SUBMISSION to the Race Discrimination Team, Australian Human Rights Commission

National Anti-Racism Strategy

May 2012

1. Introduction

1.1 The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia)

The MYAN is the recognised national policy and advocacy body representing migrant and newly arrived young people, in order to advance their rights and interests. Established in 2005 in response to an identified need for a coordinated national advisory and advocacy network for multicultural youth issues, the MYAN is auspiced by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) in Victoria. The MYAN works in partnership with government and non-government agencies at the state/territory and national levels to ensure that are particular needs of multicultural young people recognised and appropriate responses developed. The MYAN believes that a targeted approach at the policy and program levels is necessary to ensure the sustained participation of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australian society. The MYAN also supports the development of state and territory multicultural youth policy and advocacy bodies.

While the MYAN has a focus on newly arrived young people, particularly those from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds[1], the term 'multicultural' includes international students and young people who were born in Australia to parents who settled in Australia as migrants or refugees[2].
The MYAN has recently identified racism and discrimination as one of its five policy priorities.

Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC)

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is the national voice representing young people 12-25 years and the sector that supports them.

AYAC boasts a growing membership of State and Territory Youth Peak Bodies, National Youth Organisations, researchers, policy makers and young people themselves, who are all passionate about creating an Australian community that supports and promotes the positive engagement and representation of young people.

AYAC is dedicated to working for and with young people and seek to ensure they have access to mechanisms, which allow them to make decisions about issues that affect them in the Australian community.

1.2. Racism and discrimination and multicultural young people

As the AHRC is aware, despite the diversity of the Australian community, racism and discrimination is an ever-present reality for multicultural young people. In consultations with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds held across Australia, racism and discrimination is commonly identified as a key issue[3]. A national study conducted by the Foundation for Young Australians found that over 80% of research participants, from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds, reported being subjected to some form of racism. (Mansouri, F.et.al.2009:3)

For young people from multicultural backgrounds, the experience of racism and discrimination threatens personal and cultural identity (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004:79) and can have a detrimental impact on mental health, psychological development and capacity to negotiate the transition to adulthood. (Western Young People's Independent Network, 2003; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2007:11).

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[1] That is, those arriving in Australia under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program.
[2] Often this group of young people are referred to as 'second generation' migrants.
[3] See MYAN TAS (2011), Refugee Conference Youth Forum UNSW, (2011)

The experience of racism and discrimination can also be a key barrier to social inclusion, as it can diminish a young person's sense of connection and belonging to their community and broader society, can create a sense of marginalisation and isolation and diminish participation in education, employment or recreational activities. It can also contribute to feelings of anger, depression, heightened fear of being attacked verbally and physically, headaches and other physical symptoms, and flashbacks to trauma experienced prior to settling in Australia, (Mansouri, F.et.al.2009:7).

2. About this Submission

This is a joint submission from the MYAN and AYAC. It provides a national perspective, drawing on the MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors across Australia, as well as AYAC's experience and commitment to including young people's perspective in decisions at the national level and connecting to its vast national networks of young people and youth sector organisations.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of a National Anti-Racism Strategy and consider ourselves well-placed to assist the AHRC in its implementation.

This submission will respond to some of the questions under each of the Objectives in the Discussion Paper.

3. Response to the Discussion Paper

Objective 1: Create awareness of racism and how it affects individuals and the broader community

1. *What can we learn from how Australia has dealt with racism in the past? What achievements should we build on? What mistakes should we learn from?*

AYAC and the MYAN are aware of a number of excellent examples of good practice approaches to addressing racism and discrimination with and for young people. We believe that meaningful and effective approaches to addressing racism have had a focus on engaging with and supporting young people to develop and deliver anti-racism initiatives. Some examples are referred to under Obj.2.

