

RESPECT • RECOGNISE  
REJECT

# Anti-Racism

## Strategy 2023–2028

Equipping the South Australian  
public sector to fight racism

[publicsector.sa.gov.au/anti-racism](https://publicsector.sa.gov.au/anti-racism)



**Government  
of South Australia**

Office of the Commissioner  
for Public Sector Employment

# Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners

We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal people as the State's first people and recognise Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of the lands and waters in South Australia. We acknowledge that the spiritual, social, cultural, and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that the cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws are still of importance today.

We also acknowledge that diversity has been part of the Australian landscape since before colonisation, when distinct Aboriginal nations spoke around 700 different languages. The histories, cultures, values, beliefs, languages, lifestyles, and roles of Aboriginal people past and present provide a central doctrine to modern diversity. It is important that this is acknowledged, and that full recognition is given to the fact that modern cultural diversity and multiculturalism operates within the context of Aboriginal history.

If you are distressed by the discussion of racism in this strategy, free 24/7 support is available by calling:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14 for crisis support
- Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636 to speak to a mental health line counsellor
- Suicide Call Back on 1300 659 467 for help with suicide-related issues
- 13YARN (13 92 76) to speak to an Aboriginal Crisis Supporter

If you need an interpreter to help speak with any of the above services, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service: 131 450

For hearing or speech assistance, please call the National Relay Service: 1300 555 727 or [internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au](http://internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au)

Anyone who has experienced discrimination or vilification is encouraged to report the incident or seek further information from the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner: [equalopportunity.sa.gov.au/complaints](http://equalopportunity.sa.gov.au/complaints)

# Contents

<b>Foreword: SA Premier</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>A message from the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>How this strategy was developed</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Our commitment, vision and principles</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Racism and anti-racism</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Current landscape</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Priorities</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Measure of success</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Governance</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Key terms</b> .....	<b>24</b>



# Foreword: SA Premier



South Australians are known for being progressive and inclusive. We have a long history of fighting for and delivering on our belief that everyone deserves a fair go and the opportunity to succeed and prosper.

We have led the country with the historic passage of laws to establish a First Nations Voice to State Parliament, delivering a direct and independent line of communications for First Nations people to South Australia's Parliament and government, including to our public service.

Our commitment to shared decision making is reflected by our partnership agreement with the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network, through which, together we aim to Close the Gap in this State.

South Australia has a history of opening our doors to refugees and migrants, including those fleeing war and oppression. We can be justifiably proud of the way we celebrate multiculturalism and welcome newer Australians from diverse cultural backgrounds with open arms.

However, there is still work to be done. Sadly, there are South Australians who continue to experience racism and discrimination that is harmful to their health and wellbeing, creates unacceptable barriers to education, employment and services, and is detrimental to our society as a whole. As the largest employer in South Australia, the public sector can lead the way in the transformative change that my government and I are committed to.

The South Australian Anti-Racism Strategy aims to make the public sector safer, more responsive, and more accountable by improving understanding and awareness of racism, creating a more inclusive public sector workplace culture, ensuring greater cultural safety for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse community members, and by making structural changes that address institutional and systemic racism.

I look to you to embrace and support this important initiative so we can continue to make South Australia a diverse, inclusive and liveable place for all.

**Peter Malinauskas MP**  
**Premier of South Australia**



# A message from the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment



The South Australian public sector rejects racism. Unfortunately, the lived experience of many South Australians reveals racism continues to harm individuals and affect the life opportunities of our next generations.

The South Australian Public Sector Anti-Racism Strategy & Action Plan exists to proactively remove racist barriers that harm Aboriginal people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities within our workforce.

This strategy is the first of its kind for our sector, and it demonstrates our commitment to listening and learning from one of the oldest civilisations on Earth, as we develop a workforce that is culturally capable and accountable.

It answers the call from our employees to strengthen the response of the public sector to racism. Their grass roots advocacy has gained the support of the government and our sector's most senior leaders.

As a woman from a non-English speaking family, I am proud of this work, and the standard the sector has set to make our State a more welcoming place, where everyone can flourish.

It's now up to all of us to be part of the solution.

Act with respect, recognise and reject racism in all its forms.

Racism has no place in South Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erma Ranieri".

**Erma Ranieri PSM**  
**Commissioner for Public Sector Employment**

# Introduction

The South Australian Government is committed to a fair go for everyone to achieve their full potential.

