Non-Aboriginal Adults' Understanding of Daily Racism, Microaggressions and Allyship when working with Aboriginal Teenagers

Community Report from Phase 1 of the Racism and Allyship in Aboriginal Youth Spaces (RAAYS): Non-Aboriginal Adult Allyship Study
2025

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Acknowledgement of Country

This research was based on the lands of the Noongar people. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge that researchers and participants took part in this study on the lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations across the continent. We pay respect to the Elders of these nations past and present.

Terminology

Respectfully, we use the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout this report. We do this to acknowledge the terminology preferences on Noongar Country, where this report has been prepared. Our term is intended to be inclusive of the immense diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples and their communities. We recognise that all labels in settler-colonialism are contested and imperfect.

Suggested citation

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Content warning

This report contains discussions about Aboriginal teenagers' experiences of racism and adults' perceptions of these experiences. Aspects of the report may be distressing for some readers, please take care while reading. For more information on responding to racism please visit:
Racism It Stops With Me [1] and Call it Out [2].

Ethics and funding

This research in this report is funded by an Australia Research Council Discovery Indigenous Grant #IN210100051, and a Society for Research on Child Development Small Grants for Early Career Scholars grant. The research has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: 2022/176) and the University of Technology Sydney Research Ethics Committee (ETH23-8437).

Contact

Racism and Allyship in Aboriginal Youth Spaces (RAAYS) Research Team

raays@ecu.edu.au

https://www.raays.net/

Project artist

Olivia Kalin

Olivia Kalin is a young Ballardong, Yuet, Noongar, Jaru, woman from the Perth hills, who attended Kalamunda Senior High school. She was a part of the gifted and talented education program specialising in visual arts and did ATAR art and fashion design in her senior year. Olivia hopes to achieve a career from the artistic and fashion design skills she has learnt. Olivia's art pieces are used throughout this report.

Research team

Professor Bep Uink

Bep (Master of Applied Psychology (Clinical), PhD) is a Noongar woman from Perth, WA. She is the Director of Australian Indigenous Health*Info*Net at the Kurongkurl Katitjin Centre at Edith Cowan University. Her research focuses on understanding how socially determined disadvantage impacts the social emotional wellbeing of adolescents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Aboriginal LGBTQA+ youth wellbeing, and racism among Aboriginal adolescents.

Associate Professor Rebecca Bennett

Rebecca Bennett is the Pro Vice Chancellor Equity Diversity and Inclusion at Murdoch University. Her research interests include social justice and higher education; racism and allyship; Indigenous higher education; LGBTQA+ inclusion; popular and digital culture, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Professor Yin Paradies

Professor Yin Paradies is an Aboriginal-Asian-Anglo Australian of the Wakaya people from the Gulf of Carpentaria. He is Chair in Race Relations at Deakin University. He conducts research on the health, social and economic effects of racism as well as anti-racism theory, policy and practice across diverse settings, including online, in workplaces, schools, universities, housing, the arts, sports and health. He also teaches and undertakes research in Indigenous knowledges and decolonisation.

Associate Professor Gregory Martin

Gregory Martin is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has a background in adult and initial teacher education programs and has been invited to teach and research in First Nations contexts. Gregory's research interests include critical allyship and pedagogies, learning across diverse contexts and participatory methodologies.

Professor Ashleigh Lin

Ashleigh Lin's research is focused on early detection and intervention for mental health difficulties in adolescents and young adults. She is particularly interested in the mental health of marginalised groups of adolescents, including Aboriginal and LGBTQA+ adolescents. She is passionate about ensuring adolescents have a voice in research and service provision. She is a Professor at the School of Population and Global Health at the University of Western Australia.

Associate Professor Jenna Woods

Jenna Woods is a Noongar woman with family connections to the Southwest of WA. She has been at Murdoch University since 2010, first as a student and then a teaching-focused academic and is now the Dean of the Murdoch School of Indigenous Knowledges. Jenna's teaching background includes Australian Indigenous studies and community development with a teaching focus on the theory and practice of working with Indigenous communities. Her areas of interest include Aboriginal women's and children's interests, the impact of racism on Aboriginal communities, family violence, gender relations and social justice.

Jamie Everingham (Lachman-Everingham)
Jamie is of Koori (Wiradjuri and other New South Wales regions), Filipino (Visayan) and Anglo-Australian heritage and was born in Western Australia. She is the Project Coordinator for RAAYS at Edith Cowan University. Jamie's previous experience includes research at the Kids Research Institute, Curtin University and UWA, with a focus on strengthening capacity within communities experiencing social and health inequities.

