NSW GOVERNMENT

Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2035

A system-wide plan for the elimination of racism
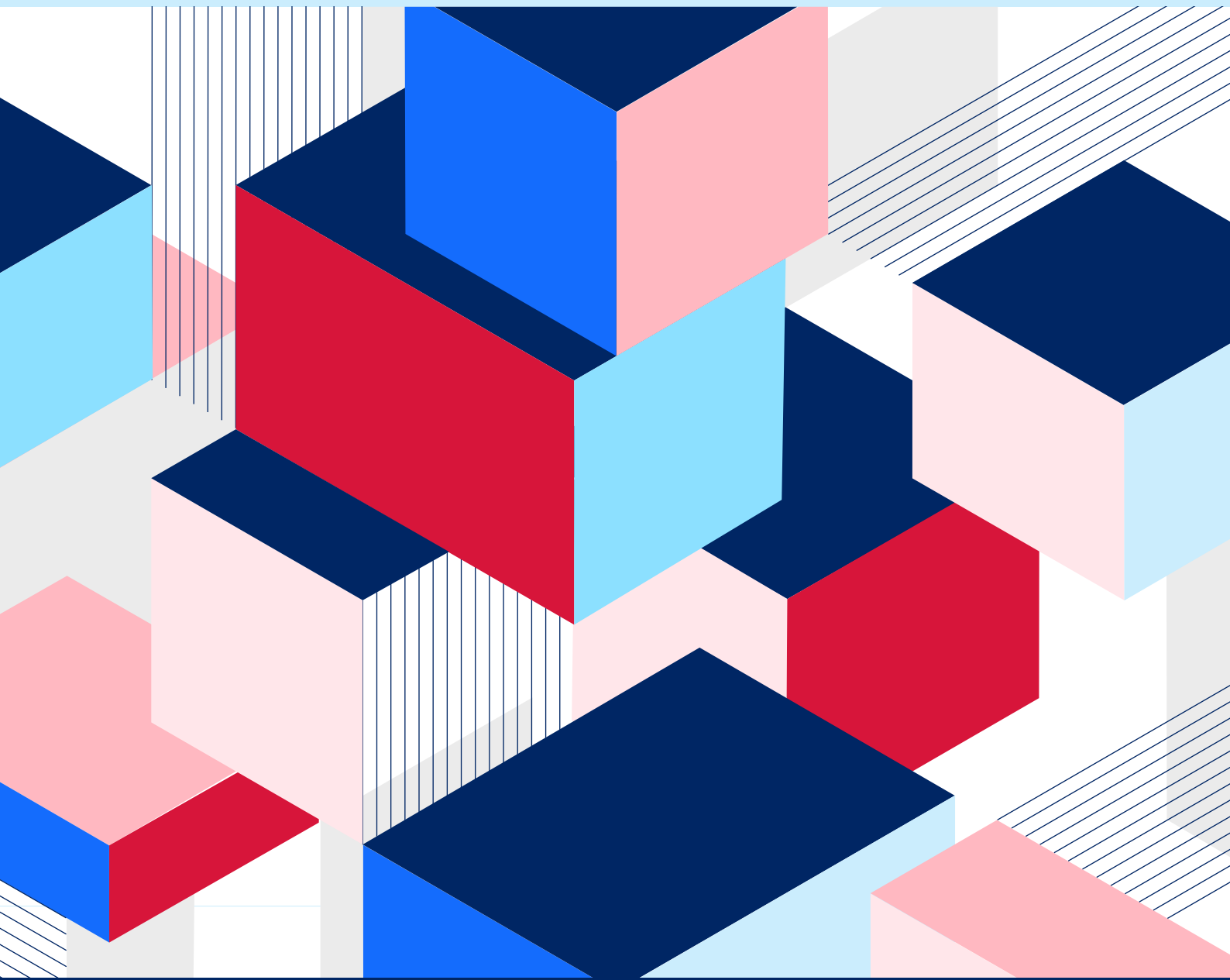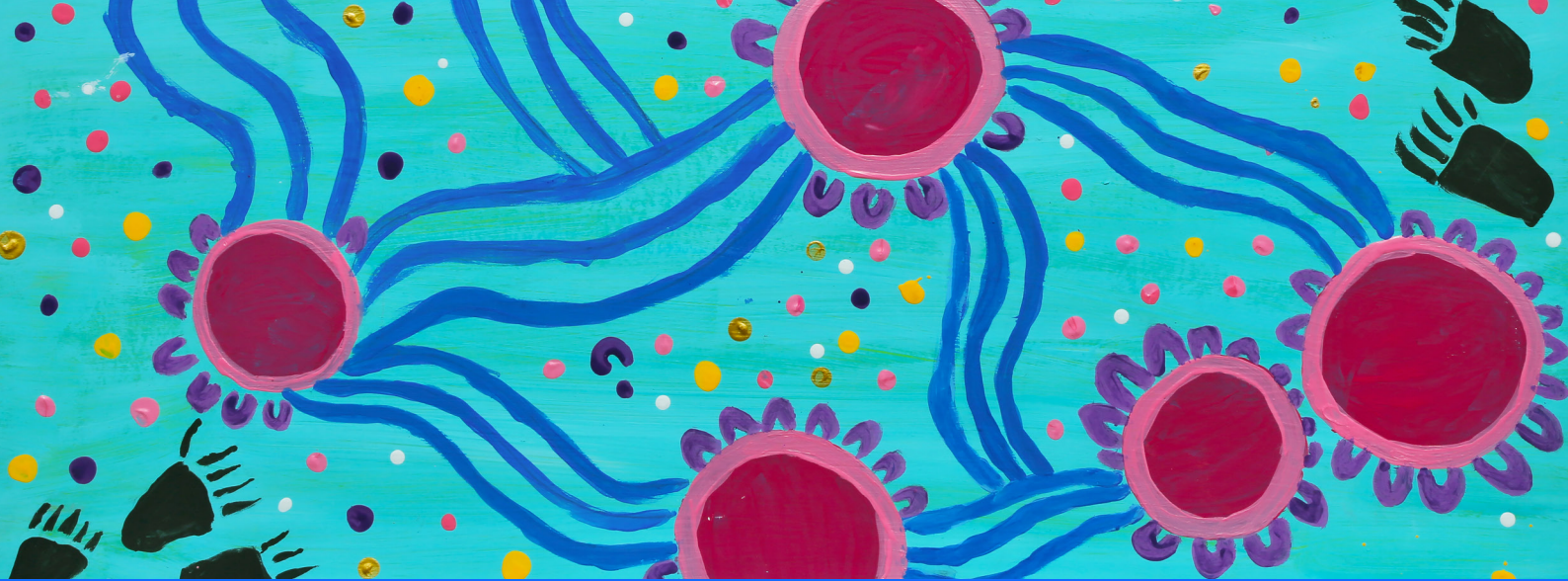
Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we learn, work and live, paying respect to Elders past and present as teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner achieves their potential through education.

