

Australian Red Cross

**Submission to the Australian Human Rights
Commission**

NATIONAL ANTI-RACISM FRAMEWORK

Prepared February 2022

Foreword

Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) is committed to improving and protecting the wellbeing of people experiencing vulnerability. We know that racism negatively impacts wellbeing and causes harm and that more can, and must, be done to ensure it is eliminated across communities in Australia. Organisations like Red Cross can contribute to this through our programs and organisational behaviours, but federal government leadership and accountability is needed to ensure progress is achieved.

With our nationwide reach and our unique role as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, we will continue to play our role in dismantling the ongoing effects of systemic racism and cultural ignorance. This includes walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognising and challenging inequity in system structures and design. We know that international migration and forced displacement is at historically high levels, as millions flee conflict and persecution, or seek opportunity and ways to contribute their skills and expertise in other countries. Worldwide, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is present at every stage of a migrant's journey – in the places they come from, the places they travel or flee to, and the places they settle in.

We reach out with empathy to empower and privilege the voices and experiences of those in Australia who have been impacted by racism or discrimination, to promote human dignity and work harder to build an equitable nation. We welcome and recognise the important role of a National Anti-Racism Framework.

Red Cross is embedded in communities across Australia through our 27,000 strong membership, staff, and volunteer base. This and the work of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs, Migration Support Programs and Community Programs including those that aim to keep people out of the justice system, means we have evidence of, and expertise in the impact of direct and institutional racism on people from a range of backgrounds. We share that in this submission together with some of the strategies that have proven effective in addressing that racism.

Our submission offers examples of effective programs which can be used to tackle racism, such as our community awareness raising programs, justice reinvestment and prevention and diversion programs. Our programs demonstrate our commitment to building strong communities through principles of person-centred design, representation and voice, and self-determination. We know we can continue to do better ourselves and are committed to embedding inclusion at the core of every aspect of our organisation. This will ensure we embrace diversity and include all voices.

In this submission, Red Cross offers a humanitarian perspective on the proposed guiding principles, national outcome areas, and key actions and strategies of the National Anti-Racism Framework. We recommend that including the voice of lived experience (including voices of youth and children) will be essential in ensuring that the Framework makes a genuine difference in the lives of people and communities. This will strengthen the Framework to identify key actions and strategies that address the key barriers to protection, mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation, and the creation of lasting peace amongst all people in Australia. We acknowledge again that actions must start at home and recognise the work that we are undertaking internally to ensure our systems and processes are inclusive.

I provide this submission in support of a National Anti-Racism Framework being developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Yours sincerely,



Noel Clement

Director, Australian Programs
On behalf of Kym Pfitzner, Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) unequivocally rejects hate, racism, violence, and bigotry of any kind.¹ This is also the position of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), including our 191 sister National Societies, supported by the Movement's published statement on racism.²

As a Movement we are working at all levels to deliver the individual, structural and cultural change to create an inclusive and welcoming culture where all Red Cross people feel they belong.

Established in Australia 107 years ago, we are guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. These are Humanity; Impartiality; Neutrality; Independence; Voluntary Service; Unity and Universality. While all have relevance, three have particular significance in relation to racism. Our Impartiality principle states that our humanitarian responses are based solely on need, including without discrimination based on race. Our Unity principle requires that Red Cross is open to all. Within the Independence principle sits a special relationship - as auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field, Red Cross has a unique position in the humanitarian sector, which includes a specific mandate in times of war but extends to many other humanitarian activities, such as disasters and emergencies. We are often first on the scene and we also work behind the scenes, as advocates and humanitarian diplomats, providing facts and evidence that support decision makers and opinion leaders to act for humanity and in the interests of people facing vulnerability, including racism.

Red Cross supports the development of an Anti-Racism Framework (the Framework) and thanks the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Our submission aims to identify key issues and opportunities in the proposed Framework which would affect people. Our focus includes marginalised groups, and taking action to combat the discrimination, racism and intolerance experienced by particular groups in society, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (including people on temporary visas, refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia). We recognise the intersectionality of racism.

Red Cross also undertakes programs, activities, and services domestically and internationally which are intended to promote social cohesion and participation, increase understanding, awareness, and respect for difference, and build trust and co-operation among diverse communities. As part of the Movement, we recognise long standing problems of systemic racism and are actively working towards localisation and 'de-colonising' the aid system.

