

Anti-Racism Toolkit

Racial Literacy

Racial literacy is the knowledge and skills to understand race and racism in society. It helps individual recognise and engage with the lived experiences of racially marginalised groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Creating change starts with acknowledging that there is a problem.

Racism

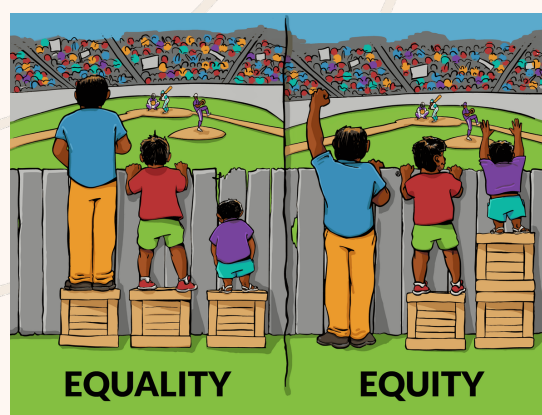
Racism is a global issue that affects millions of people worldwide. It causes significant harm to individual wellbeing, economic opportunities, and social cohesion. The impacts of racism are far-reaching and interconnected, affecting individuals, families, and communities. Achieving fair and just outcomes requires recognising the historical and systemic injustices that have advantaged some groups and disadvantaged others. Racial literacy is the first step to understanding the different ways racism presents, and its ongoing effects across society.

Equality Vs Equity

When thinking about social justice and racial equality it is important to understand that to achieve racial equality, equity must come first.



Equality and equity may sound similar, but they represent very different outcomes when put into practice.



Equality

Equality means everyone receives the same treatment and access to the same resources, regardless of their circumstances. In context of race, the problem with equality is that some groups start from a disadvantaged position due to ongoing oppression and discrimination.

Equity

Equity addresses the gaps created by structural racism and works to close them. This means a greater focus on racially marginalised groups and their specific needs. Until all groups are on a level playing field, equality alone cannot achieve social justice.

Equality is the end goal, but equity is the means to achieve it.

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Racism in Australia

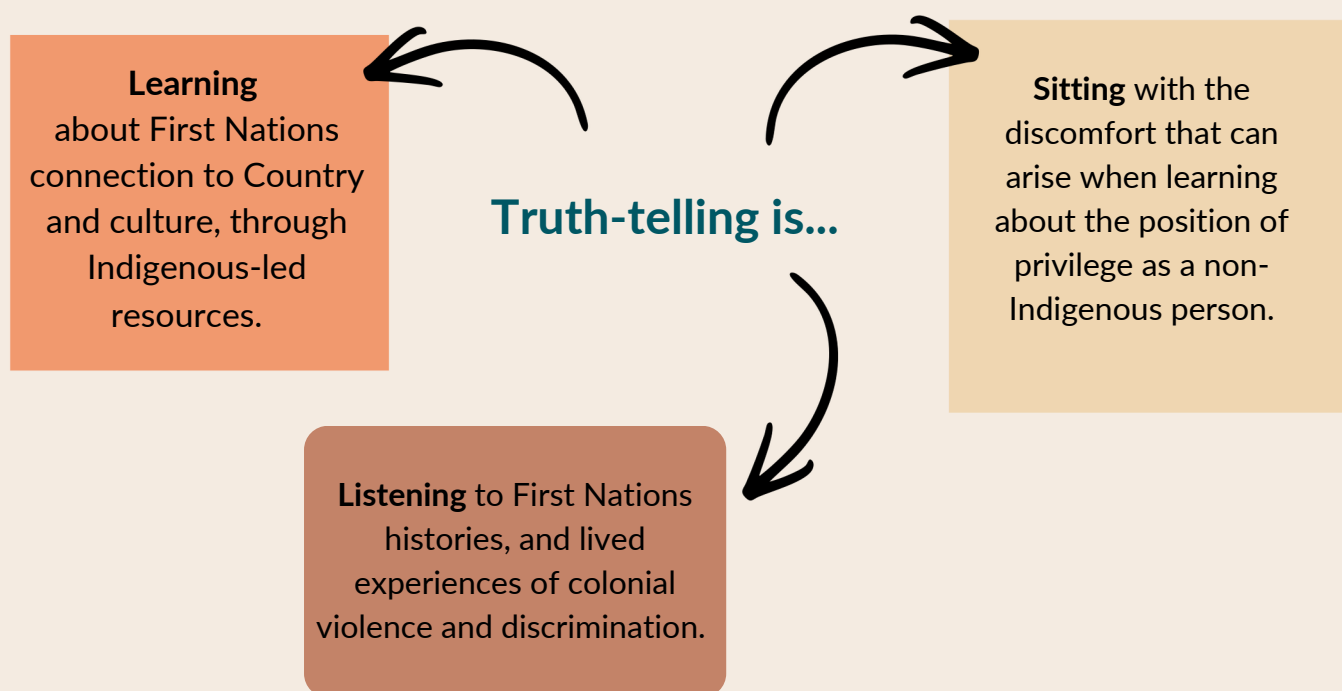
Racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remains a significant issue in Australia. While Australia is a multicultural country, its foundations are shaped by colonisation and systems that have historically excluded and disadvantaged First Nations peoples.

Mainstream media, education and public narratives have often misrepresented First Nations histories and experiences. These inaccuracies have influenced government policies, public attitudes and social systems, reinforcing inequality and causing ongoing harm.

Many Australians are not aware of the complexity and impact of racism. Building racial literacy is an important first step in understanding how racism operates and how it affects individuals, families and communities. To create a safer and more equitable society, racial literacy needs to be embedded across institutions, including schools, universities, workplaces and healthcare.

Truth-Telling

Truth telling is a key component of racial literacy. It recognises how Australia's colonial legacy continues to shape systems and attitudes that disadvantage First Nations Peoples.



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Health Impacts

Racism and racial discrimination are key determinants of health and wellbeing. They have profound impacts on the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health of First Nations peoples.

Experiences of racism are linked to stress, loneliness, reduced social and emotional wellbeing, and negative impacts on identity and cultural pride. They are also associated with poorer overall health, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, asthma, smoking, higher BMI, and sleep issues.[i] It can also impact child development, with repeated stress exposure to discrimination affecting learning, behaviour, and long-term mental health.[i]

Moreover, racism increases barriers to the social determinants of health, such as employment, housing, and education, further driving long-term inequality.



Workplace

Racial literacy is important for creating safe, inclusive, and respectful workplaces. Without it, Indigenous Australians are more likely to experience inequality, increased cultural load, and reduced wellbeing.

Gari Yala 2: Speak the Truth Report, by the Centre for Indigenous People and Work, surveyed 1,1158 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. [ii] The findings highlight ongoing racism and a lack of cultural safety in Australian workplaces.

Key Findings

- Only 40% workplaces were culturally safe.
- Almost 60% of respondents experienced racism at work.
- 1 in 2 Indigenous employees faced race-based comments or assumptions.
- 2 in 3 of employees carried high levels of cultural load, including unpaid work, educating colleagues, and organising events.

And

- 69% of workplaces had no clear racism complaint procedure, and 63% of workplaces provided no anti-discrimination training.
- Only 1 in 5 workplaces provided both anti-racism training and a complaints process.

[i] ANTAR, "Impact of Racism", ANTAR, April 9, 2026, <https://antar.org.au/issues/racism/impact-of-racism>.

[ii] Centre for Indigenous People & Work (Young, N., Gilbert, J., Evans, O. and O'Leary, J.) Gari Yala 2 (Speak the Truth): Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians in 2025-2026, Sydney, CIPW.