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Foreword from the Secretary

The cultural diversity of NSW makes it a vibrant and popular place to live. We honour and recognise the enduring strength and resilience of Aboriginal people as the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we live, learn and work. NSW is also home to generations of migrants who've settled here from all over the world and there are more than 275 different languages spoken across the state. This diversity is our strength, and it is vital that we protect and uphold it to ensure a safe and inclusive place for all students and staff.

I'm proud to launch the department's first Anti-Racism Strategy. It sets out our plan over the next decade to eliminate all forms of racism in NSW public education, promote equitable opportunities and experiences for students, staff and families and contribute to a fairer and more cohesive NSW community.

This strategy is particularly meaningful as it is the department's first. It represents the culmination of sustained and passionate effort from colleagues across the department over many years. I extend my deepest gratitude to those who have contributed to the development of this strategy.

Equity and inclusion lies at the heart of public education and is a key focus area of Our Plan for NSW Public Education. We are committed to eliminating

barriers for all our learners and colleagues, and fostering a culture that values cultural, linguistic, and religious and spiritual diversity.

Our DNA in public education is to accept all – regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic background, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system and political beliefs. It is what differentiates us as public education.

As a former public school student, teacher and principal, as well as a parent of current public school students, I fully appreciate the lifelong benefits of belonging to a diverse and inclusive education system. We see students and staff confidently bring their whole selves to school and work no matter their cultural or religious background. We see high levels of engagement, wellbeing and participation, and we create positive environments which allow every person to thrive. I am pleased that with our new Anti-Racism Strategy, we're taking a significant step towards achieving this for every learner and colleague.

Murat Dizdar

Secretary
NSW Department of Education

A system-wide plan for the elimination of racism

As a public education system, we are committed to the elimination of racism and the creation of an inclusive society.

We recognise that racism takes many forms and take a broad view of racism as discrimination and inequity based on ethnicity, nationality, ancestry, cultural and/or language backgrounds, religion, faith, beliefs or spirituality which may occur at the individual or system level.

We aim to deliver the systemic change needed to advance equity for all people in NSW public education by:

- preventing all forms of racism in our schools and workplaces
- responding strongly and clearly if it occurs.

To be successful, we need to create a climate of respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and have effective, culturally safe and responsive processes for reporting and resolving all forms of racism in our schools and workplaces.