Our experience and expertise working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people who have migrated to or sought safety in Australia and the wider Australian community, along with feedback from Red Cross people on the proposed framework, has informed this response. This response will focus on five areas:

1. Prioritising the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
2. Barriers to reporting instances of racism
3. Examples of effective Red Cross programs that build social cohesion
4. Our actions to commit to inclusion
5. Definitions, data, accountability, and approach

We offer eight recommendations to strengthen the proposed Framework's outcomes and action.

To assist with setting the context, we encourage the Commission to revisit the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#). We also encourage the Commission to listen to a prose poem, entitled Stardust, orated and written by a Red Cross person in their personal capacity who has experienced forced migration twice and is now settled in Western Australia. The poem can be heard [here](#) and found at Appendix A. This is one person's voice; however, it highlights our commonality - we are human,

¹ Red Cross, (2020)

² ICRC, (2020); RCRC Conference (2020)

with human needs and humanitarian concerns. In our work, Red Cross will continue to recognise and promote the inherent humanity of all people with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1	A new Outcome is included in the Framework to recognise that racial <i>equity</i> (not equality) is required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples before true reconciliation can occur. This should include an action to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the elements that it calls for. This Outcome extends beyond the current proposed National Outcome 8.
Recommendation 2	Actions are included in the Framework to address barriers which deter people from reporting instances of racism. These include building trust in and knowledge of the system, reducing fear of authorities, removing visa-constraints creating an imbalance of power, increasing access to information (i.e., translations, simple English), improving access to services for people in remote areas, ensuring training and capacity building for agencies, in particular those receiving complaints.
Recommendation 3	Strength based, localised, place-based approaches driven by the voice of lived experience continue to be at the heart of the Framework's development, implementation and evaluation, including community determined indicators of change.
Recommendation 4	National Outcomes 5 and 6 are retained and extended to encourage all businesses and organisations in Australia to take responsibility for ensuring they respect diversity and critically review their own practices against the Framework.
Recommendation 5	Terms are consistent and definitions are provided in an accompanying definitions document.
Recommendation 6	Cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional data sets are established, across Federal as well as State and Territories governments, with appropriate safeguards in place, which can be disaggregated by general visa category as well as ethnicity.
Recommendation 7	The Framework include specific actions which are co-designed with community, and that systems to ensure public accountability and transparency of performance against those targets are incorporated into the Framework.
Recommendation 8	That the Committee consider: (a) the extent to which the voices of people outside the dominant Australian culture have influenced the design of this Framework, and (b) how to manage the cultural load that the framework could place upon people who experience racism.

1. Prioritising the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Red Cross wholeheartedly supports the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being heard and respected as they determine their future, which are principles foundational to the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the elements as it calls for - a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution, a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement making, and a national process of truth telling.

Red Cross aspires to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to stand together in calls for systemic change. We do not purport to speak for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but to add our perspective as an Australian humanitarian organisation that exists to address the needs of the most vulnerable. The Uluru Statement guides us, and all Australians, on the path forward as determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples themselves.

We support the redress of systemic discrimination and disadvantage that has affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for generations and recognise that an imperative step to achieving equity is ensuring communities are truly able to use their own voice and represent themselves and that voice and representation is heard and acted upon.

Our teams across the country find every day how crucial it is that we are embedded in communities, living on country - on the ground - and are part of the community. Our place-based work, in partnership with those communities, identifies needs, priorities, and solutions, with the end goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities creating and leading their own futures. At Appendix B, we share Case Study 1 as an example of how we have designed a program to prioritise the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

An additional crucial component of our commitment to prioritising the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is that we do not compete with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations or seek to replace them, but instead work in partnership with these agencies and local communities to complement each other's activities and address gaps in services.

While the proposed National Outcomes in the Framework create circumstances for racial equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, they do not recognise the additional efforts required as a result of historical action and present-day biases. To create a framework that will achieve the desired outcomes, actions that support racial equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are required.

Red Cross recommends that:

1. A new Outcome is included in the Framework to recognise that racial *equity* (not equality) is required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples before true reconciliation can occur. This should include an action to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the elements that it calls for. This Outcome extends beyond the current proposed National Outcome 8.

2. Barriers to reporting instances of racism

Despite efforts by successive governments to encourage reporting by people who experience exploitation or discrimination, there are still multiple barriers to self-report.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience intergenerational trauma based on systemic discrimination and disadvantage over generations. We also know the ongoing effects of systemic racism and cultural ignorance need to be acknowledged and addressed before

every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person feels able to report instances of racism and abuse safely and confidently without fear of retribution.

