

MEDIA RELEASE

13 June 2013

VICTORIANS DEMAND AN END TO RACISM: REPORT LAUNCH

*Media are invited to conduct interviews **today** at the launch of
Choosing to act: How Victorians can prevent race-based discrimination and support cultural diversity*

**VicHealth, 15-31 Pelham Street, Carlton, Melbourne
10.30am Thursday 13 June**

Available for interview: Jerril Rechter (VicHealth CEO), A/Prof Yin Paradies (report author), Dr Peter Streker (VicHealth Manager of Reducing Race-Based Discrimination), a range of people from diverse cultures who have been the targets of ongoing racism to talk with media about their experiences.

The overwhelming majority of Victorians are against racism but many are still not confident to intervene when they see racism at the shops, at the footy, at work and on public transport, new VicHealth research shows.

A VicHealth phone survey of 601 Victorians, conducted by The University of Melbourne and the Social Research Centre, has revealed 83 per cent think more needs to be done to put a stop to racism, but around one in four did not feel supported to speak up or step in when witnessing a racist incident.

Approximately one in three respondents (205) said they had seen a racist incident in the past 12 months. Of those who had, almost half (90) intervened. The most common intervention was to say something to the perpetrator, followed by speaking to the victim and walking away in disgust to express disapproval.

There was huge public condemnation of racism in sports, although racist behaviour was more likely to be accepted in a social situation, such as at the pub. It also revealed very high support for workplaces and sports clubs to play a leadership role in reducing race-based discrimination.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said recent high profile incidents where bystanders became involved showed how powerful the act of one person could be.

"This research shows us Victorians clearly want to see an end to racism and they are more likely to take a stand if they feel supported by others around them," Ms Rechter said.

"Racism is a problem everywhere in the world. The more racist incidents a person endures, the more likely they are to suffer from severe psychological distress. This tells us that while the health impact is serious, it is preventable. The harm caused by the accumulation of racist incidents means that every incident matters. A thoughtless throwaway comment or a joke at a barbecue is just as inexcusable as threatening behaviour."

Report author, Associate Professor Yin Paradies, of Deakin University (previously University of Melbourne), said bystanders were an 'untapped resource' when it came to combating racism in the community.

"This research lends credence to the wider debate that has been unfolding about racism in Victoria over the past few months," A/Prof Paradies said. "Our previous research shows some Victorians experience a very high rate of racism, with almost every Aboriginal Victorian (97%) and two-thirds of culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians we surveyed reporting at least one incident a year."¹

"But now we know there is a very high level of disapproval for racism amongst the community, it is time to ask ourselves what we need to do about it.

"We are at a critical time where there's lots of momentum behind this. People are ready for social change and it is clear they are ready to act. They just need to know they are supported and their actions will be taken seriously."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter added: "Not acting is essentially condoning racism. There are so many things a person can do. They can confront the perpetrator, comfort the victim, report the situation, film the incident, or

¹ <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination.aspx>

seek help. We want Victorians to know that they will be supported if they act. Your action will make a difference. Victoria will lead the nation's efforts against racism if we all do something when it matters."

Download the fact sheet and reports at <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Bystander-discrimination>

Key findings:

- A random sample of 601 Victorians – 400 from the Melbourne metropolitan region and 201 from rural and regional Victoria – completed a telephone survey on their views of racial discrimination, cultural diversity and explained what they did when they last witnessed racial discrimination.
- 83 per cent believed more should be done to minimise or address race-based discrimination in Australia and more than 85 per cent thought workplaces and sporting clubs have an important role to play in leading this action.
- Around 47 per cent who had witnessed racism over the past year had intervened in some way.
- Racism was more likely to be witnessed in a social situation (23%), than in the workplace (13%) or a community sports club (12%).
- One-third believed that racist jokes were never acceptable in social situations and 59 per cent thought they were never acceptable at work.
- Approximately 9 out of every 10 Victorians believed that racist insults and sleges were never acceptable in social situations, workplaces or sports clubs.
- Around one-third said they would intervene in all of the hypothetical scenarios of racism presented to them. Most were always willing to act in sports club scenarios.
- An average of one in four people (13 per cent to 34 per cent, depending on the scenario) said they would feel uncomfortable if they saw racism, but would not do anything. This group holds the potential for a powerful, new wave of bystander action.
- Nearly three-quarters of people who had intervened said something directly to the perpetrator, 19 per cent spoke to somebody else and 5 per cent physically expressed their disapproval (eg. walked away).

Tips: what to do if you see racist behaviour

Under no circumstances should people put themselves in a dangerous situation, but it is important not to ignore it. It's really important you do something, as your actions can make a huge difference. If you don't want to confront someone in a threatening situation, there are other things you can do, such as:

- report the incident to either the Victoria Police at the local station or, if the situation is threatening on 000, or the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on **1300 292 153**.
- film the incident.
- comfort the victim by saying something like "What can I do to help you?"
- ask the victim if they are OK, turn your back on the abuser and ask the victim to come and sit with you, taking them away from the offender.

Most racist incidents are not so threatening. They include comments and social media postings by friends, colleagues or family. Things you can say include:

- "*That comment is not appropriate*"
- "*Come on, you're better than that.*"
- "*Can you please apologise/delete that comment?*"
- "*If you wouldn't say that to the face of someone from that race, then don't say it here*"
- "*It's not the 1970s. We don't accept racism here.*"
- "*That's not funny. That joke is probably more harmful than you realise.*"
- "*That's not fair.*"
- "*Why do you think/why did you say that?*"
- "*Why do you think that's funny?*"
- "*It makes me uncomfortable to hear that, what did you really mean?*"
- "*I always considered you to be a fair-minded person, why do you think that's funny?*"

More tips and links to report racism at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's Anti-Hate campaign website: www.antihate.vic.gov.au The All Together Now website has many useful tips and factsheets on combating racism: <http://alltogethernow.org.au>