

"Imagining a Future Without Racism, Intolerance, Prejudice or Xenophobia"



Logo for the *World Conference against Racism*

The Australian community action kit on Racism

Introduction

This kit is an action-orientated list of ways in which your community or group can contribute towards the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which is to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September, 2001.

The World Conference offers Australians an opportunity to discuss and explore issues of racism in Australia and show our solidarity with the victims of racism around the world – from Rwanda to South Africa, from Fiji to Myanmar, from Guatemala to Brazil and from the USA to Germany.

We urge you to join with us in promoting the slogan for the World Conference¹:

"United to Combat Racism - Equality, Justice, Dignity"

The aims of this kit are:

- to highlight the impact of racism on ordinary people, and to promote understanding, tolerance and respect for the rights of others, regardless of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic background, as a basic human right;
- to share ideas on how to work with other groups and communities around Australia and around the world;
- to suggest practical steps your group or community can take to support the World Conference;
- to call on governments at all levels together with community groups, to take active steps to support the World Conference and its aims, both in Australia and worldwide.

Contents

In this Kit you will find:

Information on racism and on the World Conference;

Action Sheets for:

- **how to organize a local community meeting to promote the World Conference**
- **how to approach your local council to become involved in the World Conference**
- **how to write letters to government**
- **how to seek the support of your local MP,**
- **how to contact the media**
- **how to involve local youth in promoting the anti-racism message**
- **how to organize community events such as seminars, film nights, and cultural events**
- **how to address issues of women and racism**
- **action feedback sheet**

¹ This kit is supported by the following organisations (in alphabetical order) in April 2001: Amnesty International Australia, Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Coalition Against Racism WA, Human Rights Council of Australia Inc., Quaker Service Australia, The Religious Society of Friends in Australia (Quakers), Western Australians for Racial Equality, WA Social Justice Commission - Uniting Church in Australia.

1. Racism

What is the World Conference?

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly (in Resolution 52/111) decided to convene its 3rd **World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance** no later than 2001. This decision reflected both growing international concern over the rise in the incidents of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, anti-semitism and related intolerance, and recognition of the challenges and opportunities for combating these phenomena in an increasingly globalized world.

The same General Assembly resolution listed the objectives of the World Conference as being to review both the factors that caused racism and the progress being made in the fight against it to date; and also to educate people about it and to formulate concrete policies to combat it in the future.

In the lead-up to the World Conference, the United Nations has organised regional meetings of countries and of non-governmental organisations, which have been held in France (October 2000), Chile (December 2000), Senegal (January 2001) and Tehran (February 2001), as well as other preparatory meetings in Geneva and New York. The Secretary-General of the World Conference Against Racism is the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.

Previous World Conferences have resulted in human rights recommendations being incorporated into UN and government agency agendas, as occurred after the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995. This year's World Conference is significant in that it will again be a meeting place for various stakeholders – governments, business leaders, and community groups – to come up with practical suggestions and timelines on how to tackle racism. If governments support the World Conference, it will set a new agenda for dealing globally with racism over the coming decades, galvanizing the world into action rather than mere rhetoric.

What is meant by Racism?

The definition of racial discrimination for the World Conference is the one contained in Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to which Australia is a party:

"In this Convention, the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".

The Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee examines the report cards of states which have signed and ratified the Convention every four years. This important function strengthens the effectiveness of the Convention in practical ways. The Committee's recommendations on how countries are implementing the Convention's provisions aim to encourage countries to do more. In 2000, the Committee examined Australia's latest reports. In Australia, the Convention was incorporated into domestic law by the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Despite this fact and the fact that successive governments have publicly committed to stamping out racism, it is a sad reality that racism is still at large in Australia.

Racism takes many different forms. It can range from abusive language or discriminatory treatment to genocide, simply on the basis of someone's 'race' or colour. Yet race has no scientific basis; it is in fact a harmful social myth. Every day, science proves more clearly that humanity, although diverse, is one family and one people. Sadly our common experience also shows that racism, hatred or dislike of others simply because of their origin or culture is a common human failing. Eradicating racism is a task we all share.

It is important to recognize that racial discrimination does not always affect men and women equally, or in the same way. Race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religious beliefs, ethnicity, colour, nationality, citizenship status, socio-economic status, cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, can all overlap and result in very specific types of discrimination. We must always examine those connecting factors when considering racial discrimination.

What is meant by Institutional Racism?



Ethnic minority refugees fleeing abuses in Myanmar (Burma). October 2000. Copyright The Age / Sandy Scheltema.

Racism is not only reflected in personal attitudes and behaviours, it can be expressed in the values, presumptions, structures and processes of social, economic, cultural and political institutions. Such institutional racism is less direct and harder to identify for what it is than personal attitudes and behaviour. Structures and processes may appear to be non-discriminatory but in fact operate to systematically advantage or value some groups over others.

For example, in the modern globalized market economy, the poor and the marginalized are frequently members of racial or ethnic groups whose position has been determined by generations of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. Racism then reinforces the inequalities -- people from ethnic minorities impoverished and disenfranchised by historical developments are viewed as somehow inferior and then blamed for their own deprivation. Such racist attitudes then act to further block their access to education, land, jobs and positions of influence. This is particularly the case in relation to Indigenous peoples, historically forced from their traditional lands and society, who find themselves excluded from contemporary society, while their culture is increasingly threatened in an era of globalisation.