Ms Rebecca Gilis
Bec Gillis is a psychology honours student at Murdoch University and a RAAYS research officer. Ultimately, she hopes to practice as a clinical psychologist with a particular focus on healing from childhood trauma. Prior to commencing her studies, she worked as a union organiser, where she developed an interest in equity as an important factor in mental health. Previous student research placements have given Bec a passion for conducting anti-racism research in an Australian context.

Ms Jessica Brand
Jessica Brand is an Arabana woman with roots grounded in Eastern Arrernte from Mparntwe country (Alice Springs, Northern Territory) and a research officer with the RAAYS project. She moved to Perth in 2017 with her two daughters. Jessica has a Bachelor of Criminology from Murdoch University and is currently completing her honours degree. She is also the coordinator for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enabling program at Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, Murdoch University.

Project governance

Aboriginal Data Sovereignty

The RAAYS project follows the rules of Aboriginal data sovereignty. Even though the data in this report is not from Aboriginal people, it is about what people think of the racism faced by Aboriginal teenagers. Because of this, we treated the data with the same care as we do with data from Aboriginal people by making decisions using the project's data governance system. You can find more information about Aboriginal data sovereignty on the RAAYS project website.

RAAYS Community Advisory Group

The RAAYS Community Advisory Group has five Aboriginal community members from Boorloo (Perth). The group gives advice and feedback during all parts of the project. The group also plays a data governance role. Members of the advisory group have co-authored this report.

RAAYS Youth Advisory Group

The RAAYS Youth Advisory Group has up to six Aboriginal young people aged between 15 to 22 years. Researchers meet with the Youth Advisory Group members at least twice a year to hear their thoughts and opinions on the study and how it is carried out. This helps make sure our research methods are suitable for and reflect the experiences of Aboriginal young people.

Acknowledgements

We thank everyone who took part in the focus groups and interviews for the RAAYS Non-Aboriginal Adults Allyship Study (NAAAS). These talks and the analysis in this report contribute to an important conversation in Australia about how to fight racism against Aboriginal teenagers and their families. This study happened during the lead-up to the national Voice to Parliament referendum,[3] when Aboriginal people faced an increased amount of hate speech and racism. We admire the strength of Aboriginal communities and their allies in standing up to this racism.

We thank the members of the RAAYS Community Advisory Group and the RAAYS Youth Advisory Group. They give us valuable help to understand how non-Aboriginal adults can stop daily racism and microaggressions against Aboriginal teenagers. We also thank Ms Paris Dickerson and Dr Shoshanna Scott for their invaluable work on the initial stages of this project. This project would not have been possible without your help. Finally, we thank our RAAYS Study Partner, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, for their initial support and ongoing input into this report.

Glossary

Adolescents, teenagers, young people

These words are all used in this report to mean people who are in their teenage years (12 to 18 years).

Anti-Racism

Actions taken to oppose racial discrimination and the ideas that support those actions. Anti-racism ideas point out the need for personal reflection on White privilege, systemic racial oppression, unconscious bias and unintentional continuation of racism. Anti-racist actions are taken to confront and/or reduce racism.[4]

Ally

A person who sees or knows about racism and takes action to stop it. Allies understand racism and work to fight against it.[5] We recognise that "ally" is not the only term for this concept. Many prefer the term "accomplice" or "co-conspirator" to show the importance of countering or dismantling bigotry and injustice.[6] Whilst we agree that this is an essential part of allyship, we have used the term "ally" here because it is used in the microaggression framework tested in this study [5] as well as most of the research we have used to inform the study.

Bystander

A person who sees or knows about racism happening but does not do anything to stop it. This might be because they do not understand racism or because they do not know how to take action to stop it.[5]

Interpersonal racism

Interpersonal racism refers to racism that happens in personal interactions between individuals, as opposed to racism that happens on a societal or governmental level. Most racial microaggressions happen at the interpersonal level. [5]

Institutional racism

Institutional racism means racism that operates at an organisational or institutional level. For example, it can include organisations like schools, hospitals or whole government departments. This type of racism results in discrimination against groups of people as opposed to operating on an individual basis. The racial microaggressions framework refers to institutional and systemic racism as macroaggressions, because they happen on a larger scale. [5]