This strategy is an important resource that addresses historical and ongoing racial inequalities experienced by Aboriginal people and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

It complements the State Government and SA public sector’s ongoing work to remove racial inequality and promote inclusion within the public sector workforce, including the establishment of the First Nations Voice to Parliament, Closing the Gap, the South Australian Multicultural Charter, and agency-level plans and actions on reconciliation and inclusion.

It is confronting that many South Australians continue to experience racism. Racism is harmful, eroding social cohesion and economic participation over time.

For some people, racism may intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as sexuality, gender, class, age, and disability, to create unique and layered harm and trauma.

As our understanding of racism evolves and matures, more governments and communities are practising anti-racism. Anti-racism is the act or process of actively identifying and opposing racism by changing policies, behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. Notably, the Australian Human Rights Commission is developing a national anti-racism framework.

The South Australian Public Sector Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-28 is a multifaceted approach to equip employees to fight racism. It draws upon best practice and learnings elsewhere, as well as survey data and consultation with community, experts and government.

The strategy is underpinned by the acknowledgement of the inequality experienced by Aboriginal peoples. Their leadership and resilience since 1788 inform the actions to tackle racism experienced by Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

## (Nearly) 6 In 10

Asian Australians experienced discrimination when dealing with government departments and services.

*\*Biddle et al, 2019*

## 6 in 10

Aboriginal people across Australia experienced at least one form of racial prejudice in the last six months.

*\*Reconciliation Australia, 2022*

## 4 in 10

Aboriginal South Australians had experienced racism in the past 12 months (compared with 21.9 per cent of non-Aboriginal people).

*\*Wellbeing SA*



# Priorities

The strategy has identified five priorities to guide action by the public sector on racism.

1

## Enable employees to act

By implementing anti-racism training and developing learning resources.

2

## Embed anti-racism into leadership & decision-making

By supporting leaders to champion anti-racism, removing barriers to the participation of Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people in decision-making, and considering race equity when making new laws and government policy.

3

## Strengthen inclusive and safe workplaces

By removing barriers to the employment of Aboriginal and CALD people, investigating complaints about racism effectively and empathetically, embedding HR processes and supporting Aboriginal employees to progress their careers.

4

## Speak up for anti-racism

By communicating the public sector's position on anti-racism in the workplace, developing anti-racism communications guidelines and training staff in its use.

5

## Be accountable for anti-racism

By monitoring current and new data focused on Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) employee experience, reporting on progress, and undertaking a formal review of the strategy.

# How this strategy was developed

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal public sector employees on the Aboriginal Affairs Executive Committee Vulnerable Families Working Group identified the need for an anti-racism strategy in 2021.

Its development was a collaboration between public sector agencies led by Wellbeing SA in partnership with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE).

Evidence used included:

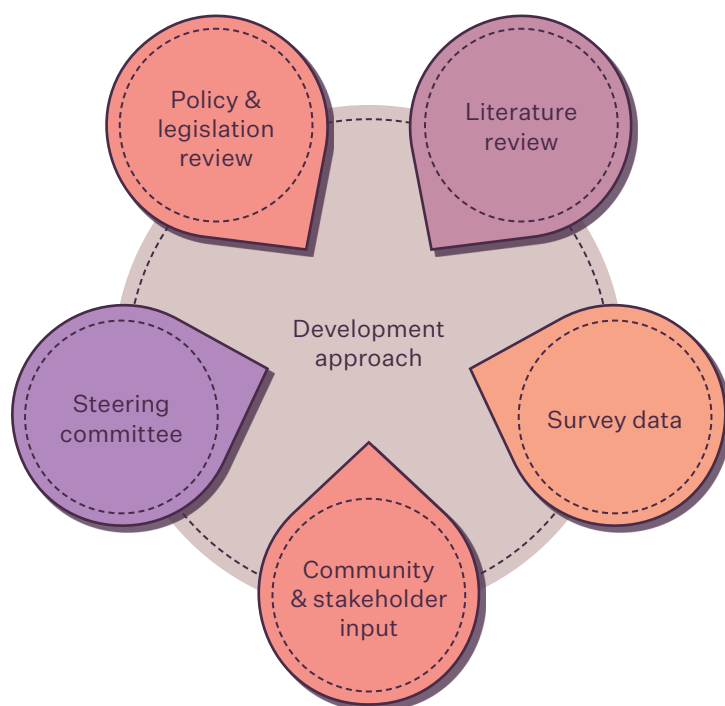
- national and international research about what works to address racism
- policies, strategies, tools and practices from Australia to learn from the experience of others
- survey data to understand the level of racism in the community and the public sector
- community consultations held in Adelaide and regional South Australia with 261 individuals from government and non-government organisations, Aboriginal regional and metro communities, and CALD community leaders.