Around the world, racism is being nourished by increasingly xenophobic responses to forced and voluntary migration. Immigrants, migrant workers and asylum-seekers, who have left their homes in search of a life with basic dignity and security, are often met with ill-treatment and denial of their rights. Often, increasing harshness of treatment is accompanied by a general increase in racist or xenophobic sentiment in the general community and the mass media. This is happening everywhere - in the northern and southern hemispheres, in the East and West, and in developing as well as industrialized countries.

Harsh treatment of migrants appears to be increasingly integral to official immigration policies, both reflecting and contributing to inflamed xenophobic fears among populations at large. Underlying these developments is a failure to see our shared humanity. All of us share a responsibility of caring for every human person, irrespective of where they come from. Racism is both a contributing factor in and a symptom of such policies.

2. Why is Racism a Human Rights Issue?

In just 100 days, up to a million people were slaughtered in one country, largely because of racism. The place was Rwanda. The year was 1994. The vast majority of the victims were Tutsi, killed by Hutus who for generations had lived side-by-side with Tutsis in relative harmony.

The genocide in Rwanda showed just how quickly racism - in the form of ethnic hatred - can erupt into bloodshed and despair, particularly when it is fuelled by those in power or those seeking power. It also showed the devastating consequences when the state and the international community fail to act to stop racism. Rwanda should serve as a stark reminder to us all that racism, in whatever form it takes, must be combated whenever it raises its ugly head, as it inevitably leads to violations of human rights.

Nazi Germany is perhaps the best-known example of a State which took racism to what is arguably its logical conclusion. The ruling Party had a core philosophy based on the concept of a hierarchy of races, with rights, including ultimately the right to live, being determined by the Nazis' assessment of an individual's racial characteristics.

Racism is an attack on the very notion of human rights. It systematically denies certain people their full human rights just because of their race, colour, descent, ethnicity, caste or national origin. It is an assault on the

fundamental principle underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - that human rights are everyone's birthright and apply to all without distinction.

The right not to suffer racial discrimination is one of the most fundamental principles of international human rights law. The principle appears in virtually every major human rights instrument as well as in the UN Charter. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the UN is to *achieve international co-operation...in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion* (UN Charter, Article 1, para 3).



"The right not to be racially abused is a fundamental human right."
Copyright Sandie Cornish

And yet racial discrimination persists in every society. Around the world, people continue to suffer human rights violations simply because of their racial identity. Some have been victims of genocidal onslaughts. Some have suffered "ethnic cleansing". Some have had their land stolen and been thrown into destitution.

Race-based human rights abuses can be seen in Europe, in the torture and ill-treatment of asylum seekers and immigrants; in Africa, in the genocide in Rwanda or the mass violations in Sudan; in the Americas, in discriminatory application of the death-penalty and ill-treatment of minorities in USA, and massacres of Indigenous people in Central and South America; in Asia, in the killing and torture of ethnic minorities in Pakistan, China, Indonesia and in the Middle East, and the persecution of minorities and ill-treatment of women migrant workers in Saudi Arabia.

There are many steps that can be taken. First, laws should clearly prohibit all forms of discrimination, and such laws should be rigorously enforced. Secondly, all governments should send a clear message that racism will not be tolerated - in society in general and in all agencies of the state. All crimes with a racist nature should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Here it is important to ensure that racism does not taint, or inhibit, the administration of justice, since a fair and impartial judicial system is one of the main means by which civilized societies ensure that human rights are enjoyed equally by all members of that society.

Institutional racism, discriminatory patterns of recruitment into the agencies that administer justice, and disparities in sentencing practices between different racial groups, all are examples of the issues that must be addressed. Mechanisms must be put in place to uncover patterns of racism in the administration of justice - and to institute remedies that tackle the causes of the discrimination. Among such remedies would be race-awareness training for those working in the justice system, whether they are law enforcement or custodial agents, lawyers or judges, or asylum determination officials; recruitment drives among ethnic minorities; and reviews of laws and practices that have a disparate impact on particular communities.

At a broader level, human rights education, as called for in the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, is essential if a universal culture of human rights, which includes the eradication of racism, is to be built. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination seeks to encourage, by all means possible, the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, and to make the twenty-first century 'an era of genuine fulfillment and peace'.

How does Racism impact on Australia?

Australia prides itself on giving all its citizens 'a fair go' and on rejecting racism. Although Australia generally has a reputation of being a successful example of an integrated and tolerant multicultural society, racism still lives in our society in both conscious and unconscious ways. Many in Australia find themselves the victims of racism or xenophobia, but it is undoubtedly Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who face racism or misunderstanding far more often than other Australians.



Aboriginal actress Deborah Mailman, supporting human rights (image copyright Amnesty International Australia)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy a unique place in Australian society as the first peoples of this land. Unfortunately their unique status and identity have not always been recognized adequately nor their rights fully respected. Despite the dispossession and disadvantage suffered by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they have continued to nurture and care for the land, and to make an important, and increasingly widely appreciated, contribution to the life of Australia, especially in the cultural and spiritual spheres.

While the process of reconciliation has helped many non-Indigenous Australians to be more aware of the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, much remains to be done. As the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has pointed out in March 2000, institutional factors such as some processes, laws and administrative practices still operate to the systematic disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

The economic disadvantage of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today cannot be understood in isolation from the history of dispossession of lands and the disruption of kinship, culture, language and ceremony.

Many immigrants to Australia have also experienced racial discrimination. Our migration policy has only relatively recently, and perhaps not completely, shaken off the anti-Asian sentiments of the nineteenth century, which led to the White Australia policy. Even today, there are those in Australian society who disparage and abuse those who have immigrated here or have fled their homeland seeking protection from persecution.