LGBTQA+

This is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and Asexual, plus other sexually and gender diverse people. Different forms of this acronym exist and are used as an umbrella term to refer to the community of people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgendered.[7]

Microaggressions and Daily racism

We use these terms interchangeably throughout this report. Racial microaggressions - also referred to as daily racism - are small but frequent actions or words that are based on racist beliefs.[8] The micro in microaggressions means these acts of racism happen on a small (micro) time scale and that they occur at the individual rather than the systemic level; [5] It does not mean microaggressions have minimal impact. [9] We use the terms "microaggressions" and "daily racism" throughout this report because they are the most common terms for this kind of racism in research. However, we acknowledge the huge impact of all types of racism on Aboriginal teenagers, families and communities.

Other uses of the words 'microaggression' 'perpetrator, 'target', 'bystander' and 'ally'

These words can also be used to talk about other types of discrimination, for example, discrimination against LGBTQA+ people. In this study, they are used to talk about racism.[5]

Overt racism

Racist actions or words that are obvious and easy to see.[8]

Perpetrator

A person who does something racist. This can be deliberate or accidental.[5]

Racism

Treating people unfairly because of their race. Racism is enacted through systems that give more power to one race over others. It is supported by individuals who benefit from those systems and do nothing to challenge them.[10, 11]

Settler Colonialism

An ongoing ideology and system of power that erases and replaces Indigenous people and their cultures. It maintains the dominance of settlers over Indigenous lands through education, culture, and politics. This system makes the unfair treatment of Indigenous people seem normal and continues the harm caused by settlers.[12]

Stereotypes

Beliefs about the characteristics or behaviours of a particular group of people, usually a minority group, that can make members of that group seem more alike than they actually are. These beliefs are informed by social and cultural influences and can cause people to make wrongful judgements about others. [13]

Systemic racism	Systemic racism refers to racism that happens on a societal or cultural level. Similarly to institutional racism, systemic racism results in discrimination against groups of people as opposed to operating on an individual basis. The racial microaggressions framework refers to institutional and systemic racism as macroaggressions, because they happen on a larger scale. [5]
Subtle or covert racism	Racist actions or words that are not obvious. People who do these things might not realise they are being racist.[8]
Target	A person who experiences racism.[5]
Whiteness/White Australians/White people	In this report, Whiteness describes the dominant culture in Australia. White is used as a descriptor for a person or people to describe them being part of the dominant culture in Australia, sharing its cultural world views, and benefitting from a White position in the Australian racial hierarchy. The term does not necessarily refer to skin colour. We acknowledge that non-Aboriginal Australians come from diverse backgrounds.[14]

RAAYS Logo

The Aboriginal art design featured carries symbolism of people coming together within the community, the differences within each element of design can represent variations of culture, land and experience.

-Olivia Kalin

Executive Summary

Context

Recent reports suggest that racism against Aboriginal people, including children and teenagers, continues to thrive in Australia. [15, 16, 17] Evidence of the negative impacts of racism on teenagers' social and emotional wellbeing and mental health has been well documented in global contexts and is emerging in Australia. [18, 19, 20] Racism is a problem in the settler colonial worldview; [11, 21] therefore, finding ways to end racism should be settlers' responsibility [22]. The Australian Human Rights Commission along with other governmental and representative bodies in the areas of health and education have called for collaborative efforts and evidence-based strategies to tackle racism. [23, 24, 25, 26] This includes acknowledging that everyone has a part to play in unpacking and challenging racism.[23]

This report details findings from the first phase of the Non-Aboriginal Adult Allyship Study (NAAAS) which aimed to examine how non-Aboriginal adults come to understand the experiences of racism among Aboriginal teenagers (12 to 18 years). NAAAS is part of the ongoing Racism and Allyship in Aboriginal Youth Spaces (RAAYS) project. RAAYS is an Aboriginal-led, Australian Research Council funded project to understand 1) Aboriginal teenagers' experiences of daily racism and microaggressions and 2) what non-Aboriginal adults do to stop or prevent such racism. This report is intended for people who work with Aboriginal teenagers, including Aboriginal community leaders, community members, service providers and others who want to learn more about how non-Aboriginal people understand racism. The findings from this report will help develop an evidence base to support anti-racism interventions.