The strategy was endorsed by the then Chief Executive Council (now the Senior Leadership Committee), comprising chief executives of the major portfolio agencies, and overseen by the Anti-Racism Steering Committee comprising representatives from:

- Department for Child Protection
- Department for Education
- Department of Human Services
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- South Australia Police

- Office of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment
- South Australian Multicultural Commission.

It responds to racism experienced by people of all backgrounds and specifically recognises and addresses the racism and historical disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples.

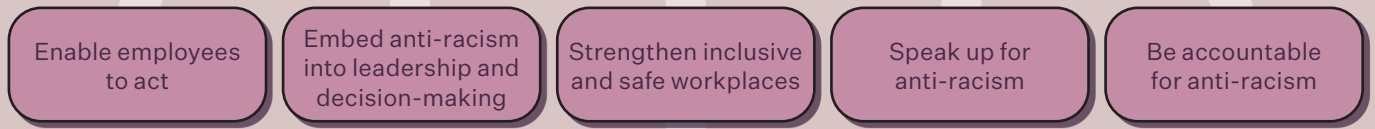


**South Australian Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-2028:**  
Summary Framework

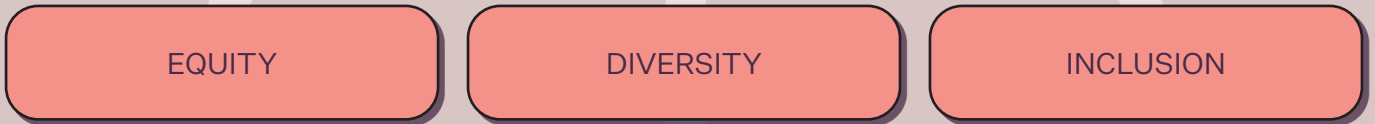
**Vision:** To eliminate racism in the South Australian public sector.  
**Aim:** To address racism at all levels and across a variety of settings for Aboriginal and other communities who are impacted by racism.



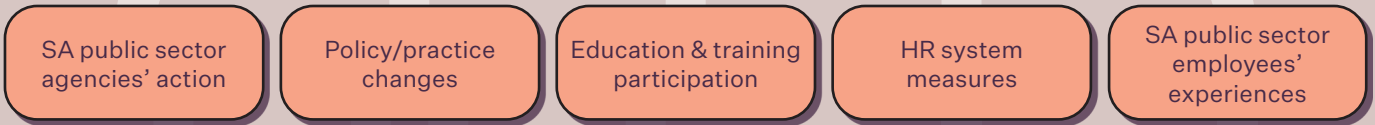
**Five priorities**



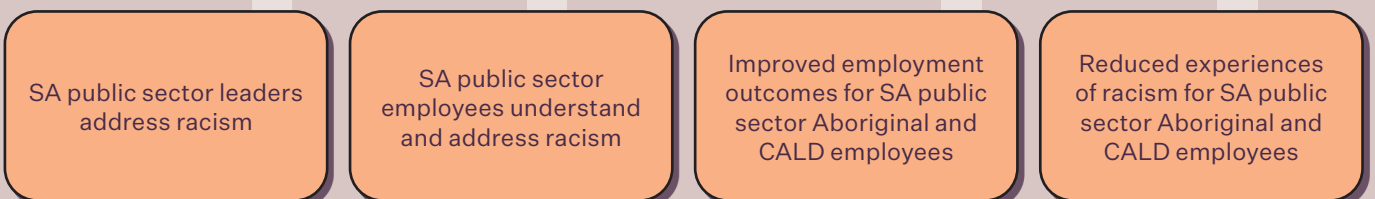
**Underpinning principles**



**Indicators**



**Outcomes**



# **Our commitment, vision and principles**

## OUR COMMITMENT

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The South Australian public sector rejects racism in all its forms.

Guided by the Public Sector Values, each employee is dedicated to serving South Australia regardless of their background.

The public sector will act as one to change systems, decision-making and culture to ensure its actions and decisions do not promote or sustain racism.