In Australia, as elsewhere, racism and sexism can combine to affect women in particular ways. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, as well as asylum seeker, refugee and immigrant women are most affected by this.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experience of racism can be different from that of men in their communities, and their experience of sexism is often different from that of non-Indigenous women. For example, Aboriginal women have often been excluded from negotiations concerning land, even though they may be the relevant traditional owners. Another example is the impact of the policy, which ended only in relatively recent times, of separating children of mixed descent from their Indigenous families, usually from their Aboriginal mothers.

Asylum seeker, immigrant and refugee women, too, experience multiple forms of discrimination based on racism, xenophobia and sexism, albeit from a different historical basis. For example, migrant women workers are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace as they may find it difficult to effectively address issues such as sexual harassment or below award pay and conditions due to poor English language skills and/or low socio-economic status. Women asylum seekers are often vulnerable to sexual or physical abuse during flight, and sometimes even in Australian immigration detention centres.

How does Racism impact on our region?

Within the South-east Asian and Pacific region, many would argue that there are several examples of racism in action. In Myanmar (Burma), for example, the military dictatorship not only refuses to recognize the results of the last democratic election, held in May 1990, but it is also engaged in armed conflict with armed opposition groups in which it has reportedly targeted ethnic minority civilians within the country, simply on grounds of their race. Thus such groups as the Shan, Mon, Karen and Karenni are subjected to torture and ill-treatment, forced relocation from their traditional lands, extra-judicial killings, forced labour and forced portering, simply because of their ethnic origins.

In India, human rights groups argue that the politicization of what is termed ‘communal [or religious] interests’ has compromised India’s traditionally secular state, enabling human rights abuses to proliferate. In particular, the issue of caste is one of great concern, with the untouchables (*dalits*) living with little hope of ever improving their lot economically and socially, and also facing violence committed - often with impunity - by the dominant castes. Similarly, women in India constitute another socially and economically at-risk section of society, facing everything from torture and ill-treatment at the hands of police and security services through to the practice of *suttee* (the immolation of a wife at the funeral of her husband). The lower status of women and girls is also reflected in such things as female infanticide, bride burnings and in the dowry system, which casts women as property. Low caste women face a double jeopardy.

In Fiji some would see the risk of racism being institutionalised into the politics of the country, already complicated by the impact of colonialism on indigenous Fijians. The coup of May 1999 ended only after key concessions on human rights had been made by the Fijian military. Since then, some Fijian politicians and community leaders have attempted to overturn the 1997 Constitution, which guaranteed racial equality to all Fijians. Since the coup, Indo-Fijians have faced everything from physical attacks and torture including rape, to looting and destruction of their property, to the denial of their democratic rights, while the police and army have acted slowly to prevent abuses or bring the guilty to justice.

3. Why is the World Conference so important?

How countries can contribute to the World Conference



“Humanity, although diverse, is one family and one people” Copyright Sandie Cornish

Countries can contribute to the World Conference at various levels. It is hoped that not only will governments give full and enthusiastic official support to the Conference - both to ensure its success and to implement its initiatives (such as national action plans) - but that they will also do all in their power to facilitate community and NGO involvement, with consultations and the provision of resources to allow the voices of communities and individuals to be heard. At present, the Australian government needs community feedback on how Australia can support the World Conference.

What Australia needs to do (national action plan)

Eradicating racism demands concerted action over the long term. Apart from the moral obligation that all civilized societies have to treat all members equally, they are also obliged by international human rights instruments to work to ensure that the state does not in any way promote or foster racism, and instead should actively combat racism.

Within Australia, there are a range of issues that the Commonwealth Government needs to urgently address. It should seek to implement the findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which in March 2000 recommended that Australia:

- “undertake appropriate measures to ensure the consistent application of the provisions of the Convention”;
- ensure that any amendments to the Native Title Act “ensure that the protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples will not be further reduced”;
- consider a formal national apology for those “forcibly and unjustifiably separated from their families” (Stolen Generations), including considering monetary compensation
- activate the reconciliation process,
- for Australia to build on the protections present in the Racial Hatred Act 1995 and in particular to withdraw its objections to Article 4 (a) of the Convention which outlaws all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts;
- address the factors contributing to the disproportionately high rate of incarceration of Indigenous peoples compared with the general population;
- address the issue of the impact of mandatory sentencing in some states and territories, in particular, its racially discriminatory impact on the rate of incarceration of Indigenous Australians, especially juveniles;
- “implement faithfully the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the 1967 Protocol thereto”.

The implementation of these recommendations is important, not only for the people most affected, but also for Australia’s human rights standing in the international community, and for its ability to take an ethical stance on other issues of international importance.

How your community can contribute.

While individuals or communities often feel that they can do little to influence the tide of change that might sweep over them, around the world campaigns to raise awareness about racism, to expose miscarriages of justice or to defend the rights of persecuted minorities and asylum-seekers have brought huge success. In Australia, communities and ordinary citizens are now getting together to foster respect and understanding for the rights of everyone in the community. In the last few years, we have seen a large number of groups and individuals committing to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From the Sea of Hands, to the Reconciliation Council’s work, to the marches over the bridges in Australia’s major cities, people are increasingly saying no to racism and bigotry (see Face the Facts, below).

Individuals around Australia now increasingly accept that mandatory sentencing should end. People are increasingly saying that basic human rights should be afforded to those who arrive on our shores fleeing persecution. People are now increasingly saying that women and children should not be arbitrarily detained in Australia’s immigration detention centres.