Data collection for the first phase of the NAAAS study took place between March and July 2023. This period covered the lead-up to the national referendum on the Aboriginal Voice to Parliament. "The Voice" referendum, meant that all Australian citizens aged 18 years or older were asked to vote on whether the Australian Constitution should be altered to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal voice to Parliament.[3]

As the result of a deliberate misinformation campaign in the lead-up to the referendum, as well as general ignorance, Aboriginal people were subjected to increased hate speech and racism across Australia. [27]

Unfortunately, reported instances of racism have only increased since the referendum [28] and many in the community are still processing and healing from the intense, hurtful, and incorrect public commentary about Aboriginal people and communities that coincided with the Referendum. [29] Notably, Aboriginal teenagers witnessed and endured racism while not having voting rights to help determine the outcome of the Referendum.[3] These events highlight the timeliness of the findings of the current report to establish an evidence-base for how non-Aboriginal adults perceive racism against Aboriginal teenagers, and whether they are responding to it in ways that will ultimately help to end racism. By improving our understanding of factors which support non-Aboriginal adults to call out racism or prevent them from doing so, this report provides insights that can help inform evidence-based anti-racism programs and initiatives in Australia.

The current study

A key goal of NAAAS is to see if "Racial Microaggressions", [5, 8] an international approach for understanding and responding to everyday acts of racism can help us understand how non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal adolescents act in response to racism. The study focuses on two groups: bystanders (those who see racism but do not act), and allies (those who try to stop or prevent racism). [5] At the same time as we were conducting phase one of NAAAS (the subject of this report), members of the RAAYS research team were also conducting phase one of a related study called the "Aboriginal Adolescents' Experiences of Racism Study (AAERS)". AAERS focuses on Aboriginal teenagers' experiences of racism. The report on AAERS phase one is in its final stages and will be available on the RAAYS project website once it is published.

In NAAAS (the present study), we want to learn about the beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and actions that non-Aboriginal adult participants have regarding racism that affect the Aboriginal teenagers they work with. We also want to see whether the racial microaggressions framework fits this context.

Method and analysis

We used focus groups and interviews (sessions) to talk with 52 non-Aboriginal adults across Australia who worked with Aboriginal teenagers or have worked with them in the past. These adults came from different areas like non-government organisations, schools, housing, youth work, and healthcare.

We asked study participants questions and discussed scenarios to help us answer these questions:

1. **What types of racism they have seen Aboriginal teenagers experience?**

2. **How aware were they of their own position in the settler colonial power structure that causes racism against Aboriginal teenagers?**

3. **What strategies do they use to try to stop racism against Aboriginal teenagers?**

The sessions were led by non-Aboriginal members of the research team and were informal and conversational in style. All questions for the focus groups were developed alongside the Aboriginal investigators on the project to ensure they reflected their lived experiences of racism. We also got feedback and perspectives on how we should analyse the data from our Community Advisory Group, and our Youth Advisory Group and feedback on our findings from the Community Advisory Group. This report shows findings from a basic analysis of the data.

* It is important to note that this report is not about how Aboriginal teenagers experience racism (see the AAERS Community Report for that). Instead, it is about how non-Aboriginal adults understand the racism that Aboriginal young people face and what they do about it.

Key findings

The findings in this report are divided into three main topic sections. Each section is focused on what participants' comments told us about that topic.
The topics are:

How significant participants thought racism was for Aboriginal teenagers.

How participants understood the racism that affects Aboriginal teenagers.

Participants ideas on how to be an ally.

Participant's views on the significance of racism in Aboriginal teenagers' lives

Most participants reported that Aboriginal teenagers experience racism, including racial microaggressions. However, not everyone thought racism was a significant issue for Aboriginal teenagers. Some participants named other issues they believe are bigger problems than racism including, family problems, anxiety, skipping school, behaviour issues, financial insecurity, and bullying. They also said that Aboriginal teenagers don't notice racism because it is normalised or that they don't fully understand it yet. Other participants said they believe that racism and racist systems cause many of the problems listed above. A few participants mentioned that racism is an extra burden that impacts Aboriginal young people on top of other problems that all young people face. Finally, some participants said that racism and racial microaggressions are a very significant issue.

Reasons they gave for this include that racism is everywhere in Australian culture and that it negatively affects the mental health and well-being of Aboriginal teenagers. Interestingly, even though most participants acknowledged that Aboriginal young people experience racism, not all participants were sure if racism was happening to the teenagers they work with specifically.

