We recognise that Australia has been immeasurably enriched by the arrival of people from all over the world, and while we recognise that diversity presents all kinds of challenges, we’re up to those challenges, and we value the diversity that is now a core feature of the Australian population”.**

→ Professor Harry Minas, University of Melbourne  
(VicHealth 2007b)

## The Framework in detail

### Continued

#### Settings for action

A number of settings for action have been identified in the Framework. The main settings are:

- education;
- housing;
- justice;
- local government;
- sports and recreation;
- workplace/labour market;
- academic;
- arts and culture;
- corporate;
- health and community services;
- hospitality and retail;
- media and popular culture;
- new technologies;
- public sector;
- public space;
- public transport.

The first six of these are seen as being especially important as they are settings where:

- the greatest rates of discrimination occur;
- the experience of discrimination is most likely to influence an individual's present and future 'life chances'; and
- it is possible and acceptable to implement discrimination reduction strategies, in particular those strategies that have been proven to be effective or promising.

Further reasons for identifying each of these settings as key sites for action are outlined in Table 2.



# The Framework in detail

Continued

**Table 2: Rationale for priority settings for action**

Priority setting	Rationale
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based diversity and anti-discrimination programs are among the most widely implemented and best documented.</li> <li>• Schools lend themselves well to multi-level and reinforcing interventions, which have a greater likelihood of producing sustainable outcomes (i.e. through 'whole-of-school' approaches).</li> <li>• Education settings provide important means for reaching young people.</li> <li>• Reducing discrimination in education settings will have a positive impact on other public policy agendas (e.g. increasing school retention rates).</li> <li>• There is particular potential to promote inter-group contact in school settings.</li> <li>• Schools are important contexts for shaping social norms.</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When race-based discrimination occurs in the housing sector, targeted individuals may find it difficult to access this crucial resource.</li> <li>• Secure and affordable housing is important for accessing other resources such as employment, education and social connection.</li> </ul>
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant advances have already been made in the justice sector both by Victoria Police and the Victorian Department of Justice and its partners in addressing unequal outcomes experienced by people from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds. A particular example of this is Koori Courts.</li> <li>• There is potential to strengthen these given that:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rates of reported discrimination are high for some groups in relation to their interactions with police and courts</li> <li>– When race-based discrimination occurs in the justice sector, targeted individuals may experience lasting disadvantage</li> <li>– The justice system is often required to respond to incidents of race-based discrimination that are against the law. However, there is potential for this sector to be more involved in preventative activities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Priority setting	Rationale
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitudes to diversity and experiences of race-based discrimination vary from location to location.</li> <li>• Implementing integrated strategies is more readily achieved within a confined geographic area.</li> <li>• Small-scale local initiatives can be the best approach to address sensitive issues.</li> <li>• Local governments have influence over a number of the settings and processes that can have an impact on race-based discrimination.</li> <li>• Local governments are visible and accessible to local populations and have a democratic mandate to implement change.</li> </ul>
Sports and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The popularity of sports creates an opportunity to reach large numbers of people.</li> <li>• Sports are an ideal activity for promoting sustained inter-group contact.</li> <li>• Sports clubs can implement codes of practice and regulations that prohibit race-based discrimination and establish positive social norms.</li> <li>• Experience suggests that these are settings through which anti-discrimination initiatives can be effective.</li> </ul>
Workplaces/the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race-based discrimination may contribute to workplace stress and lead to long-term economic disadvantage as a result of reduced opportunities. Workplace stress is one of the issues to be targeted as part of the Victorian Government’s WorkHealth initiative.</li> <li>• Workplaces stand to benefit through improved worker morale, increased productivity, lower rates of absenteeism and a broadened customer base.</li> <li>• Workplaces offer an ideal setting for activities to promote sustained inter-group contact.</li> <li>• Workplaces are organisational contexts through which social norms are shaped and can be changed.</li> <li>• Workplaces and the labour market are the focus of Australian and Victorian Government policies to reduce disadvantage experienced by people from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds. Creating safe and welcoming workplace environments will be integral to the success of these policies.</li> </ul>