In sporting life, perhaps the one area of leisure in which we all believe in giving everyone a ‘fair go’ and rewarding excellence, players and codes are introducing ways of ending racism in sport. Codes of Conduct relating to Racism and Racial Vilification is being introduced to various sports, such as the AFL, which introduced the racial and religious vilification code in 1995 in response to the increasing protests of prominent Indigenous footballers at the abuse they were facing. It has led to real change. Here are some quotes from prominent Australians acknowledging how racism does impact on our sportspeople:

“Racism denies people the fundamental human right to be judged by their character, by what is inside. This is why it’s not easy to experience a lifetime of racial abuse, be constantly reminded of it and yet be expected to simply ignore it”
Michael Long, Indigenous Footballer (AFL) - quoted in The Age 23 April 1997.

“Racism and sport are two words that I don’t like to mention in the same sentence, but unfortunately racism does exist in our communities and this contributes to the fact that many of our potential athletes are being overlooked when standing for selection in various teams.

In the wider community, people need to be aware of the underlying factors contributing to the problems Aboriginal people face every day that create hurtful stereotypes; they need to understand that only through working together in a partnership can we overcome disharmony and discord (and realise that the contribution of sport is crucial in assisting understanding and respect, enabling reconciliation to advance.”

Sharon Finnan, Indigenous Netballer

"The great successes of our Indigenous sports men and women on the athletic track, on the tennis court, on the football fields and in other sporting areas, and the resulting standing that they enjoy in the general community have been among the most important positive influences in the long process towards reconciliation."

Sir William Deane, opening the 1st International Conference on Sport and Human Rights, Sydney 1999.

How you can contribute



"The responsibility for combating racism extends to us all". Copyright Sandie Cornish

There are many steps that we can take to fight against bigotry, discrimination and injustice, whether we act as individuals, through our social, political, cultural, religious or sporting groups, or with organizations that focus on human rights. Some are listed below – organizing community action, seeking local Council responses, lobbying your elected representatives, encouraging schools and tertiary institutions to get involved, and writing letters to relevant cabinet ministers are but a few.

Your country needs you!

Action Kit

The following action kit has been prepared with the aim of catering to the needs of many different groups of Australians who share a commitment to addressing and eradicating racism. Obviously it will not necessarily be possible for your organisation or group to undertake every suggested activity. Also it is acknowledged that community groups or organizations may find it useful to *adapt* materials from this kit for their own local networks. We encourage you to do so, if this will assist in facilitating your action against racism, and have made this kit available via the Web sites below. We would be grateful if source materials from this action kit could be acknowledged.

Our hope in producing the kit is that as many groups as possible will try to undertake at least one or two of these activities that they find most appropriate to their situation and opportunities. In this way we will truly be "United to Combat Racism".

Suggested Contact Details for More Information:

Amnesty International Australia	www.amnesty.org.au
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council	www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au
Uniting Church WA	www.wa.uca.org.au

Other sources of relevant information include the UN Human Rights website <http://www.unhchr.ch> which provides detailed information on the World Conference, its aims, and progress of its discussions. In taking action in support of the World Conference, your knowledge of your own area of work or of your local community will obviously be critical in how to approach this task most constructively.

Other important sources you should refer to:

- Face the Facts, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) – http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index.html

[For free paper copies email: publications@humanrights.gov.au]

Other interesting websites:

<http://www.minorityrights.org> and <http://www.imadr.org>

- Australian Local Government Association – <http://www.alga.com.au/>
- Living in Harmony, Department of Immigration, Multicultural Affairs and Reconciliation <http://www.immi.gov.au/harmony> call 1800 33 1100
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission http://www.atsic.gov.au/default_ie.asp

Action Sheet 1

Write a letter to the Government asking what actions it plans to undertake, to support and promote the aims of the World Conference

SAMPLE LETTER:

Name
Position
Address

[date]

Dear

I am writing to you in relation to the forthcoming World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will be held in August/September of this year in Durban, South Africa.

I am sure that you share with me the hope that Australia's community life will always be open and tolerant for all the citizens of our country, and I wish to express my deep concern about the human rights situation that exists in many countries around the world. As I am sure you are aware, racism is an attack on the very notion of human rights. It systematically denies certain people the full enjoyment of their human rights, simply because of their 'race', colour, descent, ethnicity, caste or national origin. It is an assault on the fundamental principle underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that human rights are everyone's birthright and apply to all without distinction.

The right to not suffer racial discrimination is one of the most fundamental principles of international human rights law. The principle appears in virtually every major human rights instrument as well as in the UN Charter. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the UN is to "*achieve international co-operation... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion*" (UN Charter, Article 1, para 3).

The right to not face racial discrimination or persecution is outlined further in the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. And yet racial discrimination persists in every society. Around the world, people continue to suffer human rights violations simply because of their racial identity. Some have been victims of genocidal onslaughts. Some have suffered "ethnic cleansing". Others have been imprisoned and tortured on account of their race, yet others have been the subject of racially abusive acts or behaviour by others. This occurs despite the fact that everyone has the right not to be racially abused. I would argue that it is Australia's responsibility as a member of the international community to encourage, by all means possible, all countries to respect those rights.

As recent events here have shown, even an egalitarian and democratic country such as our own is not free of racial discord, despite the existence of anti-discrimination legislation on Australia's statute books. So I feel that having an open discussion within the Australian community, on issues of racism and tolerance - and how to address these issues as they exist in our country - will be a wonderful contribution we can make to the worldwide effort to eradicate racism, especially if someone of your position shows leadership in advocating and promoting harmony, tolerance and understanding within the community.