As the largest employer in South Australia with workplaces all over the State, the public sector commits to being a leader in the community on anti-racism.

Through its actions, the public sector will support, empower and amplify the efforts of others in the community to build a more equitable, diverse and inclusive South Australia.

## OUR VISION

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The South Australian public sector actively removes racist barriers that harm Aboriginal peoples and those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

## OUR PRINCIPLES

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**Diversity:** The public sector will reflect and value the diversity of South Australia, including race, ethnicity, gender and other identities.

**Equity:** The public sector will act with justice, equality, impartiality and fairness. At times, some people may be treated differently to ensure fair and equal distribution of opportunity.

**Inclusion:** The public sector will bring historically excluded individuals and groups into decision making, share power and contribute meaningfully to positive, mutually beneficial outcomes.

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### 1 in 2

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Aboriginal South Australians compared to 15.2% of non-Aboriginal people had experienced discrimination.

*\*Wellbeing SA*

### 1 in 3

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South Australians reported they believed that they were discriminated against because of ethnic, cultural, racial background or appearance.

*\*Wellbeing SA*

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# Racism and anti-racism

Racism is behaviours, practices, beliefs, and prejudices that create avoidable and unfair inequalities for groups in society based on their race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

Broadly, racism comes in three different forms:

- interpersonal racism occurs between people, and may include abuse, harassment, humiliation, exclusion, or violence
- systemic racism is less overt, with the intersection of current or historical cultural norms, laws, policies, and social and government institutions creating inequality and harm for past, current and future generations
- internalised racism occurs where people feel self-doubt, disrespect and even hate towards their own race or themselves because of racist stereotypes and beliefs from others.

For some people, racism overlaps with other forms of discrimination, such as sexuality, gender, class, age, religion and disability, creating very complex and layered harm and traumas.

Despite greater legal protections and community awareness, racism against Aboriginal and CALD Australians remains prevalent in Australia.

The impact of racism is now better understood than ever before.

There is reported evidence that at the individual level, people who frequently experience racism are much more likely to report poor mental and physical health than others in the community.



There is reported evidence that at the individual level, people who frequently experience racism are much more likely to report poor mental and physical health than others in the community.

Left unchecked, structural racism causes unequal access to opportunities such as health care, education and jobs that undermines and limits the life potential and prospects of affected groups, further perpetuating and entrenching generational disadvantage.

Continuing structural racism explains the disparity of outcomes experienced by Aboriginal Australians compared to the rest of the nation across nearly all health, socio-economic and cultural indicators.

Anti-racism is the act or process of actively identifying and opposing racism by changing policies, behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

Globally and nationally, anti-racism is increasingly used to identify and oppose racism.

In the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and New Zealand, many governments, universities and businesses have anti-racism strategies and plans.

In Australia, the resilience of Aboriginal Australians and their continuing campaign for recognition attest to their anti-racism leadership. The Australian Human Rights Commission is drawing upon the lessons learnt in Australia and overseas to develop a national anti-racism framework to address racism against Aboriginal and CALD Australians.

Today, Aboriginal males born between 2015-17 are expected to live 8.6 years less than non-Aboriginal males.

*\*Productivity Commission, 2022*

Aboriginal females born between 2015-17 are forecast to live 7.8 years less than non-Aboriginal females.

*\*Productivity Commission, 2022*

# Current landscape

The public sector operates within a legislative and policy environment that rejects racism. This strategy builds upon the progress made to date.

## INTERNATIONAL

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out fundamental rights of all humans. Although not legally binding, the declaration has influenced international human rights treaties, which create legal obligations on signatory countries.

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) affirms Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) defines and prohibits racial discrimination in all sectors of private and public life.

## NATIONAL

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Australia's obligations under international human rights law are implemented through national legislation, policies and initiatives, including:

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 promotes equality before Australian law and prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, descent and national or ethnic group.

- National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) is a partnership between governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations to stop the inequality experienced by Aboriginal peoples and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.
- National Anti-Racism Strategy (2012) promotes a clear understanding in the Australian community of what racism is, and how it can be prevented and reduced. It is unclear as at the time of writing whether the National Anti-Racism Strategy will be replaced by the proposed National Anti-Racism Framework (see below).
- The People of Australia Multicultural Policy (2017) acknowledges that government services and programs must be responsive to the needs of culturally diverse communities and commits to an access and equity framework to ensure that the government provides equitable services to Australians from all backgrounds.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is developing a new National Anti-Racism Framework, as of March 2023. The Commission's community consultation in 2022 found strong consensus that anti-racism must begin with the experiences of Aboriginal peoples. The consultation also identified community concerns that the framework should focus on data, education, cultural safety, media regulation and standards, justice and legal protections. Many of these areas are addressed in this strategy.