We also refer the AHRC to a number of publications developed by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth):

- *Building on our Strengths: A framework for addressing race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria*, available at: http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Building-on-our-strengths.aspx

- *Review of strategies ad resources to address race-based discrimindation and support diversity in schools*, available at: http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/en/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Addressing-race-based-discrimination-in-schools.aspx

In relation to learning from the past, we urge current and future governments (captured as part of this Anti-Racism Strategy) to acknowledge the racist policies and laws of Australia's past and take a leadership role in ensuring that racist policies and legislation are eliminated in the future.

2. What information would be useful to include in a campaign to prevent and reduce racism?

AYAC and the MYAN believe that there are two important elements to a youth-friendly campaign; key messages and information underpinned by a robust and inclusive youth participation strategy. An effective campaign to prevent and reduce racism among young people, must start by engaging young people in co-designing the strategies, content and implementation of the campaign.

AYAC and the MYAN assert that key information in a campaign to prevent and reduce racism should include:

- A simple definition or explanation of racism and discrimination so that the community understands how these concepts (that are enshrined in legislation) apply in everyday life. We endorse the MYAN NSW submission which states that, "t*he concepts of racism and discrimination need to be user-friendly and applicable to everyday practical lived experience*".
- Definitions should include an explanation of the spectrum of racist behaviour/actions.
- Definitions should be youth-friendly, clear and accessible when education campaigns are seeking to target and engage young people. When exploring racism with young people, member services of the MYAN have developed their own definitions which are more 'youth-friendly' and youth accessible (based on formal/legal definitions) to ensure that racism is understood in a 'practical' and concrete way, relevant to young people's everyday experiences.
- Clear, simple and concrete examples of the (various) experiences and impact of racism and discrimination on young people – e.g. directly hearing the voices of young people
- Positive role modelling by politicians, sports people, actors, 'celebrities' or high profile Australians from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Promoting shared values and commonalities across diverse cultures.

3. How could we better acknowledge the contributions to Australia of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities?

Important ways to acknowledge the contributions to Australia of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities is through positive images and stories in the media, school curriculum, and (local) community education. We also believe that an important part of an anti-racism campaign is to counter the negative perceptions of asylum seekers arriving by boat to Australia. In an area where debate is particularly politicised, sometimes these negative images are utilised by government for political expediency. Use of the terms 'boat people' and 'illegals' contribute to racist perceptions of those who rightfully seek protection in Australia and indeed, as RCOA states, "*(are) people with skills and resources and who contribute significantly to Australian society and the economy.*"

We note RCOA's examples of (government and community) initiatives that promote positive images of refugees and asylum seekers, and endorse RCOA's comments about the importance of promoting shared values and commonalities between cld communities (in particular those from asylum seeking or refugee backgrounds) and the Australian community more broadly – including "*concern for family safety, desire to self-support, to learn and to be a part of a community*"[4].

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[4] RCOA Submission to the AHRC Anti-Racism Strategy, pp.1-2

We also note the success of the SBS program '*Go Back to Where You Came From' as a si*gnificant contribution to promoting the human face of the asylum seeker/refugee debate. Through the 'reality' tv format and engagement with 'ordinary' Australians, it was able to address misconceptions and increase understanding by highlighting commonalities between 'Australians' and those from humanitarian backgrounds. This program also developed and made available resources for schools to explore these issues and promote understanding and tolerance.

As mentioned in our response to Ques.5, AYAC and the MYAN also believe that government should take a leadership role in promoting findings in such research as Graham Hugo's '*The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants'*.

Objective 2: Identify, promote and build on good practice initiatives to prevent and reduce racism

4. ***What are the priority areas in which we should be addressing racism (for example: employment, education, sport, the media, cyber-racism?)***

Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians must be a priority area in order to recognise the history, strengths and value of the First People of Australia as well as removing racist clauses in the one of the founding documents of this nation – the Australian Constitution.

We believe that priority areas must also include all those listed in section 3 above. It is the experience of MYAN and AYAC that young people often experience more explicit racism and discrimination at school (i.e. racist bullying and exclusion, and conflict between groups of young people). More implicit racism and discrimination is often experienced at work or when seeking employment, as well as in the private housing sector – most commonly when seeking private rental through real estate agents.