Specifically, I would urge the government to seriously consider the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination from March 2000. It is important that we show leadership by dealing with the most pressing issues of racial discrimination in Australia, which the Committee discussed in its Concluding Observations.

I am pleased that the government will be attending the World Conference and has stated its commitment to it. It is of course important to ensure that the voices of ordinary Australians are heard on this matter and I would ask

that you engage with the community before and after the World Conference. I would be pleased to hear how you intend to do this. Indeed, I would hope that the Australian Government not only tackle these issues directly at home, but will also be actively working to use its influence on all governments around the world, to remind them of their human rights commitments and obligations, in the area of protecting people from racism and racial discrimination

The issue of human rights transcends international boundaries and is thus the responsibility of every country.

I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Yours faithfully

(Your name)

(Address:)

List of Relevant Cabinet Ministers

The Hon John Howard MP
Prime Minister
Suite MG8
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Fax: 02 6273 4100

Or

Electorate Office Contact

Sydney Office:

Location:

Level 9, Charterbridge House
56-70 Phillip Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: (02) 9251 5711

Fax: (02) 9251 5454

Or

Electorate Office:

Location:

230 Victoria Road
Gladesville NSW 2111

Postal Address:

PO Box 336
Gladesville NSW 2111

Tel: (02) 9816 1300

Fax: (02) 9816 1349

The Hon Alexander Downer MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Suite MF-27
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Fax: 02 6273 4112

Or

Stirling Office:

Location/Postal Address

76 Mount Barker Rd
Stirling SA 5152

Tel 08 8370 9288

Fax: 08 8370 8188

The Hon Phillip Ruddock MP
Minister for Immigration and
Multicultural Affairs, and
Minister for Reconciliation and
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Affairs
Suite MF 40
Parliament House
Fax: 6273 4144

Or

Hornsby Office:

Location;

Level 3, 20 George St
Hornsby NSW 2070

Tel: 02 9482 7111

Fax: 02 9482 70189

Action Sheet 2

Hold a community meeting to promote the World Conference and its aims

The meeting could be held any time before the World Conference, but would also be appropriate during the time of the World Conference itself (31 August to 7 September), with perhaps a follow up activity.

Suggested Strategy:

Plan a Public Meeting on a theme related to the World Conference.

Develop a panel of speakers for the meeting, including NGOs, local experts or community workers, representatives of local council, local councilors, and state and federal members of parliament.

Ask speakers to talk on one or more of the themes of the World Conference as it relates to the local community eg:

- A representative of local Indigenous community, or ethnic community, may be able to speak on their experience of racism in the local community
- A representative of migrant women may be able to speak about how the effects of racism impact particularly on women
- A representative of the local Jewish or Islamic community may be able to speak on the combined effects of religious and racial intolerance that members of these communities experience
- A local councilor or member of parliament may be able to speak on what is being or should be done to ensure our community is a tolerant and open one.
- A local university expert may be able to provide the results of local research on race issues.

Involve children by asking them to display materials on human dignity and equality, and against racism

Seek media publicity before and after the event, to ensure that the wider local community hears of the meeting.

If practicable seek partner organisations - see what other groups are doing in your area - by telephoning people you know or by asking the organisations listed in this kit if they know of anything planned.

Follow up any opportunities that might emerge from the public meeting to address racism in an ongoing way - for example, by organizing another meeting later in the year, after WCAR, to discuss its findings and recommendations

Action Sheet 3

Ask your local council to pass a resolution and adopt an action plan against racism

Suggested Aim: To persuade your Local Council that it should participate in activities supporting the World Conference Against Racism, by hosting a local community consultation on the themes of the World Conference to develop recommendations to Council for a local plan of action against racism, racial discrimination, and intolerance.

Suggested Strategy:

- find out what Council is already doing
- Develop a proposal to put to Council, for Council to host a community consultation, in support of the World Conference Against Racism, with the aim of developing a "community declaration against racism" and a "community plan of action" to ensure that racism is eliminated from the local community.
- Ask Council to consider erecting "Refugees Welcome Here" signs throughout the municipality
- Invite other community organizations to co-sponsor the approach to Council: such as local churches and religious communities, local human rights groups, migrant communities, Indigenous communities, refugee or welfare groups, women's organizations
- Meet with local state/federal members of parliament and ask them to write a letter to Council to support your proposal for a community consultation.
- Decide what contribution your group could make and offer to provide this contribution (eg promote the public meeting, arrange a venue, provide background materials, assist on a Council working group for the community consultation etc)
- Arrange a meeting with the Mayor, elected Councillors, and Senior Council staff to seek support for the community consultation and plan of action.
- Seek media interest and support for the idea of the local community addressing questions of racism and community harmony in the local community.

What a letter to Council might look like:

"Dear ...

We are writing about the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will be held in August/September of this year in Durban, South Africa. The purpose of this letter is to request that Council convene a meeting of interested community organizations and the public to address the themes of the World Conference as they relate to our local community life. The aim we would suggest for the meeting is to draw up a local declaration against racism and a local plan of action to promote harmony, tolerance and understanding in our community.

We are sure that you share with us the hope that our local community life will always be open and tolerant for all the citizens of our beautiful city/municipality/shire. We feel that having open community discussion on issues of racism and tolerance, and how to address any issues that might exist in our local community will be a wonderful contribution we can make to the worldwide work to eradicate racism. More importantly, openly addressing this issue in this way will make sure that our community will always be a harmonious and tolerant one.