Our experience informs us that refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants, in particular those on temporary visas, can be hesitant to report concerns for a range of reasons including (i) constraints on their freedom of movement and potential isolation in remote areas; (ii) mistrust of authorities and fear of the consequences, including impact on visa status; fear of self-incrimination; (iii) limited knowledge of and access to information on Australian law and support systems; (iv) limited English language skills, low literacy levels and; (v) popular sentiment which may impact particularly on certain groups (e.g. incidents of racism against people from Asian backgrounds in Australia during COVID)³; (vi) lack of migrant services in remote and very remote areas. Compliance procedures which are not sufficiently victim-centred can also indirectly discourage reporting in Australia.

For people impacted by the justice system, particularly those in custodial settings, reporting racism can be difficult. Red Cross recognises that the establishment of the Australian National Preventative Mechanism (NPM) network, to be coordinated by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture will help to ensure that complaints from people in places of detention will be heard by an independent body that can act on complaints, including of racism.

Barriers to reporting are real to people. Red Cross provides casework support to people experiencing vulnerabilities and a key tenant is to provide people with information and support to enable them to make informed decisions about their future and advocate for themselves. This, combined with adequate and appropriate training and capacity building for agencies receiving complaints and feedback related to racism, has proven to be an effective method of empowering people and supporting them to advocate where they wish to advocate.

Red Cross recommends that:

2. Actions are included in the Framework to address barriers which deter people from reporting instances of racism. These include building trust in and knowledge of the system, reducing fear of authorities, removing visa-constraints creating an imbalance of power, increasing access to information (i.e., translations, simple English), improving access to services for people in remote areas, ensuring training and capacity building for agencies, in particular those receiving complaints.

3. Examples of effective Red Cross programs that build social cohesion

Pledge to build and strengthen welcoming communities

Through the 2019 (33rd) International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Red Cross entered a pledge with the Australian Government to build and strengthen welcoming communities.⁴ The objectives of the pledge and action plan, an extract of which can be found at Appendix C, outline some of the areas of focus for Red Cross and the Government. They include a pledge to build, strengthen and learn from welcoming communities across Australia where the economic and social contributions of migrants are recognised and valued. Building understanding of shared values, actively preventing, or addressing discrimination and racism, enhancing social participation, and supporting people to understand and welcome new migrants are some of the pillars that are important to the work of Red Cross.

³ Scanlon Foundation (2020)

⁴ RCRC Conference (2019)

These elements could be extended to all governments in Australia and incorporated into the Framework's National Outcome 3 (government commitment), or even into National Outcome 2 (legislation).

Factors that contribute to the success of Red Cross programs:

Our 107-year experience tells us that optimal, sustainable results are achieved when people made vulnerable by circumstances are empowered to lead their own recovery. Strength-based, localised, place-based approaches driven by the voice of lived experience are at the heart of our work, whether in the delivery of humanitarian aid overseas, responding to crises, emergencies, or natural disasters, building welcoming communities in Australia or working with marginalised youth in justice programs.

Likewise, we believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are best placed to shape the solutions that will help their communities to overcome the systemic disparities created by over 200 years of colonisation which continue to be replicated today. Our place-based work identifies needs, priorities, and solutions, with the end goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities creating and leading their own futures. Place-based work shifts power to those within a particular area to articulate needs and priorities, with community determined indicators based on localised community response and action. Red Cross contributes to support communities in a localised approach.

When people with a lived experience are centred in our work, people have agency to advocate for themselves, to contribute to and connect with the larger society in which they live and receive affirmation that their expertise has been listened to, understood, and valued. This is because a person with a lived experience has firsthand experience of the structures, services, systems, and policies that impact them.

Incorporating the voice of lived experience also recognises the differing needs of people and their individual and unique experiences and backgrounds. While the Framework recognises intersectionality, it could go further to acknowledge that personal history, culture, and experience inextricably influence personal experiences of racism. The Framework could further acknowledge that diverse representation in leadership is important for bringing a diversity to perspective, however it is crucial to remember that representation in leadership does not mean that an individual represents their nation or race, unless they are appointed by their community to do so.

We recognise and strongly support the incorporation of self-determination and co-design in the Framework and propose this could be taken further by incorporating them into the implementation and evaluation, including by developing community determined indicators of change. This would ensure shared ownership of the Framework not just amongst national, state and territory governments, but also amongst civil society.

Three case studies are shared in Appendix B (Case Studies 2, 3 and 4) as examples of actions to improve community understanding of racism and racial discrimination (Outcome 4), to counter and prevent racism (Outcome 5) and to strengthen multiculturalism, social inclusion, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reconciliation (Outcome 8).

Red Cross recommends that:

3. Strength based, localised, place-based approaches driven by the voice of lived experience continue to be at the heart of the Framework's development, implementation and evaluation, including community determined indicators of change.