**There is one word that the media always uses: 'integrate'. Why should we integrate? We were born Australians, I have got an Australian birth certificate. I do what they do basically. They go out, I go out. They play footy, I play footy, you know, everything I am Australian...I speak English more than I speak Arabic. Just that word 'integrate'; there is no use for it. We were born here; I don't know why they use it in their words about us. We were born here.**

→ Sydney man with Arabic background (IDA 2007)

# The Framework in detail

## Continued

### Intermediate outcomes

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Intermediate outcomes describe what changes are expected in the short- to medium-term. They are intended to measure progress along the way, providing important guidance for program design and evaluation.

It is anticipated that implementation of the Framework will result in:

- individuals who:
  - recognise the prevalence and impact of discrimination;
  - have accurate knowledge about and are comfortable with people from varied backgrounds;
  - believe that people from varied backgrounds are equal as human beings;
  - recognise the benefits of cultural diversity, support multiculturalism and feel pride in a diverse community;
  - interact with people from varied backgrounds in ways that are respectful and just; and
  - respond constructively to conflict;
- organisations that:
  - have policies, practices and procedures to reduce discrimination and ensure fair and equitable outcomes for clients and staff from varied backgrounds;
  - have strong mechanisms for responding to discrimination when it occurs;
  - are accessible, safe and supportive for clients and staff from varied backgrounds;
  - have strong internal leadership in the reduction of discrimination and support of diversity and model this to other organisations and the wider community;
- model, promote and facilitate equitable and respectful inter-group relationships and interaction; and
- respect and value diversity as a resource;
- environments that:
  - encourage and facilitate positive relationships between people from varied backgrounds;
  - recognise the potential for discrimination and inter-group conflict and have strong mechanisms for reducing and responding to it;
  - respect and value diversity as a resource and demonstrate pride in a diverse community identity;
  - are welcoming, safe and supportive for people from varied backgrounds; and
  - have strong leadership in the reduction of discrimination and supporting diversity; and
- a society that:
  - has strong legislative and regulatory frameworks and appropriate resource allocation to reduce discrimination;
  - demonstrates pride in a diverse population and promotes diversity as a national asset;
  - recognises and takes action to address the legacy of historical discrimination;
  - has policies, programs and resource allocation to facilitate positive contact between groups from varied backgrounds; and
  - has strong and proactive leadership in the reduction of discrimination and support of diversity.

### Long-term benefits

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Over the long term, implementation of the framework is expected to result in the following benefits:

- At the individual level:
  - reduced experiences of discrimination and improved sense of belonging for people from varied backgrounds;
  - improved health outcomes;
  - reduced socio-economic disadvantage;
  - increased productivity and participation;
  - improved quality of life; and
  - positive racial, ethnic, cultural and religious identity for all.
- At the organisational level:
  - improved productivity and creativity;
  - improved health outcomes;
  - improved organisational outcomes;
  - organisations that reflect a diverse community; and
  - reduced discrimination and inter-group conflict.
- At the community level:
  - improved health outcomes;
  - reduced discrimination and inter-group conflict;
  - reduced social isolation and improved relationships and interaction between diverse groups;
  - improved distribution of resources between diverse groups; and
  - support for strong, distinctive and interconnected racial, ethnic, cultural and religious communities.

# The Framework in detail

## Continued

- At the societal level:
  - improved health outcomes;
  - strong societal norms against discriminatory behaviours and institutional practices;
  - improved productivity and creativity;
  - improved international relations and international trade;
  - a society that acknowledges and values the unique contribution of Indigenous people and culture;
  - an inclusive, welcoming and tolerant national identity; and
  - improved distribution of power, resources and opportunities between diverse groups.

Achieving these long-term outcomes will be important for all Victorians.