The Victorian State Government established the Anti-Racism Taskforce in mid-2021 to advise on the development of its anti-racism strategy.

### 1 in 3

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Australians of a non-English speaking background experienced discrimination in the last 12 months based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.

*\*Markus, 2022*



## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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A strong foundation for success in the public sector has been established through legislation and policy to promote diversity and inclusion in workplaces. A record high number of Aboriginal South Australians are now employed in the public sector. Gender equity in executive levels have been maintained since 2019. These successes demonstrate that progress can be achieved by the public sector through focussed action.

- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race.
- South Australian Multicultural Act 2021 recognises the valuable contribution of South Australians from diverse backgrounds and promotes the State as a unified, harmonious and inclusive community.
- Public Sector Act 2009 establishes principles to guide public sector operations including the prevention of unlawful discrimination against employees or persons seeking employment in the public sector and treating the public and employees with respect and courtesy.
- South Australian Multicultural Charter sets out principles by which South Australia will promote cultural, linguistic, racial and religious diversity.
- South Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics and Public Sector Values codifies the conduct and behaviours expected of employees and defines employee misconduct.
- South Australian Executive Service Charter and Competency Framework articulates the core behaviours of SAES executives, including promoting and integrating diversity into the workplace.

84% of surveyed employees believed their colleagues behaved in an accepting manner towards people from diverse backgrounds.

*\*I Work For SA – Your Voice Survey 2021*

- Reconciliation Action Plans in all public sector agencies signify commitment and actions to advance reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples.
- Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy 2022-30 recognises the importance of strengthening Aboriginal culture as a determinant of health and in reducing disparities in health and wellbeing outcomes.
- South Australian Public Sector Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026 builds an inclusive public sector workplace where everyone belongs and their uniqueness is valued.
- South Australian Public Sector Work Health and Safety Cultural Safety Framework provides broad policy and tools to help agencies build culturally safe workplaces where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of cultural background.
- Aboriginal disadvantage is being addressed by the government's commitments under Closing the Gap, the Aboriginal Affairs Action Plan 2021-22 and the Buthera Agreement.



## Vision

The South Australian public sector proactively removes racist barriers that harm Aboriginal peoples and those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

### Priority

### Outcomes

**Enable employees to act**

- Employees understand racism in its different forms and identify its impacts.
- Employees actively respond to racism.
- Employees promote positive race relations.

**Embed anti-racism into leadership and decision-making**

- Leaders and decision-makers actively identify and take bold action against racism.

**Strengthen inclusive and safe workplaces**

- Improved employee and job applicant experience.
- Consistent standards and expectations across the public sector to benefit all employees regardless of which agency they work in.

**Speak up for anti-racism**

- Increased community and workforce awareness of anti-racism through communication of the actions and successes of the public sector.

**Be accountable for anti-racism**

- The community and workforce understand progress of the strategy.
- Public sector chief executives are accountable for implementation.
- Good practice and lessons learnt are used to drive improvement.
- Results are used to raise awareness in the workforce and community of anti-racism and its effectiveness.

# Priorities

The five priorities central to this strategy's success are supported by actionable goals.

OCPSE and Wellbeing SA will model and promote anti-racism across the public sector. Each agency is responsible for implementing the strategy within their operations, as well as their own anti-racism initiatives.

OCPSE and Wellbeing SA recognise that learning from the different approaches of agencies can inform and improve practice and performance across the public sector.

## 1. Enable employees to act

The public sector will provide a safe, empathetic learning environment to support employees to understand racism and how they can stop it.

Goals:

- require new employees to complete mandatory anti-racism training
- develop learning resources for employees that promote understanding, build confidence and inspire action
- support managers and executives to understand their role in leading anti-racism.

Outcomes:

- employees understand racism in its different forms and identify its impacts
- employees actively respond to racism
- employees promote positive race relations.

14% of surveyed employees who had experienced discrimination identified race or culture as the reason for the discrimination.

*\*I Work For SA – Your Voice Survey 2021*

## 2. Embed anti-racism into leadership and decision-making

The public sector can inspire change within its workforce and across the community by modelling anti-racism through an inclusive and accountable leadership cohort and decision-making that actively considers and addresses racial inequality.