4. Our actions to commit to inclusion

All Red Cross People commit to promoting respect for diversity and our humanitarian principles, and pledge to combat intolerance, discrimination, racism, and social exclusion, with a particular focus on mobilising the power of humanity to improve the lives of people experiencing vulnerability through services delivered and promotion of humanitarian laws and values.

Like many Australian and international humanitarian organisations, we are taking conscious and active steps to change. In this process, we are indebted to Red Cross First Nations' staff, members, volunteers, clients, partners, Board Members, and our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team.

We are actively working towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are committed to tackling racism (Outcome 5) and ensuring representation in our organisation (Outcome 6), but we know we need to go further than that.

Red Cross seeks to broaden diversity of its people to reflect all people in Australia, ensuring equity of systems and procedures free from bias and barriers, and creating an inclusive and welcoming culture where all Red Cross people feel they belong.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Our vision for reconciliation is a unified nation built on dignity, safety, and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To achieve this vision, it is critical that we continue to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, organisations, and peak bodies. We will be stronger together if: Reconciliation is from the heart, we create culturally safe environments and we connect with others along the reconciliation journey. Our first Reconciliation Action Plan was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in 2012. We continue to build on this and in 2022 are developing a new RAP to guide us in the future based on Reconciliation Australia's framework of respect, relationships, opportunities, and governance. This includes increasing understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge establishing mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, general employment targets as well as for senior leadership roles (Outcome 6) and improving the accountability and transparency of Red Cross RAP governance.

Going further - changing thoughts, beliefs and actions starts by telling the truth

Internally, Red Cross is committed to provide access and equity to Red Cross people and for our clients and communities we work with. We are mindful of the weight of ongoing prejudice and discrimination inherent in many of the power and authority structures and institutions throughout Australian society that persists and diminishes us all. We work to actively and purposefully change for the better and have pledged to play our role in dismantling the system. This includes looking at how we provide humanitarian aid and are actively working towards localisation and 'de-colonising' of the aid system.⁵

With the active and visible leadership of the Red Cross Board, Red Cross launched 'Building an Inclusive Red Cross' initiative on 9th December 2021 – a review that will look at where Red Cross is today, and most importantly, identify further real and systemic change for Red Cross.

The review will adopt an intersectional framework to understand how personal identity – all the aspects that make us unique such as gender, sexuality, disability, and so on – intersect with Red Cross' social systems and structures to influence experiences of inclusion and exclusion. We know we can do more to encourage and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

⁵ RCRC Conference (2020)

Red Cross is working with independent providers to ensure the process is culturally safe, healing and confidential where requested.

A complementary piece of work is the development of an Internal Discussion Paper to define what Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging means at Red Cross. The intention is to create a shared understanding, and foundation to underpin all our Inclusion and Diversity work.

Red Cross recommends that:

4. National Outcomes 5 and 6 are retained and extended to encourage all businesses and organisations in Australia to take responsibility for ensuring they respect diversity and critically review their own practices against the Framework.

5. Definitions, data, accountability, and approach

Understanding the nature, prevalence, and incidence of racism (National Outcome 1) will be essential to measuring impact, the extent of change and government accountability to targets (National Outcome 7).

Definitions and language

Currently the proposed National Outcomes and Key Actions and Strategies use varying forms of language, for example:

- “Indigenous peoples” and “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” are used interchangeably,
- “Migrants”, “Multicultural” “diverse communities” and “CALD communities” are all used within the document,
- terms such as racism, race hate, victims of racism, racial equality, racial discrimination, intersectional discrimination, racist extremism, systemic or institutional discrimination are all used, and
- British heritage and migrant heritage are mentioned together in Guiding Principle 2. It is unclear why British heritage needs to be distinct from the heritage of people who have migrated to Australia from other nations. If the intention with mentioning British heritage is to refer to Australia’s colonial past, then this should be distinct from any reference to migrant heritage.

To avoid confusion, ensure targeted action and assist with measuring progress and outcomes, it is recommended that terms are used consistently throughout, and definitions are provided in an accompanying document. This is particularly important for terms such as racism (inter-personal, institutional, and internalised) and racial discrimination, racial equity, racial equality, and the intersectionality of discrimination.

Red Cross recommends that:

5. Terms are consistent and definitions are provided in an accompanying definitions document.

Data

As an organisation with clients across the country requiring a range of supports from a substantial cross-over of departments, we have experience working with federal as well as state and territory governments and departments. We have found that government responses are strongest when a

coordinated and accountable whole of government priority view is taken - across governments, departments, and agencies, and supported by strong interagency governance and accountability. This helps to reduce silos.