We will contact you shortly to seek a meeting with you to discuss this proposal in more detail. Extensive information on the World Conference Against Racism is available at the web site of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:
www.unhchr.ch/

What a Declaration Against Racism Might Look Like:

A declaration against racism should reflect the views and approaches of each local community, so that there is no particular words that must be used. However, the following example may be useful, if it would be of assistance to have a 'model' of what a local declaration might look like.

(Modelled on the declaration on a tolerant and open society adopted by the Australian Parliament)

Declaration on Racial Tolerance

On behalf of the people of the ... of ...

And to mark the Third World Conference Against Racism, being held this year in Durban, South Africa

Council reaffirms:

- *Its commitment to work for the opportunity for all in our community to enjoy equal rights and to be treated with equal respect, regardless of race, colour, creed or origin*
- *Its commitment to working for, and maintaining, a community which will always be wholly free of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or origin*
- *Its commitment to reconciliation with the Indigenous community in our area, and to working to redress the social and economic disadvantage they face*
- *Its commitment to working for a united and harmonious community with a shared commitment to the well-being of all the people of our ...*

Council condemns racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of community we are and want to be.

Developing a Community Plan of Action

A community plan of action can only be developed on the basis of community consultation as to the needs and experiences of the local community. The suggested community consultation would provide a basis for the development of such a plan of action. One way of organizing a community consultation would be a full-day meeting, divided into several segments:

1. A plenary session introducing participants to the day and the issues that are being discussed;
2. Subsequent parallel workshops addressing separate issues in greater detail, with discussion of experience and "recommendations for action" as outcomes of the workshop discussion.
3. A final plenary, to follow-up the issues raised and finalise the draft community plan of action that would be launched by the Council

The themes that could be addressed by the separate workshops could be based around the themes of the World Conference Against Racism:

- Sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- Measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, at the national, regional and international levels.
- Provision of effective remedies, recourses, redress, [compensatory] and other measures, at the national, regional and international levels.
- Strategies to achieve full and effective equality, including international cooperation and enhancement of the UN and other international mechanisms in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and how these should be followed through.

Outcomes of the workshops would be reported back to the full meeting, and could be compiled and submitted to Council to draw up a plan of action that it would approve, and then share with the community. Given that World Conferences Against Racism generally occur every ten years, the plan of action might address a ten year time-frame.

Action Sheet 4

Grass Roots Democracy in Action - Seeking Support of Your Local Member of Parliament (For Approaches to both Federal and State Members of Parliament)

Speaking as a constituent to your local Member of Parliament is the essence of democracy. It is an extremely effective and relatively simple means of getting your concerns across, and evidence from other campaigns, both in Australia and overseas, suggests that it really works. Putting direct questions to MPs to elicit their views, as well as asking them to act in Parliament and in the local community, can help create a groundswell in the parliament and/or party room. Local action also helps to shape opinion and action by government. In effect, you are encouraging Parliamentarians to do one of their most important jobs - that of listening and responding to the interests and concerns of the people they represent.

What to ask your MP to do: you need to be absolutely clear about what you want MPs to do. We suggest the following requests that could be put to your member of parliament; you may choose those most appropriate for your own MP. Not all MPs will undertake them all, but try to get a commitment on some.

For detailed recommendations, check out the websites listed in this kit, but in general, ask them to:

- Encourage local councils in their electorate to consult local communities to develop local plans of action against racism (see action sheet 3)
- Write personally to the Prime Minister, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and to the Minister for Immigration and Aboriginal and Multicultural Affairs, requesting them to note our concerns regarding racism and its prevalence, and asking that greater action be taken to eradicate racism in our society.
- Write to or question their own party leaders and front bench on the action they are prepared to take in protecting human rights and promoting the issues raised by WCAR.
- Speak out in adjournment debates and/or ask parliamentary questions with or without notice on any of the above. Please ask for Hansard copies of any contributions, as you may be able to publicise a favourable intervention. (Note: Although you should not make this too obvious, always remember that most MPs will be keen for any positive publicity.).
- Take action to promote an anti-racism message in your electorate, through their newsletter, and through promoting the holding of anti-racism meetings.

Even if they do not support you, being forced to justify their position in the face of your polite but firm concern is valuable in itself and a fundamental part of the democratic process.

Local Members of the House of Representatives should first be written to by local groups and a face-to-face meeting set up. This is very important. Advice from MPs themselves is that meetings are much more effective in the long run.

* Check in the phone book if you are unsure of your MP's contact details. Also, let other community groups have copies of letters and feedback from meetings etc. This is vital, as they can use it to pressure their own MPs.

Lobbying by letter: suggested points to be made in your letter to your local MP. Remember these are suggestions only - please re-word them to suit your group and your MP:

- As a local community group, you are concerned at the current situation regarding racism and racial discrimination, and would like to make your concerns known to your MP.
- Ask to have your concerns raised with the relevant Ministers (and within your MP's own party as appropriate).
- Ask that your MP communicates to all her/his constituents her/his support for the World Conference
- Ask that your MP raises your concerns during adjournment or other relevant parliamentary debates as well as asking parliamentary questions.
- Ask for an opportunity to discuss these questions further with your MP, and arrange a suitable time for a meeting.

OTHER TIPS: Make the letter personal - use full names, tell them who you are, sign letters by hand. Keep it short - short sentences, no more details than necessary. Make it inviting to the eyes - attractive lay-out, left-aligned rather than justified paragraphs, no more than five lines a paragraph and use bullet points to attract the eye. Explain - be careful not to assume knowledge and use easy to understand language. Use a friendly tone - offensive remarks will send the letter into the rubbish bin. Be assertive - friendly but firm - refer to the fact that as your MP their job is to represent you. Ask for activity - appeal to their readiness to help, give recommendations, tell them what you see as the next "step" and suggest ways of providing more information/calls/visits.

