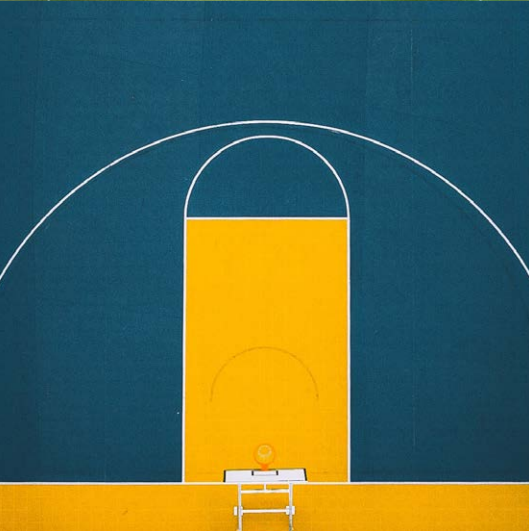
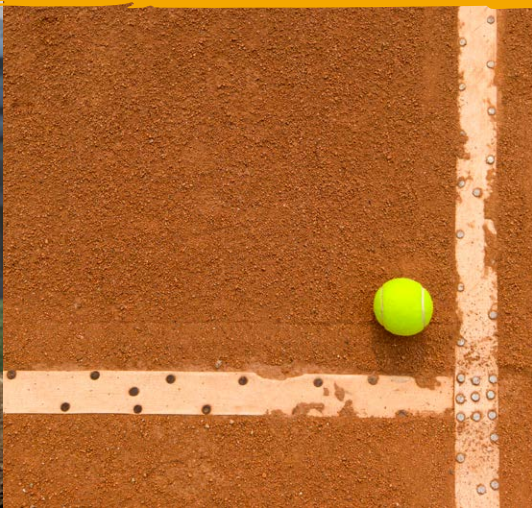
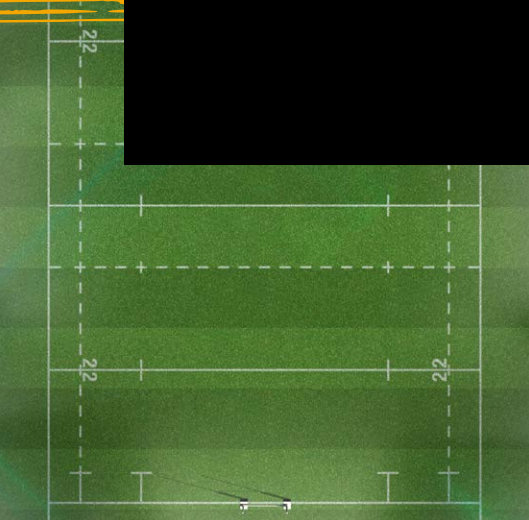


**RACISM.  
IT STOPS  
WITH ME**

**RACISM.  
NOBODY WINS.**

**GUIDELINES FOR WORKING  
WITH A TRAUMA-INFORMED  
APPROACH**



**Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission**

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## FOREWORD

**These guidelines outline a best practice response to incorporating a trauma-informed approach across all levels of an organisation.**

Trauma caused by racism and racial discrimination results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual who is the target of racial discrimination. Trauma has lasting and adverse effects on an individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.<sup>1</sup> A trauma-informed approach recognises the intersectional impact of racism and racial discrimination and aims to centre the voice and experiences of the targets of racial discrimination.

### **Trauma-informed approaches;<sup>2</sup>**

1. Realise the widespread impact of trauma.
2. Recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma, and the varied responses to trauma in both individuals and cultures.
3. Respond to trauma by integrating knowledge of trauma into all policies and practices.
4. Actively seek to resist re-traumatisation through organisational policies and environments.

## GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The principles of a trauma-informed approach should underpin your organisation's response to racist incidents. It is also necessary that trauma-informed principles be reflected across all the organisation's operations, people and culture. By doing this, you will ensure that safety and wellbeing remains a core focus of the organisation.

The following guidelines have been adapted from the Blue Knot Foundation's Organisation Guidelines for Trauma-informed Service Delivery<sup>3</sup> and can be found at: <https://blueknot.org.au/product/organisational-guidelines-for-trauma-informed-service-delivery-digital-download/>

### **Embed the five foundational trauma-informed principles at all levels of your organisation – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment**

- **Safety:** Interpersonal and environmental settings should promote a sense of physical, emotional and cultural safety.
- **Trustworthiness:** All organisational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency with the goal of building and maintaining trust.<sup>4</sup>
- **Choice:** Ensure that targets of racism are not obliged to solve issues within your organisation or provide education to perpetrators of racism or other staff members.
- **Collaboration:** Promote the reduction of power imbalances by shifting to 'collaborative' ways of working where the target of racism is part of decision-making processes that affect them.
- **Empowerment:** Centre the experiences of person/s experiencing racial discrimination in all aspects of the complaint handling processes. Decisions and actions taken by your organisation must be transparent and clear, and target/s of racism should be supported in shared decision making. Note that decision-making is distinct from the complaint handling or investigation process itself. The target's input should be sought throughout the decision-making process and should inform the way an independent complaint handling process takes place.

**For example:** Start by informing yourself on what is a trauma-informed approach. There are many resources online, including Blue Knot Foundation's webinar series <https://professionals.blueknot.org.au/professional-development-training/>

**Promote language that is respectful and de-escalating at all times, and be attuned to non-verbal communication**

- Language should move away from a deficit-based approach that could victimise and place blame on a target of racism. For example, use language such as, ‘what happened to you?’ rather than ‘what’s wrong with you?’.
- Language should be respectful, non-judgemental, clear, strengths-based and carry a sense of commitment.<sup>5</sup>
- Understand that both verbal and non-verbal communication are central to trauma-informed interactions.
- Recognise that communication methods vary individually and cross-culturally, and that it is important to provide culturally appropriate and accessible forms of communication. This may include the use of interpreters.