Our goals

- Students and learners, staff, families and communities from all cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds participate equitably in a racism-free NSW public education system
- NSW public education contributes to the creation of a safer, stronger, more inclusive and more cohesive NSW community.

Why?

Racism remains an ongoing barrier to equitable access and participation within our society and education system. NSW public education has an obligation to set the foundation for a strong cohesive society where racism is eliminated, and a climate of trust and mutual respect is supported.

We live in a culturally, linguistically, religiously and spiritually diverse society on the lands of Aboriginal peoples who have the oldest continuous living cultures in the world. All students and learners, staff, families and communities must be well supported and treated fairly so that they are able to equitably access the opportunities and benefits that our system offers.

Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2035

The strategy is an ongoing commitment, recognising that the elimination of racism will need sustained and focused effort.

Implementing the strategy

The strategy will be supported by implementation plans that outline what will be done to improve the experiences of students and learners, staff, families and communities across NSW public education in three focus areas:

Setting firm foundations for effective anti-racism action

Building everyone's capacity to contribute to anti-racism action in our schools and workplaces

Building strong anti-racism systems and processes for our schools and workplaces

Scope

The strategy applies to:

- all department workplaces
- all NSW public schools including pre-schools, primary, secondary, central schools, schools for specific purposes and unique educational settings
- all staff in NSW public education including leaders, teachers, and support staff in all education settings and staff in education support offices
- students and learners in all NSW public education settings.

Senior leaders will drive and be accountable for the delivery of workstreams and activity identified in implementation plans.

Setting firm foundations
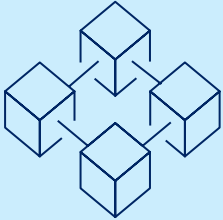
For our anti-racism action to be effective, it needs to be well-informed by evidence, including the advice of people with lived experience of racism and/or anti-racism action. Our efforts need to be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and families as partners in their children's learning. We know that a more representative workforce will assist us in understanding and meeting the needs of our culturally diverse communities.

| Our workstreams	Intended outcomes
Voices of lived experience Seek and listen to the voice of students and learners, staff, families and communities about the prevalence and impact of racism and how to address and prevent it.	Students and learners, staff, families and communities with experience of racism and/or anti-racism action: • feel heard and are taken seriously • have a sense of agency and are empowered to advocate for self and others • have confidence in the department's commitment to anti-racism.
Collaborative partnerships Partner with key stakeholders to bolster and align anti-racism efforts.	Our anti-racism initiatives are: • strategically aligned with, and informed by, those of our partners and key stakeholders • strengthened and improved through collaboration.
Workforce representation Remove barriers and implement practices to promote the participation of people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds across all levels of the workforce.	Our workforce and leadership are representative of the culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities we serve.
Evidence informed action Build, monitor and act on the evidence base on the prevalence and impact of racism.	We have an accurate and nuanced understanding of: • the prevalence of racism • the impact of racism • actions taken in response to racism. We use this insight to ensure our anti-racism initiatives: • are well-informed by evidence • build on existing strengths and plan for change where needed • are evaluated in terms of their contribution to the goals of the anti-racism strategy • are routinely reviewed and improved as part of their implementation cycle.

Building everyone's capacity
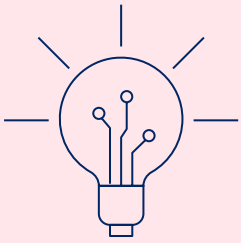
All students, learners and staff need to have the capacity to recognise and counter racism in order to successfully eliminate it from our schools and workplaces. By this we mean, they understand racism as a form of discrimination which is different from religious and other types of discrimination but which may be compounded by them; and have the capability, confidence and commitment to prevent and address racism within their sphere of influence. Our leaders need to be able to drive the change needed to build anti-racist, culturally safe and responsive learning and working environments and our teachers need to be well supported to provide fair and equitable learning experiences for all students and learners.

Our workstreams	Intended outcomes
Students and learners Enhance the capacity of students and learners to identify racism, its impacts and how to prevent and respond.	All students and learners: • know how to identify racism • understand the impacts of racism • know how to prevent racism • can confidently and capably respond to racism and are committed to anti-racism action.
All staff Enhance the capacity of all staff to identify racism, its impacts and how to prevent and respond.	All staff: • know how to identify racism • understand the impacts of racism • know how to prevent racism • can confidently and capably respond to racism and are committed to anti-racism action.
Teachers Enhance the capacity of teachers to foster intercultural understanding and implement culturally inclusive pedagogy and curriculum.	Teachers are confident, capable and committed to implementing culturally inclusive curriculum that reflects varied perspectives and responds to the needs of all learners.
Leaders Enhance the capacity of leaders to identify and address areas of inequity and barriers to cultural inclusion.	Leaders are confident, capable and committed to: • building anti-racist cultures and practices • identifying and addressing barriers to equitable access and participation for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds • modelling good practice when dealing with reports and incidents of racism • delivering equitable opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.