Participants' understandings of racism that affects Aboriginal teenagers

Participants had different definitions of racism, which ranged from obvious and intentional racist actions to more hidden, unintentional, and systemic racism. Participants descriptions of the racism that Aboriginal teenagers face, fit into eight categories:

1. Prejudice based on race or culture
2. Stereotyping
3. Discrimination based on skin colour
4. Overt interpersonal racism
5. Unintentional interpersonal racism
6. School-based racism
7. Systemic racism
8. White dominance and privilege

Participants' ideas on how to be an ally and stop racism

Participants talked about what it means to be an ally, including the importance of self-reflection, self-education, and taking actions to stop racism. While many understood some parts of being an ally, [5] few gave examples of actually intervening in racism or advocating for Aboriginal teenagers who had experienced it.
Several participants admitted that they often don't confront racism they become aware of, but they didn't seem to recognise that this allows racism to keep harming Aboriginal teenagers. Some participants said that listening and validating Aboriginal young people is the best way to support them when they experience racism. Others said they don't have the skills or aren't sure how to address racism. Some didn't seem to think that addressing the racism that Aboriginal young people experience was part of their job.

Despite the limited examples of challenging racism, many participants expressed their commitment to being allies at work and in their personal lives. They described the efforts they have made to learn about the historical wrongs of colonialism and how these relate to the current problems Aboriginal teenagers experience. Some participants shared the opinion that Australia's history of mistreating Aboriginal people has caused distrust in current-day Australian institutions. They gave examples of how their organisations are trying to include Aboriginal community members and show respect for Aboriginal cultures to improve their ability to meet the needs of Aboriginal young people. They talked about how important it is to be kind and supportive to the Aboriginal teenagers that they work with. However, only a few identified specific anti-racist actions that they were taking as individuals or in their organisations. Also, most participants did not show that they had thought about their own or their workplace's role in continuing institutional racism or their responsibility to take action to fight it.

Next steps

The findings in this report show how non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal teenagers understand racism and their role in stopping it. There are some contradictions in the findings. For example, participants generally understood the types of racism faced by Aboriginal teenagers and genuinely wanted to be allies. But they often didn't take personal responsibility for addressing racism and sometimes they showed hidden racial biases of their own in their responses. These findings raise important questions about personal responsibility in allyship. How do well-meaning non-Aboriginal adults progress from being bystanders who condemn racism to being allies who seek out their own hidden biases and actively fight racism?

Phase two of the NAAAS will be an online survey for non-Aboriginal adults in Australia who work with Aboriginal teenagers. The survey will use previous research, together with findings shared in this report to identify levels of allyship and bystander behaviour and what predicts these behaviours. Together, the findings from this report and the survey will provide detailed evidence to support anti-racist interventions that can help non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal teenagers develop the knowledge and skills that lead to allyship behaviour.

Moving Forward

'Moving Forward' features an emu, traditionally symbolic in Aboriginal culture as the creator spirit, moving forward and strength. This symbolic element and variations of colour have been used to represent the diversity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in a way where society can move forward to create new beginnings.

- Olivia Kalin

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Introduction and Background

1.1 Why was this research needed?

The elimination of racism would not only improve Aboriginal peoples' lives; it would ultimately create a stronger and more equal Australia. Racism is a barrier for Aboriginal peoples' access to healthcare, [30] and frequent experiences of racial discrimination explain almost half of the difference in psychological distress between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults [31]. Because of this, stopping racism is an important way to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal people.

Racism is especially harmful for children and teenagers, causing traumatic stress [19] and increasing the risk of future health problems. [20] Aboriginal teenagers have reported regularly experiencing racism in school including racism from teachers. [17] Research shows that racism impacting Aboriginal teenagers can lead to suicidal thoughts,[32] poor mental health, [33] and problems with emotional and behavioural development. [34] Racism also acts as a barrier to Aboriginal children and teenagers' school attendance, [35] and is linked to worse academic outcomes for them.[33]

In 2024, the Australian Human Rights Commission created the National Anti-Racism Framework to help eliminate racism in all parts of Australian society. [23] The framework suggests better legal protections, improved anti-racism practices in workplaces, and changes in schools to make them safer and more inclusive. It specifically calls for the development of initiatives that eliminate racism against Aboriginal people. [23]

1.1.1 Why study non-Aboriginal adults?

Aboriginal people make up 3.8% of Australia's population[36], so we would expect that most adults working with Aboriginal teenagers would be non-Aboriginal. There is evidence of this in areas like teaching [37] and healthcare[38] , where a very small proportion of employees are Aboriginal. Researchers who study racism have said that non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal teenagers need to develop a better understanding of racism so that they can help reduce the racism that impacts the young people they work with. [16] This study is a step toward learning how non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal teenagers understand racism and how their behaviours may contribute to preventing, stopping or continuing racism.

