

Guide to conducting a 'Cultural Temperature Check' within your organisation



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

RACISM.
IT STOPS
WITH ME

The Australian Human Rights Commission acknowledge the traditional custodians of land, sea, waterways and sky throughout Australia and pay respect to First Nations Elders past and present. Their sovereignty has never been ceded. The Commission also acknowledges the ongoing work of Australia's First Peoples in anti-racism efforts since colonisation.

Acknowledgements

The Race Discrimination Commissioner acknowledges those who contributed to this iteration of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign, in particular acknowledging the emotional labour of those with lived experience of racism. The Commissioner is grateful for the guidance of the Expert Advisory Groups overseeing both the campaign and the Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool and the significant contributions of all consultation participants.

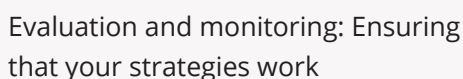
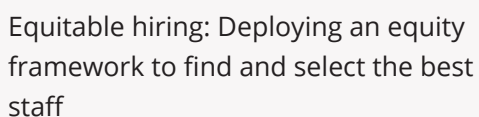
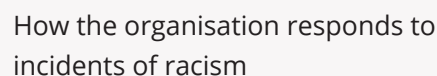
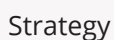
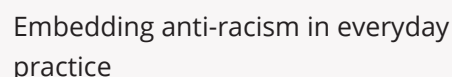
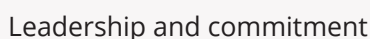
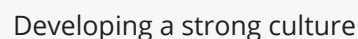
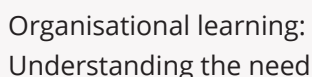
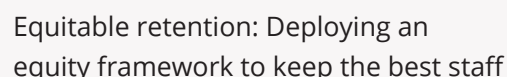
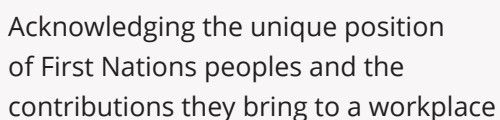
Contact details

For further information about the Australian Human Rights Commission, please visit **www.humanrights.gov.au** or email **antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au**

Design and layout

Dancingirl Designs

The Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC's) [Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool](#) is a great first step to assessing the current level of cultural inclusivity within your organisation. This tool can be used in tandem with this guide to conduct a comprehensive check of your organisation. These resources are directly geared towards creating positive change and embedding anti-racism in the workplace.



1 'Cultural safety' is a term first used by Māori nurse and anthropologist Irihapeti Ramsden in the 1980s in the context of health inequities experienced by Indigenous Māori peoples in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Ramsden's cultural safety framework has been adopted by healthcare bodies (in particular, First Nations-led healthcare bodies) in Australia to promote equitable healthcare services and delivery, and has also been used to discuss the level of safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in Australian workplaces. For more information, see Elaine Papps and Irihapeti Ramsden, 'Cultural Safety in Nursing: The New Zealand Experience' (1996) 8(5) *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 491; Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, *Cultural Safety Position Statement* (2014) <<https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.110/dgc.5bd.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/background-paper-for-catsinam-national-cultural-safety-summit-final-wfsnmfflyule.pdf%20%20>>; Diversity Council Australia and Jumbunna Institute, *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians* (Report, Diversity Council Australian and Jumbunna Institute, 2020) <<https://www.dca.org.au/research/gari-yala-speak-truth>>.

A comprehensive check could consist of all or some of the following:

1. A high-level review of corporate policies, protocols, and structures regarding anti-racism and cultural diversity, including an assessment of the extent to which the policies have been implemented both horizontally and vertically within an organisation. This includes reviewing:

- **Cultural competence and anti-racism training currently in place.** Training should be regularly provided and reviewed. As a framework, 'cultural competence' has been critiqued by some for its conceptual limitations and failure to disrupt racial inequity.² For that reason, programs should examine the role of race and enduring legacies of colonisation in shaping Australian society, including workplaces, and provide participants with opportunities to reflect on their own cultural identity, as well as concepts of racial privilege, prejudice, and anti-racism.³ Examples of best-practice training programmes as well as services that can provide expert training and accreditation are provided later in this resource.