Lobbying by meetings: holding a meeting is one of the central activities in all types of lobbying, and is the basic essence of grassroots democracy. A typical meeting with government representatives lasts no more than one hour. To make this meeting effective, you should:

- prepare thoroughly before the meeting;
- choose a delegation of 2-3 people and ensure they are thoroughly briefed;
- make sure your goals are clear throughout the meeting;
- take appropriate actions to follow-up the meeting.

OTHER TIPS: know your MP - have they met with community groups before? On what issue? What was the outcome? Has he/she ever spoken publicly/via the media about human rights, and racism issues? Have a clear, achievable goal. Decide who is going to say what. Plan for different kinds of response. Dress appropriately - showing knowledge of dress codes increases trust. Keep a positive atmosphere - actively listen and show interest in and understanding of their point of view. State your case precisely. Make your request for help explicit. Keep the discussion on track - summarize progress, dare to interrupt and be interrupted. Deal confidently with questions. Stick to your allocated time. Make sure you do not ask people to do what they are unable to - it may lead to unnecessary frustration on both sides. Check what you have agreed before leaving. Write a letter thanking the MP for the meeting, also mentioning the agreed outcomes. Call again after a two or three week interval, and ask if he/she has taken the action he/she agreed to.

Media work: meeting with your MP may be a great opportunity for local media work. You may decide to inform the media that you intend to meet him/her and to make public the concerns about racism that you wish to raise with them. Or you may judge that it is better to wait until after the meeting itself. Whatever, please use any opportunity to publicise your community delegations.

The listed websites may have greater details on what community groups are calling on the government to do.

Action Sheet 5

Contacting the media

Taking the World Conference Against Racism to the Media

Working with the Media on World Conference - Guidelines for Activists

Using the media to promote World Conference's programme is an invaluable human rights campaigning tool. As an activist working at the local level, you are in a unique position to localise human rights situations from abroad. Through your local media you can provide a link to the human rights situations that are being abused by racism and racial discrimination around the world. And as a community member you are considered good 'talent' for local press images and radio interviews.

You may also wish to respond to events you hear in the media – for example, if there are stories on refugees and the story is accurate and gives a sympathetic portrayal, you can call in and congratulate the station/newspaper on its reporting, whereas if the story is wrong or is intolerant, you can call in to offer a correction or different perspective. The points you can raise are listed in some of the websites listed in this kit, particularly the Face the Facts kit from HREOC and the government's Living in Harmony kit.

It is suggested that you only approach 'local' media that cover your immediate area. Community radio and your local newspaper will be the easiest first point of contact to line up interviews or send media releases. Commercial radio will be more of a challenge. You need to be familiar with the media outlets you are targeting and have an appreciation of their demographics.

Unless you set yourself up with a 'shock jock', you are unlikely to be misrepresented or humiliated. When you go to the media you must be well-equipped with information, in particular knowledge about the issues being raised at World Conference. At the same time, we encourage people to listen to the shock jocks and call up to rebut incorrect statements or prejudice on refugee or Indigenous issues – you can use the information available in the Face the Facts and Living in Harmony kits, which are statistical, accurate and reasonable. Racism is most effectively challenged by people speaking out reasonably in their community and once you ring a radio station, you will have gained incredible confidence.

Put a World Conference spin on publicity for events such as film nights, visual stunts in public places, local school children taking action, information evenings, and cultural events.

Local media, especially press, are very responsive to photo opportunities. Visual stunts, such as drama re-enactments, or the local MP/celebrity writing a letter to the Prime Minister or other relevant Ministers, work well. Listen out for opportunities on talk-back radio and phone in. Don't restrict your media activity to 'obvious' media, approach organisations in your area about getting your message in to their newsletters.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an excellent and easy way to get World Conference mentioned in the press. Letters are usually in response to stories or opinions in a publication. Either mention WCAR in the body of the letter or sign the letter from your group. Letters should be a succinct 200-400 words, be signed, dated and include a contact phone number. Ring the publication you are targeting to find out the name and fax number of the Letters Editor.

Writing a media release

A media release should be written to give advance notice of an event, announce the launch of your group's work in support of World Conference, outline your response to current events, or draw attention to any new initiatives.

It must be newsworthy: have impact, be timely, and interesting. The first paragraph should contain the '5Ws' - who, what, where, when and why. The rest of the media release is for you to provide details and background information.

A media release must be word processed and include, the date and contact phone numbers of your group. Media releases should be no longer than one page and in an easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman, minimum size 12. Include quotes from your spokesperson.

Media releases should be addressed to either the editor (print media) or producer (radio), or to a journalist you believe would be interested in reporting the event. Ring the person you sent the fax to and 'sell' them the story over the phone by discussing possible story angles, photo opportunities, why their listeners would be interested and spokespeople.

The Interview

The more media interviews you do, the easier it will become. Be prepared with your message and background information and be comfortable with the time and place of the interview. Try to anticipate what questions you might get asked and practice answering them aloud. Discuss the line of questioning with the journalist beforehand to help you prepare. It is important to get your message across - never be forced to comment on something the answer to which you are unsure.

If you are being interviewed for TV or radio news, the journalist will take from you a 5-30 second 'grab' (TV grabs are shorter than radio). The journalist will interview you for several minutes but pick out the part of your interview which; makes a statement, explains the statement (usually with an example), then concludes the statement

For example:

"Our community is calling on the government to note the issues and concerns as raised at the World Conference".