Goals:

- support executives and managers to fulfil their responsibility to lead anti-racism
- remove barriers to the participation of Aboriginal and CALD peoples in decision-making
- consider race equity when making new laws and government decisions.

Outcomes:

- leaders and decision-making processes that actively identify and take bold action against racism.

## 3. Strengthen inclusive and safe workplaces

The public sector acknowledges the urgency in implementing actions already underway and new actions that will increase inclusion and eliminate racism in the workplace.

Goals:

- remove barriers to the employment of Aboriginal and CALD peoples
- investigate complaints about racism effectively and empathetically
- embed anti-racism into performance appraisal discussions

- ensure exit surveys include questions to identify racism
- support Aboriginal employees to progress their careers.

Outcomes:

- improved employee and job applicant experience
- consistent standards and expectations across the public sector to benefit all employees regardless of which agency they work in.

#### 4. Speak up for anti-racism

Government communications – both within the workforce and to the community – should embody the public sector’s commitment to anti-racism and inclusion. Communication is critical in building strong organisations and inter-personal relationships within workplaces and with clients and stakeholders.

Goals:

- communicate the government’s position on anti-racism
- develop anti-racism communication guidelines
- train all communications staff in the use of the guidelines.

Outcomes:

- increased community and workforce awareness of anti-racism through communication of the actions and successes of the public sector.

#### 5. Be accountable for anti-racism

The success of the strategy depends on continuous research, evaluation, and monitoring.

Evidence must underpin assessment of what works for whom and why. It is important for the public sector to celebrate success and use the lessons learnt for future plans.

Goals:

- monitor current and new data focussed on Aboriginal and CALD employee experiences
- report progress to government and community regularly
- undertake a formal review of the strategy after three years of implementation.

Outcomes:

- the community and workforce understand progress of the strategy
- public sector chief executives are accountable for implementation
- good practice and lessons learnt are used to drive improvement
- results are used to raise awareness in the workforce and community of anti-racism and its effectiveness.

68% of surveyed employees agreed their agency is committed to creating a diverse workforce.

*\*I Work For SA – Your Voice Survey 2021*

70% of surveyed employees thought personal background was not a barrier to success in their agency.

*\*I Work For SA – Your Voice Survey 2021*

# Measures of success

The progress of the public sector will be tracked and measured.

High level measures of success are set out below, and these will inform additional detailed measures that will be developed as part of the work program:

- improved understanding and awareness of racism and its impact among employees
- inclusive workplace culture that facilitates belonging and promotes respect
- greater employment and career progression of Aboriginal and CALD peoples in the public sector
- structural changes in policy and practice within government to address institutional and systemic racism.

The action plan will be reviewed and adapted as new opportunities arise, such as learnings from implementation or new national frameworks. A formal review of the action plan is planned in 2026.



# Governance

OCPSE will coordinate implementation of the strategy. Some goals will be led by OCPSE as the central agency for public sector workforce matters and others will be delivered by agencies.

OCPSE will coordinate progress reporting from agencies to government and to the community through the annual State of the Sector report of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