## Implications for policy and planning

The evidence and analysis in this report have a number of implications for policy and planning. These are identified below.

### A multi-level, multi-strategy approach

It is apparent that a range of factors contribute to race-based discrimination and that these can be found in individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours; in organisational and community environments; and in broader societal structures and cultures. It is also clear that there is interplay between influences at each of these levels. For example, when organisations have weak sanctions against discrimination, this may contribute to individuals failing to recognise their own negative attitudes and behaviours and encourage them to view such attitudes and behaviours as 'normal'. Likewise, individuals, especially those in leadership positions, influence whether organisational policies, practices and procedures discriminate or, alternatively, support diversity.

Many of the factors contributing to discrimination occur in the settings in which we spend our day-to-day lives, such as schools, sporting clubs and workplaces. This means that many of the opportunities for preventing the problem are also likely to lie in these environments.

For these reasons, reducing discrimination will require more than addressing single factors in isolation. Rather, there is a need for comprehensive approaches involving multiple strategies implemented at multiple levels (individual, organisational, community and societal) in ways that support and reinforce one another. This is true whether the goal is to achieve change across the whole society, in a particular community, or in an organisation such as a school or workplace.

**The evidence suggests that such an approach should be informed by eight key themes. These are:**

- increasing empathy;
- raising awareness;
- providing accurate information;
- recognising incompatible beliefs;
- increasing personal accountability;
- breaking down barriers between groups;
- increasing organisational accountability; and
- promoting positive social norms.

Implementing a multi-level, multi-strategy approach to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria will require:

- State-level leadership and planning to ensure coordinated effort across settings and sectors;
- universal or 'society-wide' interventions, emphasising the importance of a whole-of-population approach to embedding social change;
- interventions at a local level coordinated by local governments;
- multi-level, multi-strategy interventions in priority settings, merging the settings in which discrimination is most prevalent with effective or promising strategies. Particular emphasis will be required on those settings through which young people can be reached and that have a strong influence on their 'life chances';
- support for implementation of multiple and reinforcing organisational development strategies;
- engagement of Indigenous and CALD community leadership; and
- research, evaluation and monitoring, reflecting the ongoing need for evidence on 'what works'.

These are discussed in more detail below.

### State-level leadership and planning

Clearly much work remains to be done by governments and others to address the impacts of discrimination once it has occurred and in particular to address disadvantage affecting Indigenous and some CALD communities. A firm response to discrimination by government and in law is also important for its symbolic value and its potential to deter future discrimination. However, there is considerable potential to complement these efforts by strengthening measures to address the factors that contribute to discrimination. The Victorian Government has a clear commitment to this, manifest in a number of policy frameworks addressing disadvantage experienced by Victorians from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds and through its commitment to protect human rights under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*. There would be benefits in a high-level planning framework to guide this work. Since, as noted earlier, the focus for change when addressing discrimination affecting Indigenous and CALD communities is the whole community and mainstream organisational contexts, this could be achieved through a common planning framework that recognises both the similarities and differences in race-based discrimination affecting these two groups.

**I have no doubt that our multiculturalism is one of Australia's outstanding attributes. It has helped to make us a global nation by giving us ready-made links with the rest of the world. It has also offered us many economic advantages in terms of our multilingual workforce and high standard of skilled workers we can provide. Australia's identity as a nation...is very much determined by its multicultural make-up. It is a vital part of our nationhood and underpins the truly global country we have become.**

→ Former Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett  
The Menzies Memorial Lecture 1998

## Implications for policy and planning

### Continued

Many of the factors contributing to discrimination cross traditional boundaries between government and non-government sectors, government departments, disciplines and settings. It would therefore be beneficial for government to invest in a state-wide planning process to coordinate efforts to address the factors that contribute to discrimination and help ensure these efforts support and reinforce one another and are guided by the evidence.

State-wide leadership and planning will be especially important as the State Government has primary responsibility for many of the policy settings in which discrimination occurs. State Government policy and program development will also be required to support efforts by organisations and communities at the local level.