There are a range of strategies that could be used to achieve improved whole of government response to identify racism and the impact of actions to protect from and respond to racism, which could be strengthened in the Framework.

These include improving and formalising whole of government approaches and interagency collaboration, through legislation and/or policy that mandates shared data or case planning and decision making related to reported instances of racism. For example, across Juvenile Justice and Child Protection departments, or across Department of Home Affairs and Services Australia. These approaches have applicability beyond data frameworks and should utilise approaches which empower people and strengthen their decision making.

Red Cross is aware that data frameworks are either in place, or are being developed, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' data which includes protections around data sovereignty. These are being developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the organisations that represent them, and through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

When considering our own data, we have found value in testing quantitative data with people who have lived experience; not only does this help to highlight gaps in data but it also enables the community to be the decision makers and to lead priorities that are important to them.

Our experience with the COVID-19 response is that data sets for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are being developed, however further cross-government and community sector investment will be needed to improve the accuracy and maturity of this data. For example, Department of Health and Services Australia COVID-related data is currently unable to distinguish people who are temporary migrants or people on different visa categories (such as humanitarian visas). This is important because of the intersectionality of racism and people on temporary visas may face different barriers and challenges to people who are born in Australia or people who have permanent residency. Data sovereignty strategies, like those being developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' data, need to also be developed using similar approaches for culturally and linguistically diverse people's data.

Red Cross recommends that:

6. Cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional data sets are established, across Federal as well as State and Territories governments, with appropriate safeguards in place, which can be disaggregated by general visa category as well as ethnicity.

Accountability

Establishing a monitoring and evaluation element to the Framework will be instrumental to the Framework's implementation, informing decision making and impact assessment and upholding government and civil society accountability and compliance. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Monitoring and Evaluation guide provides guidance on strategies that could be applied to ensure the Framework is implemented effectively.⁶

In addition to governments adopting "*targeted and appropriate measures*" (National Outcome 7), we suggest specific actions are developed through co-design processes and included with a requirement to report on progress against measures, and not only on "*the experiences of racism and racial discrimination*", for example, as currently presented in National Outcome 1.

We note the consultation paper includes a previous racial equality framework developed by Dr Helen Szoke in 2012 and agree with her statement that building racial equality is needed,

⁶ IFRC, (2020).

alongside eliminating racism. It is positive to see the 2022 framework aims to go further, has a focus on youth and preventing racism through awareness and education.

Within the 2012 framework, many of the priorities include specific actions. For example, the priority to “*work with bodies that regulate professions to identify and address any systemic inequalities in the recognition of overseas qualifications*”, provides a practical action that could be taken and which, based on our experience working with people through the Humanitarian Settlement Program, would have positive impact. The 2022 Framework’s actions are currently broad which has potential to limit its impact. In our experience, and as demonstrated in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**, the process of identifying specific actions and targets is most effective if it is collaborative and includes the voice of lived experience.

We are aware of the work of the Queensland Government in leading in this approach with their Hospital and Health Boards (Health Equity Strategies) Amendment Regulation 2021 and supporting Health Equity Framework. The Health Equity Framework includes clear requirements around accountability to stakeholders (including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the wider public, in not only the development of locally relevant, place-based solutions and targets, but also in the monitoring and evaluation of how the health service is tracking against those targets.⁷ This is an example of a legal framework established to create equity (of relevance to National Outcome 2) and of a government’s commitment to eradicating racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (of relevance to National Outcome 3) through true partnership.

Red Cross recommends that:

7. The Framework include specific actions which are co-designed with community, and that systems to ensure public accountability and transparency of performance against those targets are incorporated into the Framework.

General considerations

We note that other nation’s anti-racism plans and strategies have been considered in the design of this Framework. As part of a global Movement, Red Cross recognises the value of learning from others. We note the concept paper refers to the Canadian and British models, other nations which reflect similar dominant cultures to Australia. Given the purpose of the Framework is to tackle racism, it could be beneficial to approach the framework from a non-dominant perspective. Approaching it from this perspective might also highlight the need to include greater understanding of the harms caused by racism in the outcomes.

There is also a need to ensure that the Framework does not place the onus on people experiencing racism to lead the change. This should be shared responsibility. Within Red Cross we are acutely aware of the cultural load that many of our staff experience, where cultural load is the (often invisible) additional load borne by people where they are only one of a small number of people in an environment who are called upon for their cultural (or racial) expertise.