Access to and engagement in education, training and employment is central to a sense of belonging and connection to community for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and essential to social cohesion – including sustained and meaningful participation in Australian society. We refer the AHRC to VicHealth's publication "*Review of audit and assessment tools, programs and resources, in workplace settings to support race-based discrimination in workplace settings*", developed in response to the identification of workplaces as both places where race-based discrimination occurs, as well as a priority setting where anti-discrimination and diversity can be supported and enhanced. Further information can be found here:
 http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Addressing-race-based-discrimination-in-workplaces.aspx

In relation to the area of 'cyber-racism', AYAC and the MYAN believe that for young people there is a correlation between online and offline settings because research suggests that young people who are at risk online would be most at risk offline[5].

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[5] Palfrey, J., Sacco, D. boyd, DeBonis, L. (2010) Enhancing Child Safety & Online Technologies: Final Report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, Harvard University, Berkman

5. What measures should governments at all levels take to address racism?

It is essential to any successful anti-racism strategy that all levels of government are actively promoting anti-racist attitudes and behaviours and, as a key mechanism, are supporting community-based initiatives - e.g. through a targeted policy approach and funding programs and initiatives.

In Victoria, a number of local government areas are participating in the 'LEAD Project – 'Locals embracing and accepting diversity'. It involves a coordinated range of specific actions within each locality and is based on VicHealth research that the best way to reduce discrimination, support diversity and generate long-lasting cultural change in communities. Further information can be found here: http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Localities-Embracing-and-Accepting-Diversity-LEAD-program.aspx

AYAC and the MYAN believe that for any anti-racism strategy to be successful, government at all levels must take a leadership role in celebrating and promoting Australia's multicultural past, present and future. This includes a leadership role in promoting current policies in relation to immigration and meeting Australia's international obligations to provide protection to those seeking asylum – either through the on-shore or off-shore programs.

Government should also take a leadership role in promoting findings in such research as Graham Hugo's '*The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants*'.

6. What role can business, the arts, sporting organisations, community groups, service organisations and the media play in addressing racism?

AYAC and the MYAN believe that each of these groups/sectors can play a significant role in an anti-racism campaign, through a targeted and consistent approach/strategy (relevant/meaningful to their organisational focus) to anti-racism. The leaders in community, corporate and government play an important role of championing the values and attitudes underpinning the Anti-Racism Strategy. This includes role modelling genuine anti-racist attitudes and behaviours and exploring/promoting how racism might be tackled. Specifically this could be achieved through active promotion of:

- Positive images of diversity;
- Simple messages about racist attitudes/behaviour – definitions, impact, and examples of appropriate responses;
- Highlighting the commonalities among people in our community.

The media can and should play a critical role in any anti-racism strategy - in particular:

- Reflecting diversity in popular TV shows such as *Home & Away* and *Neighbours* and reality TV shows.
- In popular media outlets such as (talk back) radio programs and daily newspapers, promoting simple, clear messages about racist attitudes/behaviours and 'bystander' responses.
- Utilising (large scale) advertising that promote messages as above, but also community-based campaigns – e.g. an anti-racism advertisement on the side of a Sydney bus produced by local multicultural young people for young people.
- Engaging young people in social media campaigns that empower young people to positively reflect on the diversity within Australia.

7. How can we involve young people in addressing racism?

Young people should be at the forefront of addressing racism and be considered as significant champions of social cohesion and inclusion. It is our experience working with young people nationally, that young people continually call for more humane and progressive policies and initiatives that tackle racism and discrimination and celebrate Australia's cultural diversity. Indeed, Australia's youth-led movement is born out of young people identifying and taking leadership on the need for social change (because they are not seeing this in government or other established mechanisms) – including in the area of anti-racism.

AYAC and the MYAN believe that the best way to support young people in this role is through a embedding a youth participation approach – e.g. engaging young people co-design the campaign from planning, development to implementing and evaluating anti-racism initiatives. We believe that fundamental to any policy and program response, is a recognition that young people are experts in their own experiences and knowledge (particular to the development stage of adolescence and identity formation), and are best placed to articulate the impact of racism on their lives and identify appropriate anti-racism strategies.

