

11<sup>th</sup> of February 2025

## Statement on Racism and Discrimination

Victoria's rich cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is one of our greatest assets. Victorians come from more than 300 ancestries, speak more than 290 languages and dialects and follow over 200 faiths. We are an immigration nation. Almost half of our current population was either born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas. We celebrate this diversity, and recognise it enriches our shared experiences and strengthens our collective goals.

Building a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria means more than just celebrating diversity and multiculturalism. Racism and discrimination cause real harm – both to the people affected, and to the broader community. As a community we need to take actions to prevent and confront racism in all forms, so that Victoria is a state that is not just diverse but safe, inclusive and welcoming for all people.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) defines racism as “the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others.”

In November 2024, the AHRC released its recommendation for a '[national anti-racism framework](#)', outlining a roadmap to eliminating racism in Australia. Among the key findings was that, despite the diversity of people's backgrounds – including location, age, disability, sexuality, faith and cultural background – racism was widespread throughout the country and entrenched in society.

In December 2024, the Senate released its report '[right wing extremist movements in Australia](#)', citing a rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia in Australia, as well as religious hate crimes, which has had a detrimental impact on social cohesion in our society. The report also cites an increase in abuse and racism towards First Nations people in the lead up to the 2023 Voice Referendum.

The Victorian Government has recently developed a new state-wide '[anti-racism strategy](#)' to proactively prevent and address racism in Victoria. As faith leaders, our hope is that the implementation of this strategy will bring about positive changes within the Victorian community, and, as faith communities, we are pleased to be part of that change.

*Promoting a Harmonious Multifaith Victoria*

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As people of faith, with shared values of compassion and respect, informed by our faith traditions and teachings:

- We stand against all forms of racism and discrimination, and affirm that every human being, as members of the human family, should be treated with dignity, equality and respect;
- We commit ourselves to promoting an environment that will prevent and confront racism and discrimination in all forms, fostering positive attitudes and actions that contribute to a harmonious and inclusive society.
- We recognise that Scriptures, sacred texts, and cultural traditions and practices should not be used to justify or excuse racism or discrimination;
- We acknowledge that overcoming racism and fostering inclusion is an active and ongoing process of building a society that is rich in both its unity and its diversity - a process that requires conscious and intentional work by all.
- We commit ourselves to participate fully in building a society where we all flourish through cooperation and a continuous process of giving and receiving, where everyone is given the opportunity to fully and meaningfully participate in the life of society and where all are accepted and valued, regardless of race.

*Faith Communities Council of Victoria is comprised of the following peak bodies: Baha'i Community of Victoria, Brahma Kumaris Australia, Buddhist Council of Victoria, Hindu Community Council of Australia (Vic), Islamic Council of Victoria, Jain Council of Victoria, Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria and the Victorian Council of Churches.*

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