Red Cross recommends that:

8. That the Committee consider: (a) the extent to which the voices of people outside the dominant Australian culture have influenced the design of this Framework, and (b) how to manage the cultural load that the framework could place upon people who experience racism.

⁷ Queensland Parliament, (2021); Queensland Government, (2021).

Conclusion

We support the Commission developing this Anti-Racism Framework and believe it is an important and necessary Framework for Australia.

In our work, we apply a principle of 'do no harm'. We are aware of the harm that could be caused if nothing is done with this draft Framework, and of the potential harm to community if this Framework is not developed properly or followed up with real action, as issues could be exacerbated.

We welcome opportunity to contribute further to the task of refining the key actions and strategies based on our extensive experience working with people experiencing vulnerability in Australia and our national reach and would be happy to discuss the case studies provided.

We welcome a meeting to describe some of our experiences with racism in Australia and stand ready, as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, to support the ongoing development of this important Framework.

Further Information:

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Appendix A: “Stardust” by Banafsheh Driver (2021)⁸

This prose poem was written by Ms Banafsheh Driver, a former refugee, who settled in Western Australia in 2010 after life in Iran, Belgium and Scotland.

The fate of us humans IS to feel love, pain, joy and sorrow while we dwell on the face of the earth. We are at times aware that this granted time is brief, and that finally, we have no option but to take our hopes and fears with us into the unknown.

All our fragile hearts pump red blood. All our fragile hearts, desire loving kindness.

East or West, whichever land you come from, your deepest fears and highest hopes are very much the same as the next person. We live and we die and while we live we store in our brains memories of manifold deeds both good and bad and collect in our hearts feelings of joy and sorrow.

No matter if you believe that we are the children of the great spirit or an evolutionary accident, no matter if you hold the belief in almighty God or the pillars of science deep in yourself, it unfolds that we are ALL star dust.

On the one hand, astronomers tell us that we are made of cosmological matter. All the atoms in our body are made either in the big bang, or in the centres of massive stars which go supernova. We are all recycled dead creatures. We are the ultimate recycled product. When the stars explode all the dust gets mixed up. No atom is better than any other one. You break any person down into their chemical composition, you will discover that each and everyone of us is made of the same amount of oxygen and hydrogen, nitrogen and carbon.

On the other hand, almost every ancient or modern religion tells us that we must seek harmony and oneness.

We must commend more highly those people who strive to establish union amongst us, the peacemakers who speak of safety and amity. We are told in every language and by all men of God and many spiritual leaders that we are connected, that we are stronger in our collectivity and inter-dependence, that we should celebrate the communities we belong to.

But I must remember that my skin, my language, my forefathers, my abilities and finally my club and my group are only better than others, when they lead me to love and respect the other. To forget about myself, to notice the other, to help that person, to feel their pain, to stand up for them, to remember their struggle. Surely, our worth as a human being, is measured by our acts of loving kindness. All our worldly achievements be it monetary, spiritual or intellectual are not worth a fig (or one watermelon seed as a sage once said), if we perpetually put ourselves and our needs at the centre of our universe.

As we go about our days, let us question the news item, the movie, the politician or the family member who vilifies others based on their differences. We all have a little bigoted troll deep within us, he has been sitting there since the times of cavemen. He tells us to run and hide, attack or ignore ‘the other’ who is different. Let us be the seekers of truth and the doers of good as often as the primitive creature inside us allows it. The multiple skin colours and outward characteristics and the different smells and sounds we make don’t divide us, they simply make us more interesting and beautiful.

Here is what I see: that we should acknowledge the troll within and recognize that on a very deep and primordial level we value and are attracted to what we have in common with others. This is a blessing as we can use our commonalities to strengthen our human connections.

All we need to do is to consciously elevate the importance of our bone deep similarities while finding skin deep differences intriguing and beautiful.

And remember, without exception, we are All star dust.

⁸ The views expressed in the prose poem are those of the writer in her personal capacity.

Appendix B: Red Cross Case studies which demonstrate factors and approaches that could be included in a Framework

Case study 1: Building young leaders' understanding through privileging voice

Digital story telling in Wallaga Lake (NSW) - Building young future leaders' understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and language through privileging the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

