



Local community-based anti-racism support services in Victoria offering safe spaces to speak out against racism: First insights after one year

9 February 2026

A public statement from the coordinators of the Wyndham Anti-Racism Support Network, the Whittlesea Wyndham Anti-Racism Support Network and the Southeast Anti-Racism Support Network (<https://antiracismvictoria.com.au/support-services/>)

According to a 2024 [study](#), 76% of Victorians from racialised communities have experienced racism in Australia, but only 15.5% of them have ever reported it. Racism hurts individuals, communities and society in many different ways, and those who face it are often pushed into silence without having a safe space where they can speak out and feel heard. In 2025, three community-led anti-racism support networks were set up in Wyndham, Whittlesea and Melbourne's southeast with the mission to break this silence. They provide **trusted and culturally safe spaces in the local community** where people who have experienced racism can speak up, find emotional support and validation and are offered qualified referral advice and assistance with formal reporting.

These three anti-racism networks have established themselves as crucial support services on the local level. The networks have heard from **hundreds of community members about their experiences of racism**, many of them sharing their stories of racist abuse, threats, or discrimination for the first time outside their family circles. Network representatives have highlighted the importance of having safe spaces where people feel listened to and supported.

"To be able to be heard was huge. It was a lot around recognition that I'm being heard...often just listening alleviates some of that pressure," one network coordinator noted. Another one confirmed that: *"The support we provide is quite varied, but yes, just to tell their story to someone who's listening. It's the way of telling their stories in a safe environment".*

With the consent of those who shared their experiences of racism, the networks have started to systematically document racism locally: In 2025, **52 cases were formally recorded**. While this number represents only a small fraction of the experiences shared by community members, this emerging local documentation will help paint an evidence-based picture of the scope and nature of racism locally and shape targeted measures to address racism where it happens.

The majority of the recorded incidents of racism happened in **public spaces** (26), in particular on the street or in car parks (10), on public transport (8) and in shops/shopping centres (8), as well as in **employment** (10) and **schools** or other education institutions (7). The most commonly reported types of racism were described as verbal abuse or insults (33) and discrimination (25), but more than one fifth of the incidents (11) were recorded as verbal threats. In 42 of the 52 documented cases of racism, women were targeted, many of them being deeply impacted by the experience; some for example, decided to not use public transport any more or to take off their hijab in public.

These are some of the experiences community members reported to the networks.

- *A South American family has been harassed and abused, verbally and in several written notes, by their neighbour; one note included the sentence: "you will be shipped back to your own country".*
- *A hijab-wearing Muslim mother was travelling on public transport with her 10-year-old son, when a white man suddenly punched her son in the stomach. She believed the attack was racially and religiously motivated.*
- *An Afghan-Muslim women's co-worker consistently asked her, 'why do you wear a scarf, why do you force your kids to wear a scarf, why do Muslims kill people.'*
- *A young man of African background was walking on the footpath as a man got out of his car, approached him and verbally abused him: 'You black c***, what do you want here in my country?'*
- *Burundi-born woman works as a child minder at an educational centre. A mother brought her toddler in to be looked after while she went to her class; she pointed at the educator and told her not to touch the child and then handed her child to another educator.*
- *The day after the Bondi terror attack in Sydney, a 12-year-old Muslim female high school student was called a 'terrorist' and a 'red flag' by another student.*

The three anti-racism support networks remain committed to provide safe spaces for our communities to speak out against racism. They encourage everyone who faces racism to contact them, to share their experience and discuss potential next steps. The networks also jointly express the need for funding and additional resources to be able to continue and expand their local support services, which are more important than ever.

Wyndham Anti-Racism Support Network

Wyndham Community and Education Centre

Email: WARSN@wyndhamcec.org.au

Phone: 03 9742 4013



Whittlesea Anti-Racism Support Network

Whittlesea Community Connections

Email: ch@whittleseacc.org.au

Phone: 03 9401 6666



Southeast Anti-Racism Support Network

Wellsprings for Women

Telephone: 03 97013740 (Samar Geid)

Email: samar@wellspringsforwomen.com

Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre (SMRC)

Phone: 03 9767 1902 (Sharon Smith)

Email: sharons@smrc.org.au

Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)

Mobile: 0428 760 849 (Ayuel Mading)

Email: amading@cmynet.au

South East Community Links (SECL)

Phone: 03 9791 8344 (Ruwanthi Mudannayaka)

Email: rmudannayaka@secl.org.au