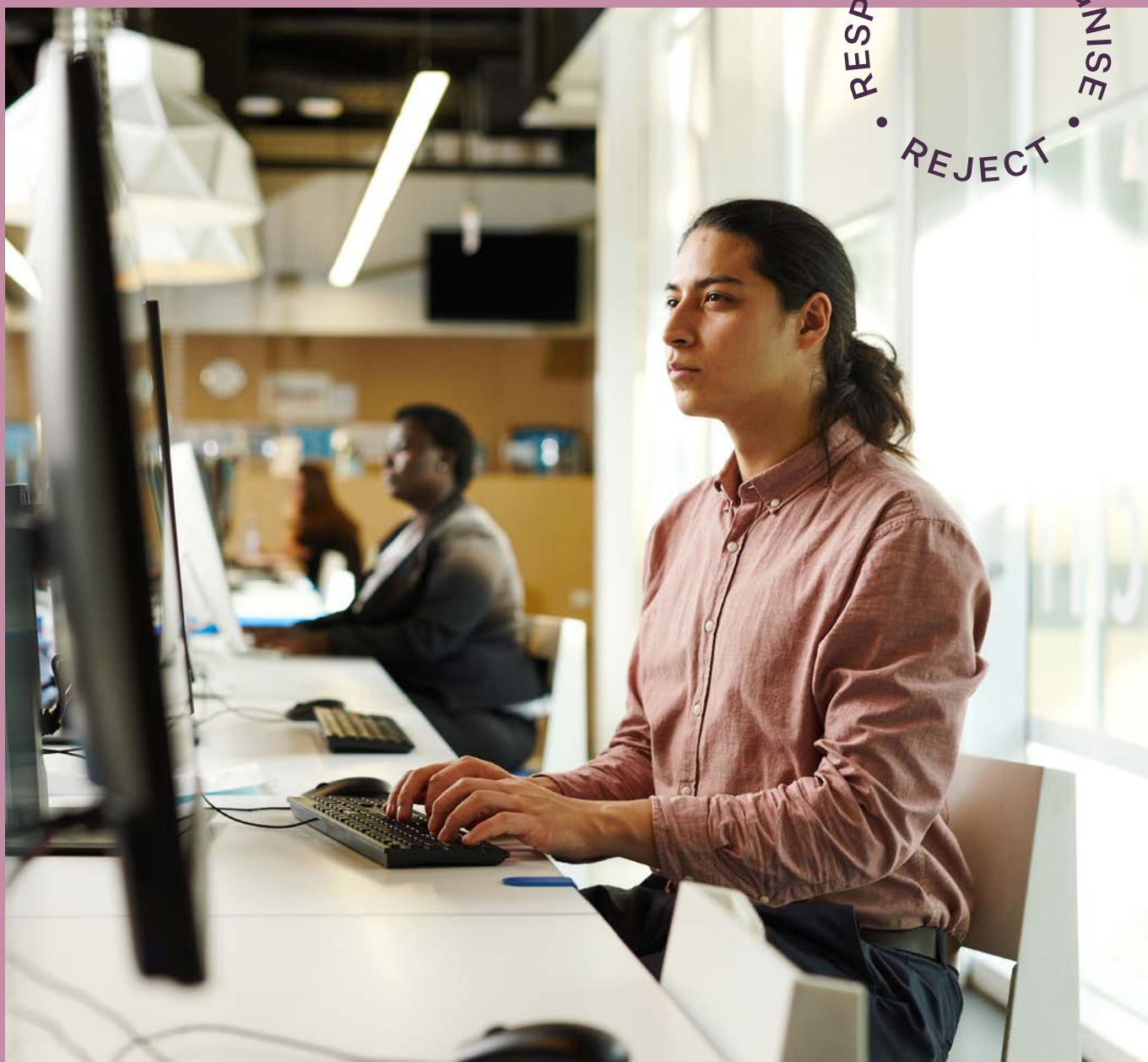
Wellbeing SA will assist OCPSE and agencies with ongoing research, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

An advisory group comprising representatives of government and people with lived experience will be established to advise on the implementation of the strategy.



A diverse, equitable and inclusive South Australian public sector workforce.

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• REJECT •



# Key terms

Words matter. Using respectful language fosters shared understanding and meaningful conversations that can help us address and dismantle systemic racism.

## Aboriginal

A person or persons who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both. The term is preferred by Aboriginal South Australians.

## Anti-racism

The act or process of actively identifying and opposing racism by changing policies, behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

## CALD

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.

## Intersectionality

A person's experience of racism may be compounded by other forms of discrimination against other features of their identity such as sexuality, gender, class, age, religion and disability.

## Multiculturalism

The policies and practices that recognise and respond to diversity in the community, allowing people to live and work together harmoniously; participate in economic, social and cultural life; and maintain and express their distinctive cultural heritages (South Australian Multicultural Act 2021).

## Racism

The systems, policies, actions and attitudes that create unequal opportunities and outcomes for people based on race<sup>1</sup>. Racism can be further categorised as:

- **Interpersonal** – during interactions between individuals, e.g. abuse, harassment, humiliation, exclusion, or violence.
- **Systemic** – when cultural norms, laws, ideologies, policies and practices of a society, organisation or institution result in inequitable treatment, opportunities and outcomes.
- **Internalised** – when a person incorporates racist attitudes, beliefs or ideologies into their view of the world and/or themselves.

*1. It is noted that, as part of the development of the National Anti-Racism Strategy, the Australian Human Rights Commission will work with communities to better define racism from a community perspective.*



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**Government  
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Office of the Commissioner  
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