

# WHY IS RACISM A PROBLEM?

*"If I wasn't hearing bad things about myself, I wouldn't think "oh, I'm a bad person, I can't do this, I am not going to do it". Whereas if no one said anything bad about me, I would push myself harder into doing things and knowing that I can do it, no matter what happens I will do it ... but I just can't."*<sup>1</sup>

— Ekta, 15

Racism can cause a lot of damage to both individuals and communities.



These impacts can reduce people's ability to work or study, and to achieve their future goals.

Racism also affects people's general wellbeing when they are denied equal access to jobs, services and education.

*"Racism makes me question myself and why things have to be this way ... I wondered one day what it would be like to be white and how much better my life would probably be. That was a low point."*

— Andrew, 19

## INDIVIDUALS

A study of over 800 Australian secondary school students found that racism had huge mental health impacts on young people who experience it, including:

- ongoing feelings of sadness, anger, depression and being left out
- headaches, increased heart rate, sweating, trembling and muscle tension
- a constant fear of being verbally or physically attacked
- not wanting to go to school
- having little or no trust in anybody apart from family.<sup>2</sup>



For more information about What You Say Matters and the Racism. It Stops With Me campaign go to [itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au](http://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au)

**RACISM.  
IT STOPS  
WITH ME**

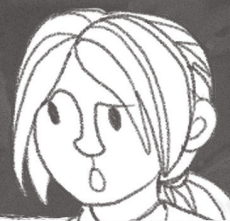


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## COMMUNITIES

Australia is now a very culturally diverse country — about half of us were born overseas or had one or more parents born overseas. When racial tensions develop, they don't just affect one or two of us — they affect us all... as neighbours, workmates, friends and fellow Australians.

Racism creates a society where people don't trust and respect each other.

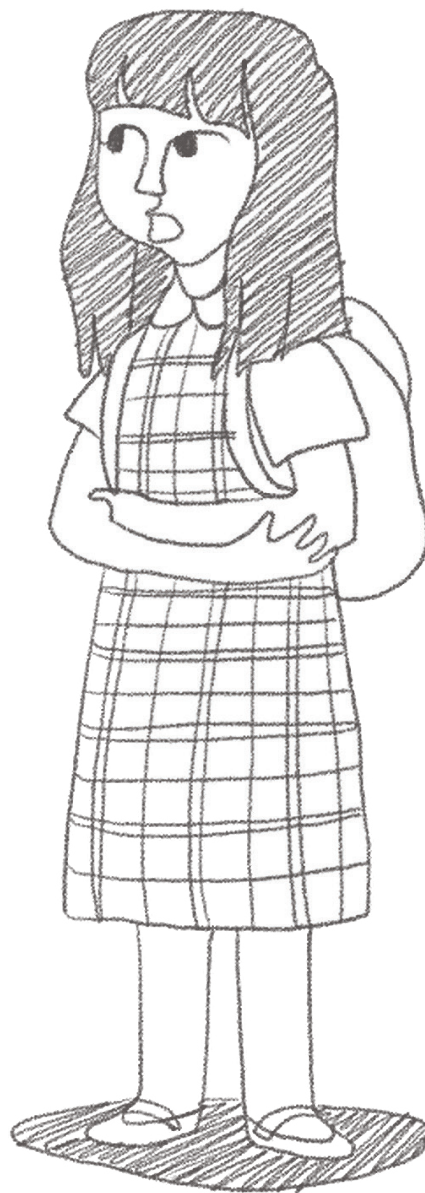
When it's allowed to flourish, it lessens us as a people. Remember the Stolen Generations... the White Australia policy... these are the ugly times in our history. We need to be vigilant in making sure that these kinds of things are never allowed to happen again.

**There are no reasons or excuses for racism.** It's just wrong. And in many cases, racism is against the law. For more information, see the "What does the law say" factsheet.

If racism happens to you, find out what you can do in the "What can you do?" factsheet.

If you see racism happening at school, in public or online, stand up to it. There's lots of safe ways that you can help. Find out more in the "What you can do?" factsheet.

You can also get support or advice to deal with a difficult situation from organisations like **Kids Helpline** ([www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)) and **ReachOut.com** ([au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)).



1 Foundation for Young Australians, The Impact of Racism Upon the Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians (2009), p93.

2 Foundation for Young Australians, The Impact of Racism Upon the Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians: At a Glance (2009).

The quotes above were obtained through the Commission's consultations with the Australian community. Some names and ages have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved.



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