#### Implications for policy and planning

1. A state-wide plan should be developed to guide activities aimed at reducing discrimination affecting Indigenous Victorians and those from CALD backgrounds.

#### Universal interventions

The evidence indicates there are benefits in targeting efforts to particular local communities and in particular settings or sectors. These are discussed further below. However, universal or 'society-wide' interventions, such as social norms campaigns and policy and legislative reforms, will be crucial to the success of an overall plan to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- Evidence shows that discriminatory behaviour is influenced by broader social norms. How an individual behaves is likely to be influenced not only by their individual attitudes and contexts but also by their perceptions of how their behaviour will be viewed by others and the likely consequences of that behaviour. At a societal level, race-based discrimination is evident in cultural and ideological expressions that underlie and sustain majority values and beliefs. It is evident in a whole range of concepts, ideas, images and institutions that provide the framework of interpretation and meaning for seeing society in terms of 'us' and 'them', 'local' and 'foreigner', 'Australian' and 'un-Australian'. Shifting these broader norms is important to reduce discrimination across the population.

- Policy statements and laws act as moral exemplars or declaratory statements, embodying the values, norms and standards of acceptable behaviours in society. They provide the social foundations needed for altering deep-seated stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices, as well as serving deterrent, remedial, prescriptive, proscriptive and punitive functions.
- A society-wide approach recognises that while race-based discrimination occurs more commonly in certain localities and settings and among certain social groups, it is not confined to them. Rather it is evident across a broad range of institutions and settings and transcends socio-economic, age, cultural and gender boundaries. With the exception of poor education, which is a strong and consistent predictor of intolerance, the strength of the association between demographic factors such as age and gender is modest. While such associations suggest the need to ensure that strategies reach across a range of demographics, they are generally not sufficient to warrant specifically targeting interventions.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act has recently been reviewed. The preferred model outlined in the review report proposes the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) be allowed to issue guidelines, create action plans and assist public and private organisations reviewing their policies and procedures. It also proposes that VEOHRC be required to collect and analyse data on systemic discrimination and to initiate inquiries, enter into enforceable undertakings and issue compliance notices. This model would provide a crucial foundation for the approach proposed in this report.

# Implications for policy and planning

## Continued

### Implications for policy and planning

2. A state-wide plan should support diversity by strengthening relevant policy and legislation across settings and sectors and include whole-of-population social marketing strategies.
3. The preferred model proposed in the review of the Equal Opportunity Act should be implemented to build on the current Victorian legislative framework and support discrimination reduction and strengthen activities to reduce discrimination and support diversity.

### Interventions at a local level

The VicHealth Survey found that although both tolerant and intolerant attitudes are found in all locations, there are variations in attitudes toward diversity and experiences of race-based discrimination across Victoria. In particular:

- Victorians living in rural areas generally hold less tolerant attitudes than people living in metropolitan Melbourne, although there are important exceptions to this.
- There are some areas on the fringes of the Melbourne metropolitan area that show above average levels of intolerance toward diversity and discomfort with cultural difference. Some of these are areas where there is rapid population growth and increasing diversity. This provides an opportunity to support the development of positive inter-group relations at an early stage.
- There are some areas with high levels of diversity and substantial Indigenous communities. These areas require ongoing support to ensure that positive inter-group relations are maintained.

This suggests that although strong State Government leadership and a supportive legislative context are vital, there would be benefits in complementary efforts at the local level. Other reasons for supporting local-level interventions include:

- Implementing a range of strategies (such as media campaigns and community development activities) in an integrated way is more readily achieved within a confined geographic area.
- Small-scale local initiatives can be carefully managed, supported and monitored to help to avoid negative impacts.
- Locally targeted strategies can be tailored to the characteristics of particular communities.