Building strong systems and processes
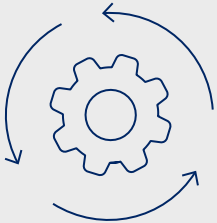
In order to deliver better experiences for students and learners, staff, families and communities, our systems for reporting racism in all its forms need to be clear and appropriate and our processes for responding to racism must be safe and prompt. Students and learners, staff, families and communities who report racism must feel well supported and trust that we will manage racist incidents, reports and complaints effectively and prevent them from re-occurring.

Our workstreams	Intended outcomes
Clear reporting pathways Provide clear and accessible reporting pathways for students and learners, staff, families and communities.	Reporting pathways for students and learners, staff, families and communities are: • well communicated • equitably accessed • understood and trusted.
Appropriate support Provide accessible, culturally safe and responsive support services for people experiencing racism in our schools and workplaces.	Anti-racism support services: • are equitably accessed • culturally safe and appropriate • facilitate equitable opportunities, experiences, and outcomes.
Safe processes Address reports and incidents of racism using culturally and psychosocially safe processes.	Processes for addressing reports and incidents of racism are: • clear and transparent • culturally safe and responsive.
Effective responses Implement transparent actions in response to reports of racism	When racism occurs in our schools and workplaces, the response is: • prompt • appropriate and effective • recorded and transparent.

Success measures

To gauge our progress and guide our next steps, a monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed. This will identify specific measures to track the progress of workstreams and overall impact of the strategy and inform continuous improvement.

We will know we are making progress when we see:

↑ Increases in

- participation in anti-racism programs and professional learning
- confidence in preventing and addressing racism among students and learners and staff
- wellbeing and sense of belonging among students and learners and staff
- confidence in the department's commitment to anti-racism action
- the resolution of reports of racism
- workforce cultural diversity
- the use of evidence-based initiatives and practices to address and prevent racism.

↓ Decreases in

- the incidence of racism reported by students and learners, staff and communities (noting that reports may initially increase as systems improve)
- disparity in student and learner attendance, performance and wellbeing on the basis of cultural, linguistic and religious background.

☆ New or enhanced

- systems and processes for reporting and recording racism
- anti-racism support services
- data sources for identifying racism and its impact
- processes for consulting with students and learners, staff, families and communities about racism and anti-racism
- community and stakeholder anti-racism partnerships.

Understanding racism

An understanding of the nature and various manifestations of racism is essential for recognising and countering it. This includes understanding the impact racism has on the individual level as well as how racism coupled with power can marginalise groups who do not belong to the dominant culture within a society.

What is racism?

Racism is a global phenomenon and takes different forms in different contexts. In Australia, racism is linked to the history of colonisation and migration. Expressions of racism may also be linked to international, social and political events.

To fully understand its impact, we need to understand the history of race relations in Australia, and concepts relating to socio-cultural and religious identity within Australian society as well as contemporary global expressions of racism which may manifest locally.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (2020) 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 this context, it is important to note that other factors such as gender, country of birth and religion may increase or compound experiences of racism for many individuals and groups, while recognising that discrimination on other grounds may also occur independently and without a racial element.

What is anti-racism?

Anti-racism refers to the ideas and practices that seek to confront and eradicate racism and racial discrimination on both the interpersonal and systemic level to uphold human rights and ensure equal opportunity for all members of society.

What is religious discrimination?

Religious discrimination refers to distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on religion, faith, belief or spirituality that impact human rights and freedoms. It can occur with or without discrimination based on race, culture or ethnicity.

Related terms

Cultural inclusion – Refers to strategies which remove barriers to participation for people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds and which seek out and value their contributions and perspectives.

Culturally responsive – Being able to understand and consider the diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds in the provision of services.

Culturally responsive teachers continuously support minoritised students through examination of their own assumptions about race and culture (Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis, 2016 cited in AITSL 2020).

Cultural safety – Providing a learning environment that is conducive to the diverse learning needs and aspirations of Aboriginal students, and where the students' cultures and identities are visible, centred and valued (AITSL 2020:22).

Equity – Is a way of thinking about fairness which recognises that inequality affects how people access and benefit from systems and services.

For the department, equity means that we recognise the rights of all students and learners to access and participate fully in education and realise their educational potential; we strive to adapt practices and policy settings to remove barriers to education; and channel support where it is most needed.