We note that 'peer-to-peer' education is a particularly effective means through which young people engage in issues, acting as positive role models for their peers and leading by example. When speaking out strongly on issues such as racism and discrimination, young people can empower others to do the same as well as knowing how to communicate in a way that young people will relate to.

8. Can you give examples of strategies that you have seen, used or been part of that have been successful in preventing or reducing racism? Why were they effective?

We are aware of a many good practice examples of youth-led anti-racism initiatives. We believe that these were successful because they were community-based, designed and delivered by young people and therefore implicitly recognise and directly address young people's experiences of racism. Below are examples from Victoria, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and New South Wales. The MYAN and AYAC can provide further case study examples upon request.

Northern Territory - Multicultural Youth Northern Territory (MyNT)

MyNT has a focus on supporting youth-specific, youth-led preventative initiatives that foster inclusion and strengthen community. These initiatives include: Harmony Day, cultural celebrations, sporting events and 'peer-to-peer' education. Currently MyNT is running a program in which young people in Darwin play soccer with Unaccompanied Minors from immigration detention. This program encourages young people to find commonalities, thus seeking to mitigate negative community perceptions of asylum seekers.

MyNT also runs *'Anti-Bullying and Bitching'* workshops using a 'peer-to-peer' model. This program is currently working on a youth-directed movie exploring issues of identity, belonging, racism and discrimination. Through this movie, young people seek to challenge negative media stereotypes and raise awareness of the issues diverse young people face when settling in Darwin.

Victoria: Voices of Young Australians: Uniting for Social Cohesion

Delivered by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), this 3-year project was funded by the Scanlon Foundation and auspiced by the Australian Multicultural Foundation. It was based in the Cities of Hume, Whittlesea and the Shire of Melton – LGAs on the northern fringes of Melbourne experiencing growth and demographic changes. The project had 3 main objectives:

- To help young people from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds to develop youth leadership skills through leadership training
- To increase community acceptance of cultural diversity through dialogue and youth-led activities
- To mentor future leaders in diverse communities.

Nine local schools were key partners in the project, which delivered leadership training to 96 young people aged 13–18 years. During the program, the young people planned and delivered 13 varied projects. All of their projects aimed to combat racism and to improve social cohesion within their schools and broader communities. The young people were supported by mentors. In response to annual reviews, the mentoring model was changed to better suit the needs of the young people and the nature of their projects. For further information go to: http://www.amf.net.au/projects/scanlon

NSW - Connections: Culturally Diverse Youth Development Project

Delivered by St George Youth Services Inc. NSW, this project was also funded by the Scanlon Foundation and auspiced by the AMF. It was based in the St George and Sutherland regions in the inner west of Sydney. These regions have very diverse populations with a mix of established communities and new arrivals. The project had three main objectives:

- To help young people from culturally diverse backgrounds develop leadership skills through leadership training,
- To build awareness and acceptance of cultural identity through youth-led activities and the media, and
- To enhance the social development of culturally diverse young people by improving knowledge, life skills and networking.

46 high schools were involved in the project, and 68 young people were trained in leadership skills. Three anti-racism forums were organised and delivered. A number of workshops and events promoting racial harmony and cultural diversity complemented the forums. Several community groups supported the project, providing mentoring and advice to the young people. St George Youth Services Inc. successfully applied for funding from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to take the project to its next stage. For further information go to: http://www.amf.net.au/projects/scanlon