This suggests that local government has an important role to play in efforts to reduce discrimination and support diversity. This is particularly the case as:

- Race-based discrimination can be addressed through a range of settings and processes over which local governments exert influence (e.g. public spaces, the retail sector, recreation services).
- Local governments are visible and accessible to local populations and have a democratic mandate to implement change.
- Local governments have well-established track records in supporting diversity.

VicHealth is currently working with a number of funding and implementing partners to trial a locally-based approach to reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity in two local government areas. The Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity Program (LEAD) has been funded for three years (2009 to 2012). Evaluation of the approach is being conducted and will provide information to serve as a basis for future planning.

### Implications for policy and planning

4. Local government should be identified in a state-wide plan as having an important role to play in the development and implementation of multi-level, multi-strategy approaches to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity. Particular emphasis should be placed on localities with high levels of diversity, and rural, regional and outer-suburban localities in which there are significant Indigenous communities and/or increasing diversity.
5. Information from the evaluation of the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) demonstration sites should be considered in determining the nature and extent of program support required by local governments in fulfilling this role.

## Multi-level, multi-strategy interventions in priority settings

Locality is not the only issue to be considered when determining priorities for action. People may experience discrimination in settings outside their home localities, such as in their workplaces or in educational contexts. Further, many of the factors that influence the experience of discrimination lie outside local areas. For example, local branches of large companies may have their policies set by central offices, sometimes in other states or off-shore. In such cases, addressing discriminatory practices is best achieved by working beyond localities, with sector or settings-based organisations, such as employer organisations, trade unions and state anti-discrimination authorities. When planning takes place at the local level, consideration will also need to be given to particular settings.

There are a number of settings in which discrimination can occur, it can have a particularly negative impact and in which there are good prospects for reducing the problem. Six of these have emerged as being particularly important:

- education;
- housing;
- justice;
- local government;
- sport and recreation; and
- workplaces/the labour market.

The reasons for this are outlined on p 40 and in Table 2].

There are also compelling arguments for targeting interventions to settings through which young people can be reached and that have a strong influence on their life- chances given:

- evidence of young people's particular vulnerability to the impacts of discrimination; and
- the greater prospects for success when intervening early in the life-cycle, both in terms of reducing exposure to discrimination and in shaping positive responses to diversity.

### Implications for policy and planning

6. A state-wide plan should complement universal and locally targeted actions with actions in settings where high rates of discrimination have been observed and where effective or promising strategies are available. In addition to local government, these should include education, workplaces/ the labour market, sports and recreation, justice and housing.
7. A state-wide plan should consider processes for identifying and implementing the best available programs to reduce discrimination and support diversity in each of the priority settings.
8. A state-wide plan should give particular priority to settings through which young people can be reached, with the aims of:
  - reducing discrimination affecting young people; and
  - reducing discriminatory behaviour and supporting acceptance of diversity among young people.

## High priority organisational development strategies

While a number of effective and promising strategies were identified in the course of the review, the evidence for those involving organisational development was particularly strong. The case for strengthening such approaches is compelling given the influence of organisations such as hospitals, schools and workplaces in our day-to-day lives. The relatively small scale of many organisations also makes them amenable to change.

Organisations also lend themselves well to approaches where multiple and reinforcing strategies can be used at different levels of influence. This is best illustrated in 'whole-of-school' approaches to anti-discrimination where programs involve activities targeted to individuals (teachers and students) as well as to school policies and procedures and the wider school community.

Three organisational development strategies warrant particular consideration:

- measures to improve organisational accountability;
- measures to increase inter-group contact; and
- diversity training among key workforces.

# Implications for policy and planning

## Continued

Achieving organisational accountability involves a conscious, planned and appropriately resourced process of reform to incorporate non-discrimination as a standard across a range of functions, including leadership and governance, strategic planning and policy development, operational processes and practices, training, communications, auditing and reporting. Organisational accountability strategies are also vital since the effectiveness of other organisational development strategies is dependent upon a wider organisational context in which diversity is supported.