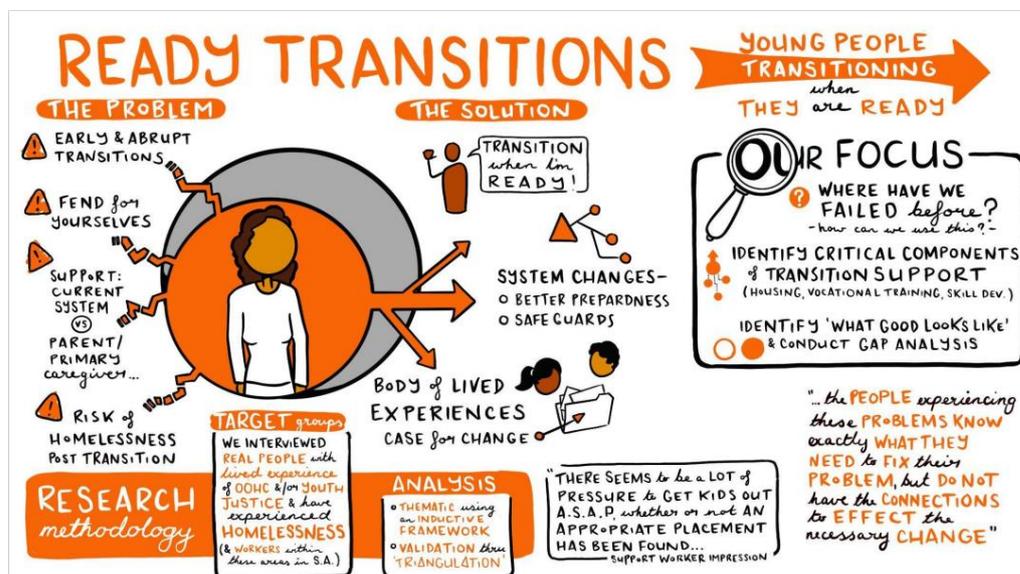


In Wallaga Lake, our [digital storytelling program](#) aims to cultivate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young future leaders, bring culture and language into the classroom, and create a space for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories to be celebrated and valued.

We are an ally to support revitalising the local Dhurga language at Bermagui Public School with deep collaboration of Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW Government, Bega Valley Shire Council and ABC South Eastern NSW, which sparked the publication of a book and additional resources. Wallaga Lake Art Project was to refresh and give new life to artworks in the community. The project was borne from many conversations in community, with the intention of lifting the spirit of the community. The impact comes from proactively privileging the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and creating connection, sharing stories and learning from each other whilst being in a school environment. Our work in Wallaga Lake is about lifting the self-esteem of young people in school and community environments through learning art.

Case study 2: Driving action on homelessness through working collectively

The Constellation – Better Journeys Project



In 2018, Australian Red Cross, the Centre for Social Impact, Mission Australia and PwC Australia joined forces in the belief that together we stand a better chance of driving action on homelessness. Red Cross brings expertise and a national network to engage people with lived experience of homelessness including a specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team and an identified position on the executive team. We work as part of a team to develop and test solutions to problems, such as what a system could look like when young people transition from out of home care and youth justice systems when they are ready to do so.

Creating a culturally safe environment for the project is a core priority. We supported the development of a set of First Nations Inclusion Principles. These include the need for self-reflection (being aware of how our own beliefs, values, families and community influence and impact our interaction with others), privileging the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (allowing their voice to be the underpinning cornerstone of the conversation “*nothing about us without us*”), recognising the unconscious bias in the conversation (having the ability to draw attention to unconscious bias while maintaining positive working relationships), recognising cultural load and that many people at times carry a huge cultural load and obligation for and to their family and communities, and working in equal partnership based upon a mutual respect of experience, knowledge and understanding (“*we don’t need protection, we need partners*”).

In developing every solution, the project builds a body of remunerated lived experience insights and brings to life the case for change. Through working collaboratively with other agencies and with people with lived experience, practical, realistic, non-racist solutions are being designed and evaluated.

Case study 3: Building welcoming communities

In Search of Safety – Building a community understanding of refugees and the journey they have been on.



In Search of Safety is a social inclusion initiative, working with communities to build an environment where all people feel like they belong. Volunteers and storytellers with personal lived experience of seeking asylum deliver values-centred, knowledge-based workshops in schools and various adult forums, exploring forced migration to develop participant understanding and empathy, and provide tools for taking action.

Sessions are delivered through a principled impartial and neutral framework designed as fact-based humanitarian conversations, allowing for a constructive, dialogue-based, anti-racism intervention. Sessions address questions and misconceptions through presentations, simulations and stories.

Our outputs and outcomes lead to communities that are more welcoming and inclusive of migrants, particularly of people seeking safety. It has been found that the intervention was effective in increasing children's positivity towards people seeking protection, reducing prejudiced attitudes and increasing intentions to interact.⁹ Through the program, Red Cross has developed this [Welcome Toolkit](#), informed by thousands of responses from students around Australia. The Toolkit contains 21 ideas for young people to take action on, enhancing social capacity for new and emerging communities to settle, integrate and thrive.