South Australia: Cultures of Taste

Representing a unique and innovative approach to addressing racist bullying in schools, *Cultures of Tastes* aims to encourage mutual respect, understanding and acceptance among all young people. The project is a collaboration between Multicultural Youth South Australia (MYSA) and the Australian Icon, Ms Dorinda Hafner. Dorinda is well loved and known across all generations both for her many years of innovative Africa-in-Schools Programs as well as her celebrity Chef status and leadership in addressing poverty through her Australian Sponsorship 4 African Kids (AS4AK) charity. *Cultures of Tastes* targets Year 8, 9 and 10 students aged between 12 and 16 years from the Western and Northern suburbs of Adelaide. Students include new arrivals, second generation migrants, Aboriginal youth and Australian young people. Schools are invited to register their interest for this cost-free project which will involve a series of three workshops over 3 hours. Fun, interactive and creative, these workshops focus on:

- Engaging students in a discussion about racist bullying and its impact on young people,
- Exploring the importance of respect, acceptance and understanding through sharing personal experience, and
- Brainstorming small projects to address racist bullying.

Following the workshop, students are assisted by their teachers and MYSA to develop and present their projects at MYSA's music event. Working together on their own projects towards a common goal enables students to strengthen their cross-cultural friendships and set strong, postive examples for current and future students.

Cultures of Tastes builds on the national multicultural policy "People of Australia" which has a strong focus on children and young people as the future champions of social cohesion and inclusion. The project aims to demonstrate how young people can promote cultural diversity and the values of a genuine Multicultural Australia.

Tasmania - Living in Between & Students Against Racism

The *Living in Between: Diversity Education through Storytelling* project provides opportunities for students at southern Tasmanian schools to learn first-hand about the differences and similarities through sharing food, music and stories. A collaboration between the Hobart College Students Against Racism, the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning and the Alcorso Foundation, the project provides a series of workshops for school groups that involves performance and activities.

Living in Between also supports the *Students Against Racism* group. This group was first formed in 2008 at Hobart College – developing a dramatic presentation that explains why they left their homelands, the journey to Australia and their lives in Tasmania. The Hobart College group currently has 35 members, most of whom have come to Tasmania as humanitarian entrants. As well as music and food, they share their stories about settling in Australia and the pain and pleasure of working out how to live between two cultures. The dramatic presentation is designed to be a proactive response to young people's experiences of racism – addressing a lack of understanding about why asylum seekers, refugees and migrants were settling in Tasmania. The project won the Tasmanian Human Rights School award in 2009 and currently receives funding from the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship through the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program. For more information, go to http://www.afairerworld.org/_Current_projects/lib.html

Victoria - Western Young People Independent Network (WYPIN)

Established in 1989, WYPIN is a youth-led group working to challenge racism and social issues in the community. WYPIN's vision is for a multicultural Australian society with understanding between young people of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds and their mission includes: (i) breaking down ignorance and bridging understanding between young people of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds, (ii) empowering young people to develop skills which enable them to successfully overcome their problems and achieve their full potential and (iii) addressing both structural and personal racism and discrimination. WYPIN's working group on racism and discrimination has developed a play for workshopping in different settings, including Ki*tchen Culture* – a program that brings diverse young people together around the theme of food. Participants are encouraged to perform the play and engage in discussion over food that has been prepared by the group. Having an open discussion allows people to learn and share their experiences of racism and discrimination and explore non-violent ways of tackling this problem. For further information go to: http://www.wypin.org.au/About.aspx

Objective 3: Empower communities and individuals to take action to prevent and reduce racism and seek redress when it occurs

> *12. What strategies or approaches can be used to help bystanders address racism where and when it occurs?*

AYAC and the MYAN wish to draw the AHRC's attention to the VicHealth publication *Review of bystander approaches I support of preventing race-based discrimination*, available at: http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Bystander-approaches-in-support-of-preventing-race-based-discrimination.aspx . This research focuses on bystander action in response to both interpersonal and systemic racism. The potential role of the bystander is explored in relation to the varied forms and levels of racism, and across multiple levels and settings. It is based on the assumption that such action may be applied across a range from preventing racism occurring, to limiting its reoccurrence, to intervening after a racist incident.

AYAC and MYAN would also like to draw attention to the work being done by youth-led organisation *Project Rockit* that focus on tackling bullying through peer-to-peer youth empowerment and leadership programs within schools and universities: http://www.projectrockit.com.au/

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