Although no evaluations of the impact of organisational accountability strategies were found, they have been implemented across a range of settings in countries around the world and are well established in a number of sectors in Victoria.

Measures to increase inter-group contact are based on the 'contact hypothesis', a psychological model that suggests stereotyping and prejudice can be reduced through positive contact between groups (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998). The effectiveness of the approach has been well established in a number of cross-national studies (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006).

Much inter-group contact occurs naturally in organisations. However, there is potential to strengthen this, identify new opportunities and take steps to optimise the conditions under which it occurs.

This is important as the evidence specifies a number of conditions that should be met when different groups are brought into contact for this approach to be most effective. These conditions include that:

- there is equal status between groups;
- competition is avoided;
- participants are engaged in collaborative activity, working toward a common goal;

- contact takes place in an environment in which diversity is valued and supported; and
- opportunities are provided for participants across groups to form personal acquaintances.

There is a risk that contact will be ineffective or counterproductive if these conditions are not met.

Although diversity training is a well-established practice in many public and private sector organisations, there is variability in the quality and approach of training, with evidence suggesting that many contemporary programs:

- tend to focus on old fashioned forms of prejudice;
- are confined to achieving change in individual attitudes, with very little content on behavioural, cultural, organisational or sector wide change;
- lack clarity in their philosophy, targets, aims and objectives; and
- are focused on acquiring knowledge and awareness about the 'other', with very few seeking to increase awareness of participant's prejudices and discriminatory beliefs and of discrimination in society and what can be done to combat it (Ungerleider & McGregor 1993). The most effective training appears to incorporate both these approaches.

These findings suggest there may be benefits in taking a more systematic and planned approach to organisational development in general and to diversity training in particular. The public sector has the potential to play a leadership role in this regard, both in its own workforces and program delivery as well as by supporting such approaches in its funded agencies.

## Implications for policy and planning

9. A state-wide plan should identify key settings in which organisational development strategies should be implemented and consider a systematic approach for ensuring implementation and associated resourcing, support and monitoring.
10. A state-wide plan should include measures to review and build on existing diversity training initiatives to ensure that such training provided in public sector settings is appropriately coordinated, planned and resourced, and that it is based on evidence-informed approaches.
11. A state-wide plan should consider measures for supporting and mandating its funded agencies to implement evidence-informed organisational development approaches to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity.

## Engagement of affected communities

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Arguably, the responsibility for addressing discrimination lies primarily with mainstream organisational environments and the whole community. Nevertheless, Indigenous and CALD communities have a pivotal role to play in shaping overall approaches. Strong leadership in those communities will be important to facilitate this input as well as to support the capacity of communities to participate in efforts to highlight and address discrimination and to build linkages across groups.

### Implications for policy and planning

12. Leaders of affected groups should be involved in the development and implementation of a state-wide plan to reduce discrimination and support diversity.
13. Supporting the development of leadership in affected communities should be a key goal of a state-wide plan to reduce discrimination and support diversity.

### Evaluation and monitoring

As with any other investment of resources, rigorous evaluation of interventions that develop out of the proposed planning framework will aid future planning and build the knowledge base for reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity. Monitoring of the overall impact of the framework and associated interventions will also be critical for accountability and ongoing review and adjustment.

### Implications for policy and planning

14. A state-wide plan should include means of evaluating the implementation of the plan as a whole as well as specific strategies, with a view to assessing impact and promoting learning, continuous improvement and skills and knowledge transfer.
15. Indicators and measures should be developed against agreed intermediate outcomes of a state-wide plan to enable progress to be assessed.



**We play above our weight in so many fields – sport, film, aspects of science. We are potentially a country of enormous skill and capacity. We are one of the healthiest countries in the world. There is absolutely nothing unique about the history of Aboriginal people nor the disease pattern. There is absolutely no basis whatsoever for thinking we could not make the same gains here that have been achieved in New Zealand, the USA and Canada.**

→ Former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser, National Sorry Day, Sydney Opera House 2004

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