The table below contains some dos and don’ts on how to use positive, strengths-based language to avoid using a deficit-based approach when communicating with those who have experienced trauma as targets of racism<sup>6</sup>. For further information, see the Recovery Oriented Language Guide at [http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide\\_2019ed\\_v1\\_20190809-Web.pdf](http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide_2019ed_v1_20190809-Web.pdf)

DOS	DONT’S
Use language that is respectful Use statements like ‘Thank you for sharing with me. I am here to listen.’	Use language that is negative or judgemental Don’t use statements like ‘Why didn’t you tell me sooner?’
Validate a person’s experience Use statements like ‘It sounds like what happened to you was terrible.’	Minimise a person’s experience of trauma Don’t use statements like ‘It was just a joke, I’m sure they didn’t mean anything by it.’
Allow people the time to find the words and express what they want to say Listen attentively and minimise interruptions during pauses and silences.	Tell someone that certain information is irrelevant Don’t suggest approaches like ‘I don’t think we need to include that person’s details or how it happened?’
Ask whether the person feels they have been listened to Summarise what has been said and ask the person if you have the correct understanding.	Argue with a person’s perception of events Don’t question the target’s experience with statements like ‘Are you sure that happened? Maybe you’re just overthinking it.’

### **Incorporating a trauma-informed approach through all policies and procedures**

- Revise all policies and procedures to align with trauma-informed principles.
- All policies and procedures should respect diversity of culture, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, socioeconomic position, and experience.
- Policies and procedures should employ co-design principles, working in collaboration with people with lived experiences of trauma caused by racism and racial discrimination.
- The diverse perspectives of people who have experienced trauma caused by racism and racial discrimination should be at the centre of all activities of the organisation, including policy making, leadership positions, training and service provision.
- Trauma-informed education should form part of the organisation's professional development policies to improve staff competency and enhance capacity when responding to incidents of racism.

**For example,** documents that outline an organisation's commitments and strategies about racism and anti-racism within the organisation should always centre the perspectives of people with lived experience. This might include inviting members of the organisation to review and provide input on codes of behaviours and/or Member Protection Policies, or it may involve the contracting of external consultants with such expertise and experience. Where possible, the knowledge and time of people with lived experience of racism should be appropriately remunerated.

### **Promote respect, diversity, and inclusion in trauma-informed approaches**

- Trauma-informed resources and training should centre intersectionality of experiences and reflect the way that trauma impacts people from diverse backgrounds differently.
- Trauma-informed approaches should respect and adjust responses based on culture, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- Trauma-informed approaches should include educational tools on understanding internal racial biases that can impact responses to trauma.

**For example:** When holding trauma-informed education and training, seek providers that are led by people with lived experience of racism. Whenever a person is invited to speak about their lived experiences of racism and related trauma at events, webinars or meetings, it is important that those speaking have choice and control over how their stories are told, and how sessions are run. People with lived experiences of racism should always be remunerated for sharing their experience and insight. For more information about safe and meaningful engagements, see <https://www.ourrace.com.au/>

**Promote and implement an anti-racist approach that recognises the unique experiences of First Nations peoples**

- Ensure trauma-informed approaches are guided by the specific community needs in mind and are culturally safe and sensitive.
- Ensure the self-determination of First Nations peoples is respected and trauma-informed approaches, responses, and systems centre the experiences of First Nations communities.
- Trauma informed approaches should have ongoing evaluation to ensure they are current and appropriate for different scenarios.
- Trauma-informed approaches should be informed by anti-racism resources and guidelines.

**For example:** Seek out anti-racism resources informed by the perspectives of First Nations people and people with lived experience of racism. Use these as the basis for ongoing education for senior leadership, staff, officials, members and spectators. Anti-racism resources can be found at <https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (Report, 2014) [https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA\\_Trauma.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (Report, 2014) 9 [https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA\\_Trauma.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Blue Knot Foundation, *Organisation Guidelines for Trauma-informed Service Delivery* (Guidelines, 2020) 55-69 <https://blueknot.org.au/product/practice-guidelines-for-treatment-of-complex-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care-and-service-delivery-digital-download/>

<sup>4</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (Report, 2014) 11 [https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA\\_Trauma.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Mental Health Coordinating Council, *Recovery Oriented Language Guide* (Guidelines, 2018) [http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide\\_2019ed\\_v1\\_20190809-Web.pdf](http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide_2019ed_v1_20190809-Web.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>Mental Health Coordinating Council, *Recovery Oriented Language Guide* (Guidelines, 2018) 6-7 [http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide\\_2019ed\\_v1\\_20190809-Web.pdf](http://www.mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guide_2019ed_v1_20190809-Web.pdf)

**RACISM.**  
**NOBODY WINS.**

ABN 47 996 232 602  
GPO Box 5218,  
Sydney NSW 2001

General enquiries  
1300 369 711

National Info Service  
1300 656 419  
TTY 1800 620 241

Human Rights Commission  
[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

This resource has been created by the Australian Human Rights Commission, in collaboration with national, state and territory-based sporting organisations and venues. For additional resources and information about the project, please visit <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/%20guide-addressing-spectator-racism-sports-2021>.