

Racism. It Stops With Me

Conversation Guide

July 2022



The *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign asks Australians to reflect on their relationship to race and the role of racism in shaping Australian society. The campaign film may also be a useful tool for starting conversations about racism. The purpose of this guide is to outline some key considerations when discussing the campaign and the issues it touches on.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for those who want to talk about the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign video, and the issues it discusses, with their colleagues, family and friends. It is designed to give campaign supporters the tools to engage in conversations about racism and anti-racism, and will be most useful in the context of conversations with other people who already recognise that racism is a problem and want to do something about it.

This guide is not intended to support conversations with people who deny, openly advocate for, or defend racism, which requires a different approach.



First things first

Talking about racism with those around you is important. However, it's important that you've taken the time to reflect on your own experiences, biases, and relationship to racism, before doing this. The [Racism. It Stops With Me](#) website provides information about racism and practical steps that you can take to develop your skills in anti-racism. It includes [useful definitions](#) and examples of the different ways racism operates. The [Questions and Context](#) section invites you to ask yourself questions about the role of racism in shaping society, including your own life. The [Resource Hub](#) also contains information about other organisations and initiatives that can support deeper learning.

Anti-racism is an ongoing process of learning, listening, and refining your skills. When you do have conversations with others, acknowledge that you are on a journey, too, and invite them to come along with you.

Setting the scene

Conversations about racism, and anti-racism, must **always centre the perspectives of First Nations people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities**. As the First Peoples of Australia, First Nations people have a unique experience of racism and experience racism in many forms. Many First Nations peoples and communities have led anti-racism and championed racial justice in Australia for centuries. Ensure that your conversations centre the messages being shared by these communities, and acknowledge their experience and expertise.

As much as possible, **focus on solutions and actions**, and point to examples of successful anti-racist action, as this will help to keep the conversation focussed on the possibility and need for change. This can be challenging, as it is also important to hold space for the complexity and severity of the problems being discussed. However, in many cases, communities already know and are providing tangible solutions.



DEADLY CONNECTIONS
COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SERVICES

An example of this is the work of **Deadly Connections**, an Aboriginal Community-led, not-for-profit organisation addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the child protection and justice systems by breaking cycles of systemic racism, trauma and disadvantage.

Talking about racism can be uncomfortable. Encourage those you speak to (and remind yourself) to lean into feelings of discomfort, as this is where the most growth happens. Acknowledge that conversations about racism can be challenging and confronting, but this only underscores their importance.



Tips for framing conversations about racism

Passing the Message Stick is a First Nations-led research project that seeks to transform the way we talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice. Many of the lessons learned from that project may be useful in conversations about racism more broadly. Some examples include:

- **Start the conversation** by discussing shared values, such as *fairness, justice, freedom, safety, equality, dignity, community*
- **Use a strength-based approach** when discussing communities negatively affected by racism and avoid deficit discourse. ‘Deficit discourse’ refers to the patterns of thought, language or practice that represent people in terms of deficiencies or failures.¹ Avoid deficit-based, homogenising language, such as: *vulnerable, disadvantaged, living in poverty*. For more information, check out this [Summary Report](#) on deficit discourse by the Lowitja Institute
- **Avoid negation** – don’t repeat the opponents’ message. Negation is when we say what something is *not* rather than explicitly stating what it *is*. Negating a particular mistruth often serves to reinforce it in the listener’s mind. Instead, we need to reframe the conversation and be clear about what we know.

Read more about this and other insights in the [full report](#).

¹ William Fogarty, Hannah Bulloch, Siobhan McDonnell and Michael Davis, *Deficit Discourse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Policy* (Summary Report, The Lowitja Institute, 2018) 1 <<https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Document/PDF/deficit-discourse-summary-report.pdf>>.



Further reading/next steps

Conversations are important, but they will only ever form part of the solution. Remember that learning is ongoing. It's important to stay open minded, committed, and at all times centre the perspectives of those who have lived experience of racism.

Here is a list of some next steps you could take:

- **Continue your learning** via the [Commit to Learning](#) section of the Racism. *It Stops With Me* website
- **Visit the Resource Hub** and create a list of anti-racism initiatives and organisations to follow and support, with whatever resources available to you
- **Visit the [Take Action](#) section** of the Racism. *It Stops With Me* website to find out how you can be part of the solution when it comes to tackling racism
- **Explore the possibility of hosting a conversation** about racism in your workplace using the [Let's Talk Race Guide](#)

- **Encourage your organisation** to use the [Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool](#), an online, confidential self-assessment tool that supports organisations to strengthen their approach to cultural diversity and anti-racism in the workplace

There are many great resources out there to support you as you continue having conversations about racism and advocating for racial justice and equity. Some examples include:

- [Raise the Age Messaging Guide](#)
- [Incarceration Nation Conversation Guide](#)
- [Passing the Message Stick](#)