Always say 'our group believes' as opposed to 'I believe'. Remember that 'um' is a thinking word and silence will also help you think. If a journalist asks you a question you don't have the answer to, you can either 'bridge' to something you do know or say that your group is considering the issue - it sounds better than saying you don't know. 'Bridging' is a good way to not answer the question but provide alternative information. For example;

"What do you think will be the outcome of the World Conference?"

"It is hoped that governments everywhere will pursue actions that will help stamp out racism and racial discrimination, and allow everyone to exercise and enjoy their full human rights".

If you are going on television or being photographed, wear smart but simple clothes. Most of all, try to relax and be natural. Think of longer interviews as a one-on-one conversation with the journalist. Remember there is no such thing as 'off-the-record' comment.

Action Sheet 6

Youth Against Racism

Young people can play a critical role in promoting the anti-racism message, by raising the World Conference and its objectives in schools, on campuses and in their communities.

Young people represent the hope of the future, and it is important to involve them in planning and action for a better world, one that they will inherit and inhabit. Also, such involvement encourages them to both develop the skills required to create this new world, and empowers them in dealing with the issues that will arise.

Action you could take:

- Promote a debate at schools or on campus: “Have we done enough to fight racism?”
- Organise 'speak-outs' at schools, universities and at TAFEs, focusing on youth experiences of racism and ideas of how to combat it;
- Approach your local Youth Affairs Council, student organisation, community centre or other youth organisations to help organise some of the above activities, whether by providing a venue, resources to make phone calls and send out letters, or to host an event;
- Hold a concert promoting anti-racism messages;
- Promote a petition headed “Students Against Racism” and asking students to commit to rejecting racism in all its forms and promoting understanding and tolerance between all cultures and races.

Action Sheet 7

Other events to involve community members

Film nights, seminars, and other cultural events

One important way of raising awareness within the community is to organize various events that can all, in their different ways, bring the issues of racism and racial discrimination to a wider public awareness.

Film nights are a popular and stimulating way to raise awareness. A local community, school or church hall is probably the easiest to arrange, and you should allow time after the film for a discussion of the issues it raises.

Assessing films: there are many sources of relevant films, ranging from the ABC (its recent series “The Australian Story” had one programme devoted to the white Australia policy) and SBS through to the National Library or the Koori Educational Centre at Sydney University.

Seminars: While these may sound a rather dry way of trying to generate interest, they are actually an excellent forum for canvassing issues and ideas, and dispelling misconceptions. Choose a topic (perhaps one of the themes of the World Conference, or perhaps some issue of relevance to your local community), and organize appropriate speakers.

A range of organisations may be able to provide speakers (*in alphabetical order*)

- Amnesty International Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- State Labor Councils
- Local universities

Then there are **cultural events**. Within most communities now there is often quite a wide range of cultural and ethnic diversity. Events that bring these groups together and allow for all the community to see aspects of other communities’ life are an excellent educational tool. And they can be both entertaining and enjoyable (think of sampling all those different ethnic foods).

Contact local groups representing the different ethnic and cultural communities within your area, and discuss with them the possibility of holding something like a fair day (A Fair Day as a Fair Way to Combat Racism), with stalls selling traditional foods, and with performances of traditional dances, or mime, or short plays. Or, if this seems too daunting, perhaps simply organize a Cultural Night, with the performances only. Or perhaps a local art gallery might be willing to mount a display of art from persons of different ethnic groups.

Approach your local schools, which are hopefully sensitive to issues of the diverse cultures of their students, and see if they can be involved (providing a school grounds, or a hall). Involving children is useful, since it then brings parents along.

Action Sheet 8

Women and Racism

Racism is not just about our skin colour, or our ethnicity; it can be influenced by other factors as well. We need to keep in mind that the intersection of issues such as race with **gender**, sexuality, disability, age, and religious beliefs can result in very specific types of discrimination.

Issues of gender may affect the way in which the problems are perceived and articulated, and what solutions are suggested. The experiences of women and girls are just as important as those of men and boys, and their contributions towards overcoming racism are equally vital.

What you can do:

- Ensure that in every and any action or campaign you undertake to combat racism - whether in organizing a community meeting, writing a letter, approaching your local council, hosting a Youth Forum, or dealing with the media - there is recognition given to the issues of gender and sex discrimination faced by women and girls.
- Encourage the participation of women and girls in all of your actions against racism.
- Participate in any Gender and Racism activities, such as forums, consultations and documentation processes being run by organisations such as the Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA) or the Association of Non English Speaking Women Australia (ANESBWA).
- If you are a women's organisation, or have a large membership comprising women and girls, host a workshop about the connections between racism and sexism, and the resultant problems faced by so many women in our community.

Some good educational resources from the internet are

- World Conference Against Racism website: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/racism/index.htm>
- Women's Caucus Against Racism: <http://cwgl.rutgers.edu/ac/wc.htm>
- Human Rights Internet: <http://www.hri.ca/racism/>
- Commission on the Status of Women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/csw>
- Amnesty International Australia (Torture of Women): <http://www.amnesty.org.au>

FEEDBACK SHEET
UN WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

(Please complete and return to the Australian NGO Working Group care of our email at wcar_australia@hotmail.com so that we can share the news on the NGO Kit Website)

Name of Your Organisation/Group:	
Locality or Region:	
Your State or Territory:	
Contact Details/Person: <i>(optional)</i>	
What activity did you undertake to support the World Conference Against Racism?	
What were the outcomes and achievements of your activities? (Please feel free to attach supporting materials)	
Will your activities result in ongoing work to address racism? If so what form will that ongoing work take?	