- 2 Sue Green, 'Cultural Support and Social Work' in Bindi Bennet & Sue Green (eds.), *Our Voices: Aboriginal Social Work* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.) 175, 179.; Janine Mohamed, 'Cultural safety matters – the conversation we need to keep having', *IndigenousX* (Article, 24 March 2018) <<https://indigenoux.com.au/janine-mohamed-cultural-safety-matters/>>.
- 3 Bronwyn Fredericks & Debbie Bargallie, 'Which way? Talking culture, talking race': Unpacking an Indigenous cultural competency course' (2016) 9(1) *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 4, 12.

- **The approach to cultural diversity and inclusivity in recruitment processes.** This should include actively identifying and addressing structural barriers that may prevent diverse recruitment, a commitment to diversity on recruitment panels and a focus on 'cultural add' rather than 'cultural fit'. Recent research published by Diversity Council Australia & Monash University explored the impact of unconscious bias on recruitment processes that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as offering strategies organisations can take to reduce bias in AI-led recruitment processes.⁴ A useful factsheet summarising the findings and strategies of this research can be found on Diversity Council Australia's [website](#).



4 Diversity Council Australia & Monash University, 'Inclusive AI At Work' (Infographic, 2022) <https://www.dca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/dca_ai_infographic_final.pdf>.

- **The level of cultural inclusivity and accessibility facilitated by hybrid e-working arrangements.** Covid-19 has seen an increased reliance on hybrid working arrangements dependent on Information & Communication Technology (ICT) practices. E-working involves work processes which occur within the confines of ICT, either remotely or in an office-environment.⁵ E-working environments may be disproportionately inaccessible to those from negatively racialised communities for a number of reasons including the uneven distribution of e-working infrastructure, language, and technological literacy barriers, as well as culturally inappropriate ICT processes⁶ and the costs associated with facilitating ICT for home use.⁷ Additionally, the conflation of public and private space in work-from-home arrangements can be potentially harmful and/or culturally inappropriate for certain communities and groups.⁸ E-working arrangements must attend to cultural diversity and inclusion through content that matches the needs of users and promotes equitable access and outcomes to e-working.⁴ To ensure this, ICT and e-working processes should be co-designed with team members from a broad range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in addition to those with diverse access requirements, roles and levels of responsibility. Where this is not possible, an external consultant may be required.



- 5 Adapted from: Bolanle A. Olaniran, 'Discerning Culture in E-Learning and in the Global Workplaces' (2009) 1(3) *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal*, pp. 180–196.
- 6 Research indicates the importance of adapting technologies and e-working practices to consider and foster understanding of different cultural communication patterns, values, and societal norms. See Bolanle A. Olaniran, 'Discerning Culture in E-Learning and in the Global Workplaces' (2009) 1(3) *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal*, pp. 180–196.
- 7 Laura Morgan Roberts & Courtney L. McCluney, 'Working from Home While Black' (Article, June 17 2020) Harvard Business Review <<https://hbr.org/2020/06/working-from-home-while-black>>.
- 8 Productivity Commission, 'Working From Home' (Research Paper, September 2021) <<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/working-from-home/working-from-home.pdf>>.

○ **The extent to which complaints mechanisms and conflict resolution strategies are culturally safe and accessible.**

Complaints mechanisms and conflict resolution strategies must centre anonymity, confidentiality, and the perspectives of those targeted/negatively impacted.⁹ It is important to consider the assumptions that underpin complaints mechanisms and conflict and dispute resolution processes within your organisation, as these may not be safe or culturally appropriate for all staff. For example, The [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association's Cultural Safety Framework](#) highlights the need for effective conflict resolution processes which value local First Nations cultural protocols.¹⁰



- 9 The Australian Human Rights Commissions 'Guide to racism complaints handling policy' provides more information and some general principals for developing a complaints handling policy. See Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Guide to racism complaints handling policy' (2021) <https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/ahrc_sr_2021_7_complaints_handling_policy_a4_r3.pdf>.
- 10 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association, 'Cultural Safety Framework' (Document, 2016) <<https://www.natsihwa.org.au/cultural-safety-framework>>.

