

# Speaking Out CAN Make a Difference

RACISM.  
GET UP!  
SPEAK OUT.



GREATER  
DANDENONG  
*City of Opportunity*

# RACISM. GET UP. SPEAK OUT.

**'Racism. Get Up. Speak Out.'** is a series of cultural community projects that invites local people to share stories that affirm and celebrate positive responses to acts against racism within the Greater Dandenong community.

The project is informed by the National Anti-Racism Strategy and developed in support of the Australian Human Rights Commission national anti-racism campaign.

Research from 2011, undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Commission, showed that one in seven Australians say that they have experienced discrimination because of their colour or background. This figure has been increasing steadily in recent years.

As the most culturally diverse Council in Victoria, this is an important issue for the Greater Dandenong community and everyone has a role to play.

In June 2013, Greater Dandenong Council unanimously pledged support for the Australian Human Rights Commission national anti-racism campaign – 'Racism. It Stops With Me'.

By pledging their support, Council took a public stance against racism in our community.

We are committed to building a strong, resilient community where our differences are respected and celebrated. Council's pledge will further build on the existing work and initiatives within the community.

Inspired by Council's leadership, **Racism. Get Up. Speak Out.** aims to:

- raise awareness about racism and its effect on individuals and communities
- give individuals and organisations tools and resources to take practical actions against racism
- empower individuals and organisations to act, prevent and respond effectively against racism.

**Racism. Get Up. Speak Out.** plays a significant role in advancing Council's position - valuing the cultural diversity within the Greater Dandenong community and working to counter racism through the promotion and acknowledgement of positive community behaviour.

## Community Pledge

The community pledge invites local residents to come together and 'Speak Out' against racism, supporting the national anti-racism pledge at a personal and community level.

Through a series of public workshops members of the local community created over 1,000 imprinted ceramic tiles which will form a series of 3 mosaic panels.

Each tile is decorated with individual affirmations countering racism, such as 'I Have a Voice', 'I Make a Difference' and 'I Speak Out'. The tiles form an interlinking pattern symbolic of the diversity of our community and our ability to come together to hear each other's voice.



Claire Sutherland, Artist

## Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is a problem solving theatre technique in which an unresolved scene of oppression is present. The scene is then replayed with the audience invited to stop the action, replace the character they feel is 'lacking power' and improvise real solutions. Creative facilitators worked with a group of local refugee and migrant youth, developing the theatre technique and exploring the issue of racism.

In partnership with Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council (SEAAC) and the Noble Park English Language School, the group performed for a selection of local secondary schools where the audience members participated in making a change to discriminatory situations that reflected their experiences in the real world.

*"The students in the first workshop had no idea what they were up for, most of the students had never done drama before, so this was very new to them. We explored storytelling, drama games and opened up stories about racism, using forum theatre to create a change.*

*The group are excited to present the scenes and see what change people can make, being the spec-actors. This is about change, and what we can do as a community to break down racism, and say NO together."*



Diana Nguyen, Facilitator

# Community Stories

Local community members were invited to share their own stories, speaking about racism in our community and highlighting the positive actions people have taken when witnessing racist behaviour.

Elements of strength, courage and optimism became the threads to each story, while encouragement to look beyond stereotypes, value diversity and talk to each other offered us direction for our future.

The stories were shared as a series of postcards, posters, and banners; appeared online and were published in partnership with the Dandenong Leader.

John



“I tell [my peers], ‘It’s up to you. **YOU ARE THE CHANGE.** Start it right now. You are the future.”

Hayat



“I can’t deny my culture, but I feel more Australian now than before. I identify as Australian. If I’m singled out I **DON’T ACCEPT IT.** I speak to people.”

Diana



“Through storytelling we become more human, instead of being labelled. If everyone could have a conversation with their next door neighbour, then you’d **BREAK DOWN** all those walls.”

Bashir



“This country (Australia) has given me so much; I want to see myself as an **AMBASSADOR**. I want to show what a true, open-minded Afghan stands for. While we maintain and respect the core values of our culture, we are open to and **RESPECT** other’s cultures.”

Aunty Di



“Nothing will succeed unless we as peoples – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – **UNDERSTAND** each other. I ask people to talk to each other. It’s being a **HUMAN BEING**.”

# Documentary Series

Building on the published community stories, the theme of racism was explored through a confronting and moving series of mini-documentaries.



Since he came to Dandenong, **ANTONI** maintains a deep connection to his homeland, Aotearoa (New Zealand), his culture, and his family. This connection is symbolised by his Tā moko (traditional Māori tattoo).



**YOUSUF** had a happy childhood with extended family always close by. Since being forced to flee to Australia he has harnessed his memories of Afghanistan to inspire his approach to architecture.



From a young age **SKY** has always had the urge to create things. Drawing upon the rich heritage of the world's oldest living culture and a strong independent spirit, her fashion design is uniquely her own.



Traditionally the norms of Sudanese social interactions are very different to those in Australia. For JIKANY this means simply crossing the train tracks with friends might be cause for a major misunderstanding.



For NABILA the decision she made as a young woman to wear the Hijab wasn't taken lightly. It is a strong representation of a commitment to her faith but is also an expression of rationality and independence.

*"This project has been quite an amazing learning experience for me. To be honest, making these films was a more demanding task than I had envisaged at the outset. These are big, sensitive issues that are being dealt with and I soon became aware that different sections of the community experience discrimination in very different ways. I found that much work was needed to gain the trust of the different sections of the community and individual participants.*

*Consultation proved invaluable in developing and transforming an initial concept into workable and effective films. Through this process it became evident that addressing and challenging racial stereotypes was the most pressing issue to be told through these films.*

*Whilst making these films I had the great privilege of working with some inspiring and brave participants who all strongly believe in a vibrant, diverse and tolerant community. I want to thank them for their time, effort, creativity and honesty. I have learnt so much about their diverse cultures during this process and I am extremely proud of the work we have achieved together."*

William Head, Director

# How can you **SPEAK OUT** against racism?

If you witness racism towards someone there are **POSITIVE** things you can do to help.

- **Offer support** – Go and sit or stand with them.  
Ask them if they're OK.
- **Say something** only if it feels ok to do so –  
*“That was offensive; please have some respect for yourself and for others.”*
- **Report** the incident to Victoria Police and if the situation is threatening call 000.
- **For information about making a complaint** call the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on 1300 292 153 or the Australian Human Rights Commission on 1300 656 419.
- **Protect** your physical safety – don't put yourself at risk.



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View the full project at [www.greaterdandenong.com](http://www.greaterdandenong.com)







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Dandenong  
**Leader**

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