The program, through its design, privileges the voice of lived experience. We actively sought to embed remunerated voices of lived experience from individuals belonging to the forced migrant community, demonstrating the value of this powerful instrument for change. We recently also piloted a transformational ethical storytelling approach, providing professional and personal development training to people with lived experience of being a refugee on storytelling, public speaking, advocacy and media to ensure confident self-representation.

⁹ Hartley et. Al (2021).

Case study 4: Connecting Women Program – celebrating humanity

Building Migrant Women's confidence, capacity and economic capability through community connections



Red Cross recognises that migrant women often face various barriers adjusting to a new culture, language, navigating the government and social structures, adjusting to lifestyle and social expectations, raising children and many are isolated by their circumstances. We have met many migrant women who are vulnerable due to their circumstances, alienated, and disengaged with the local community. As a result, Red Cross initiated the Connected Women Program in the Northern Territory in 2017 to increase the capacity, abilities, and confidence of migrant women, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in Northern Territory.

The goal of this program is to build and strengthen social connections through developing skills, knowledge, language ability and confidence by providing safe spaces to host workshops, events, lessons and participating in the local community events while celebrating and sharing their own culture with each other and the wider Northern Territory community, including Aboriginal communities.

The Connected Women Group now has over 350 members from over 40 nationalities; each a champion of resilience seeking to build a purposeful life for herself and her family.

Since coming together, these women have been engaged in community initiatives identified and led by the group – a testament to our commitment to support and empower communities and function in a Community Development role. The Katherine group recently organised a major community event – The Joy of Many Colours fashion show and Taste of Many Colours food expo. As the event title indicates, it was a celebration of individual difference with 13 countries represented in the fashion show and 93 different dishes from 25 countries in the food expo.

The Connected Women program is a grassroots program that brings people together irrespective of their background or race and celebrates individuality, commonality, and humanity.

Appendix C: Pledge by Australia and Australian Red Cross. Number: SP330197

Every four years, members of the Movement liaise with representatives of the states which are party to the Geneva Conventions at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The Conference is the Movement's highest deliberative body and offers an opportunity to examine cross-cutting priorities and challenges.

Pledges are one of the most creative and flexible outcomes of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. They are an important tool, giving International Conference members the freedom and creativity to take concrete, measurable and action-oriented voluntary commitments on issues of priority for their local, national and regional contexts – or even at the global level. Joint pledges by National Societies and governments provide the basis for joint plans and commitments.

Building and Strengthening Welcoming Communities, a joint Australian Red Cross and Australian Government pledge¹⁰

A) Objectives of the pledge:

For the years 2020 – 2023, the Australian Government and Australian Red Cross hereby pledge:

- To build, strengthen and learn from welcoming communities across Australia where the economic and social contributions of migrants, are recognised and valued.
- To strengthen migrant and refugee understanding of Australia and our shared values.
- To continue to work to prevent or address discrimination and racism towards migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse groups in Australia.
- To enhance social participation of newly arrived migrants, including refugees, by supporting key local communities to ensure they understand, welcome and can support new migrants.
- To enhance economic participation, by reducing existing employment barriers and building the capacity of employers to engage migrants.
- To ensure the successful permanent and temporary settlement of migrants, including refugees in Australia, with a focus in regional areas.

B) Action plan:

- Work together to promote a socially cohesive Australia by celebrating our shared values, the country's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, as well as the economic and social contributions of migrants, through ensuring we represent that diversity, and that we profile the voices of lived experience.
- Work together to implement community-based activities, which foster increased understanding, partnerships that promote intercultural dialogue and social and economic inclusion and encourage mobilisation of local communities to take action.
- Work together to support Australian employers to create welcoming and safe workplaces for all migrants, including in regional areas.
- Work together to ensure primary and secondary settlement is informed by including and elevating the voices of people with lived experience as well as local communities.
- Work together to ensure settlement is locally led and enhanced by cross sector coordination and whole of government approaches.

C) Indicators for measuring progress:

- In three sites, developing a model around building social cohesion and measuring impact of activities.

¹⁰ See: <https://rcrcconference.org/pledge/building-and-strengthening-welcoming-communities/>

- In areas where Red Cross delivers HSP, test models of partnerships, including expanding volunteering, cross sector assessment tools, and orientation.
- In the roll out of Red Cross school, workplace and community –based education, aim to reach 10,000 people per year.
- Test and learn from pilot projects on community mobilization, to be led by Red Cross in late 2019/2020, and built on in subsequent years.
- Conducting stakeholder engagement to understand what makes strong, community led settlement.