○ **The ability to practise, and accessibility of, cultural and religious forms of expression in the workplace.** The right to enjoy and benefit from culture is contained in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.¹¹ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People also outlines the right of First Nations People to observe and practice their distinct religious and cultural practices. Workplaces must facilitate and empower those from negatively racialised communities to access these rights to culture, religion and language. [The Diversity Council Australia's Multi-faith Workplace Guidelines for Managers](#) highlights the need for workplaces to have:

- ⦿ Dress codes and policies that are responsive to religious diversity
- ⦿ Reasonable consideration to requests for leave for religious reasons
- ⦿ Designated facilities available for prayer and other practices
- ⦿ An approach to end of year and other holidays that is sensitive to cultural diversity
- ⦿ A policy to ensure that work-related events include food and drink options inclusive of diverse cultures and dietary requirements¹²

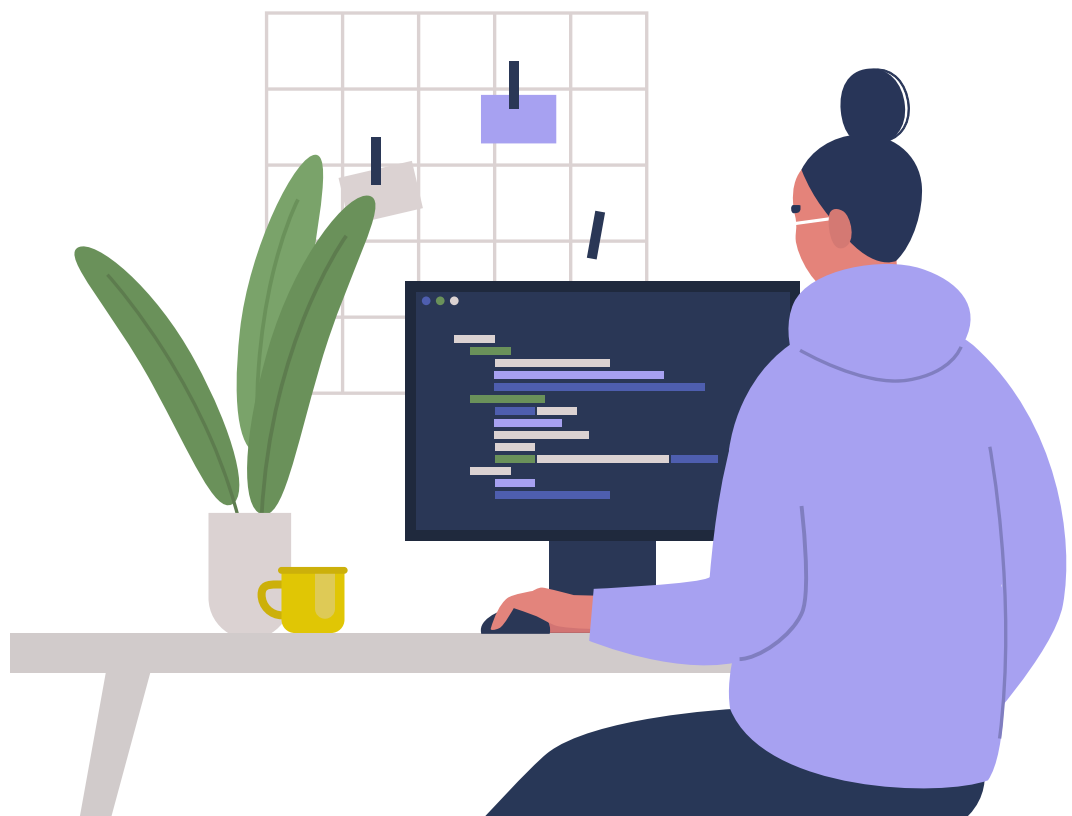


11 Attorney General's Department, 'Right to enjoy and benefit from culture' (Webpage) <<https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/human-rights-scrutiny/public-sector-guidance-sheets/right-enjoy-and-benefit-culture>>.