Intersectionality – Means that people's experience of a certain form of discrimination, such as sexism, is impacted by other features of their identity, such as whether they are of a particular race, a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and/or someone with a disability. Understanding this is important in understanding racism because it allows us to see how a person's experience of racism can be compounded, or transformed, by other forms of discrimination they face. (Australian Human Rights Commission, Racism. It stops with me).

Governance

The Anti-Racism Strategy and Religious Intolerance Steering Committee, with the Secretary as its executive sponsor, has been established to guide strategy development and implementation.

The steering committee will:

- oversee implementation plans and workstreams
- monitor the risks associated with successful delivery of workstreams
- ensure appropriate consultation is taking place
- monitor and review quality and effectiveness of workstreams
- provide strategic direction and make decisions based on strategic and operational requirements
- review and endorse the progression of reforms, programs and initiatives aligned to the strategy.

The steering committee would like to thank the following organisations for their support in developing the strategy:

- Advocate for Children and Young People
- Association for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, NSW
- Ethnic Communities Council
- Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales
- Multicultural NSW
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) Inc
- NSW Teachers Federation
- Primary Principals Association
- Secondary Principals Council
- Special Education Principals and Leaders Association
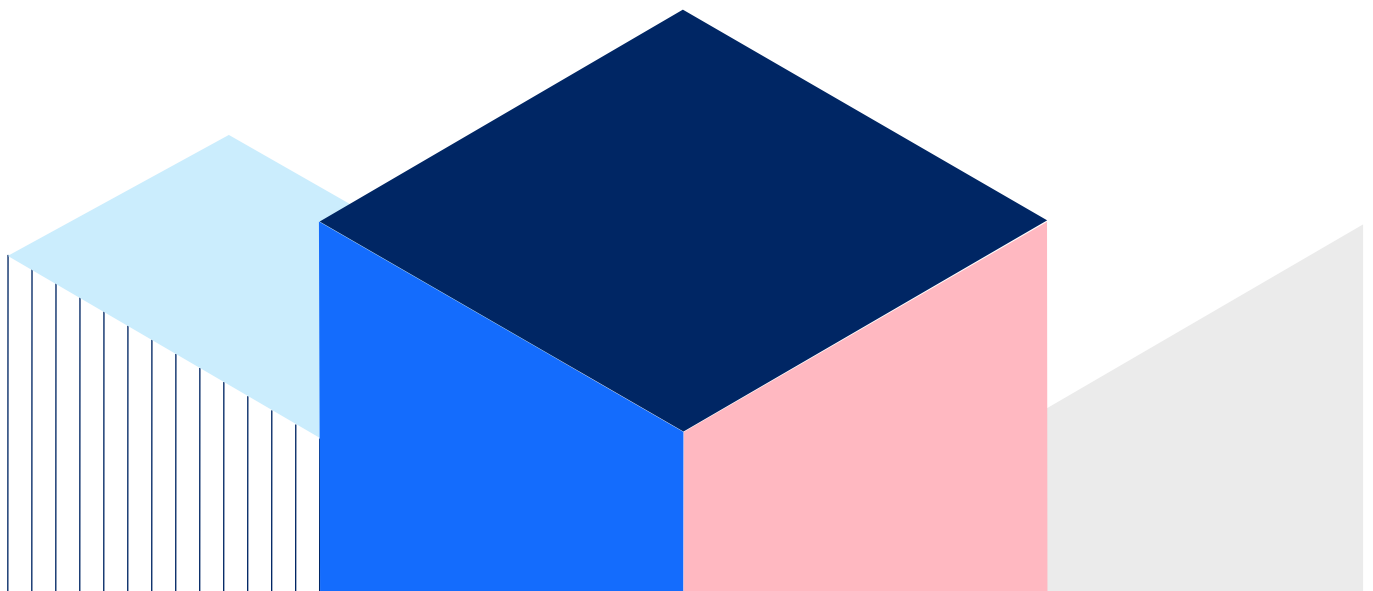
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Australian Human Rights Commission (2020) What is racism? (humanrights.gov.au), accessed 21 March 2024.

Australian Human Rights Commission (2022) Key terms, Racism. It Stops With Me (humanrights.gov.au), accessed 21 March 2024.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL 2020) Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce (PDF 901 KB), aitsl.edu.au, accessed 5 March 2024.

Defining equity, NSW Department of Education, 2023.

More Information:

For more terms and definitions and anti-racism resources, see:

- Anti-Racism Policy
- Multicultural Education
- Racism. No Way!

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and pay our respect to Country.

Say hello

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