12 Diversity Council Australia, 'Multi-Faith Workplace Guidelines for Managers' (2009) <<https://paperzz.com/doc/7850624/multi-faith-workplace-guidelines-for-managers>>.

2. Qualitative research methods, including focus groups, interviews, online written submissions and surveys with staff and the leadership body to determine the level of cultural inclusivity and cultural safety as experienced by staff from negatively racialised communities. This may include:

- Focus groups, which can be particularly useful as they allow for the capture of multiple and diverse perspectives on a range of topics
- Interviews and online written submissions, offered to staff who may not feel comfortable sharing or disclosing information in a group setting, or who may be unable to participate in a focus group
- Anonymised surveys seeking the perspectives of staff about cultural diversity, cultural inclusion, and cultural safety within the workplace and measures that could be used to improve these (note that this may not be appropriate in small teams where there is a risk of staff being identified by their responses)



Whilst undertaking these processes, it is important to ensure:

- All data and information recorded or collected is de-identified and treated as confidential
- An understanding of intersecting forms of marginalisation and discrimination is embedded in all policies and materials relating to cultural inclusivity and cultural safety in the workplace
 - ⦿ This includes how experiences of racism and cultural exclusion may intersect with experiences of sexism, homophobia, ageism etc.
- A commitment from organisational leadership to invest in the process is guaranteed. This is to ensure that adequate time and resources are available to action findings of the temperature check as much as possible
- Focus groups and interviews are conducted by an expert third party with relevant qualifications to conduct interviews relating to issues of cultural diversity, cultural safety and racism in the workplace using a trauma-informed approach
- A final report, including recommendations and specified goals for change or improvement be prepared at the completion of the check and shared with staff
- A cultural temperature check is undertaken on a regular basis to evaluate and measure progress against specified goals
- Training is regularly undertaken within the organisation, demonstrating an active and ongoing commitment to disrupting white supremacy and promoting anti-racism, cultural safety, inclusion, and racial equity in the workplace

Some useful resources to assist with the facilitation of a check include:

- » **Australian Human Rights Commission Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool**
- » **Diversity Council of Australia and Jumbunna Institute's Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) Report**
- » **Diversity Council of Australia Racism at Work research**
- » **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healthcare Workers Association Cultural Safety Framework**
- » **Victorian Department of Health and Human Services' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Continuum Reflective Tool**
- » **Australian Human Rights Commission Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) website** with links to the report, implementation framework and other action-focused and strengths-based resources
- » **Settlement Services International's Guide for Choosing a Training Provider for your Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy**

The below organisations may be available to provide expert advice regarding anti-racism training and the undertaking of a cultural temperature check. This is a non-exhaustive list and does not necessarily represent endorsement from the AHRC:

- » **Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association** offers online, individual and self-paced training modules as well as face-to-face workshops focused specifically on cultural safety
- » **Evolve** offers a range of cultural competence training services including an online education course, Yarning webinars, Yarning circles as well as ally accreditation
- » **Hue. Colour the Conversation** provides anti-racism training for organisations and can support organisations to set up safe spaces for employees to engage in meaningful conversations about racism
- » **IndigenousX** provides training and consulting services delivered by expert First Nations facilitators on a wide range of topics including anti-racism, community engagement and corporate responsibility
- » **The Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research** offers a range of services, including cultural safety audits
- » **Mindtribes** specialise in building inclusive cultures and have experience in expert facilitation
- » The University of Sydney's **National Centre for Cultural Competence** offers online modules and learning resources for individuals and organisations to develop understanding and capabilities regarding cultural competence, and to learn strategies to engage in active anti-racism
- » **Zion Engagement & Planning** specialise in First Nations engagement and cultural capacity training tailored towards the built environment industry to help foster cultural capacity in working with Country, community, and culture

Visit the [Racism. It Stops With Me Resource Hub](#) and select the 'Training/Consulting' filter to view more organisations that may be able to assist.