1.1.2 Types of racism

A challenge in understanding racism is that it can be subtle or hidden, making it hard to recognise or prove.[8] Racial microaggressions (or just microaggressions) is a term that describes small but frequent everyday actions or words that are based on racist beliefs.[8] Because microaggressions are not always obvious or intentional,[5] it can be hard to prove that they are racist, but they can still cause a lot of harm.[18] These daily forms of racism are linked to broader systems of racism in society, influencing institutions like schools, medical services, and social services, and contributing to unfair treatment and poorer outcomes for Aboriginal people.[39] [40]

1.1.3 Calling out racial microaggressions

Microaggressions happen in everyday situations, which makes it tiring for those affected by them to frequently speak up and educate others.[5] However, when people who experience racism don't challenge microaggressions, they often feel bad for not speaking up, which makes things worse. Over time, these small incidents add up and can greatly damage a person's confidence and well-being.[5] There are online places where people can report racism against Aboriginal people, like the "Call it Out" campaign.[2] However, it can be hard to address microaggressions directly because perpetrators of microaggressions and bystanders who observe them happening often don't recognise them as a type of racism and don't understand how harmful they are.[5] This is especially true for people who don't experience racism themselves. But ignorance doesn't make the impact of microaggressions any less harmful. It is very important for non-Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal teenagers to learn to recognise both subtle and obvious racism.

1.2 The current study

The Non-Aboriginal Adult Allyship Study (NAAAS) aims to understand how non-Aboriginal adults view microaggressions in the lives of Aboriginal teenagers. It also looks at what steps these adults take to stop racism against Aboriginal teenagers. The NAAAS uses an international model of racial microaggressions created by Sue and colleagues[5] to explain microaggressions, how they can be stopped, and the four roles people play in them: perpetrators, targets, bystanders, and allies. The definition of each of these roles is shown in **Figure 1.**

Perpetrators	are the people who do microaggressions.
Targets	are the people who the microaggressions are aimed at.
Bystanders	are people who see the microaggressions but don't do anything to stop them.
Allies	are people who recognise the microaggressions as racism and take action to stop them. They also educate the perpetrator to help stop microaggressions happening in the future.

Figure 1. *Microaggressions Framework (Sue et al., 2019)*

The microaggressions model hasn't been fully tested in Australia to understand the role and ability of adult bystanders and allies working with Aboriginal teenagers. (See Moodie et al., 2019 for an exception in schools [41]).

1.2.1 Study phases and research questions

In addition to testing the microaggressions model, NAAAS was designed to answer these questions:

1. How significant do non-Aboriginal adults think racism is for Aboriginal teenagers compared to other issues?
2. How well can non-Aboriginal adults identify racial microaggressions and other forms of racism against Aboriginal teenagers?
    i. Do they think about microaggressions they might have caused?
    ii. Can they identify microaggressions done by others?
3. How do non-Aboriginal adults act to stop all forms of racism against Aboriginal teenagers?
    i. How do they respond to obvious racism?
    ii. How do they respond to subtle racism?

To answer these questions, we designed the NAAAS study in two phases. In Phase One (this report), we talked with non-Aboriginal adults across Australia who work with Aboriginal teenagers. In Phase Two, we will use the findings from Phase One to create an online survey (expected in 2025) to measure allyship behaviour and what factors predict it.

02

Method

2.1 Participants

Our participants were 52 non-Aboriginal adults who currently work or have worked with Aboriginal teenagers. We reached out to community, mental health, and youth organisations that work with Aboriginal teenagers to ask for their help in finding participants. Some of these organisations sent our recruitment email to their staff, others shared a link to our online recruitment information, and some posted our recruitment message on social media. Members of our research team also shared information about the study with eligible individuals and organisations in our networks. All participants were volunteers and received a $25.00 gift voucher for their time.

Figure 2 (below) shows the different job sectors where participants worked. Participants came from all Australian states and territories, except Tasmania and the Northern Territory. No other demographic information was collected. All participants were 18 years or older and gave their informed consent before joining the study.

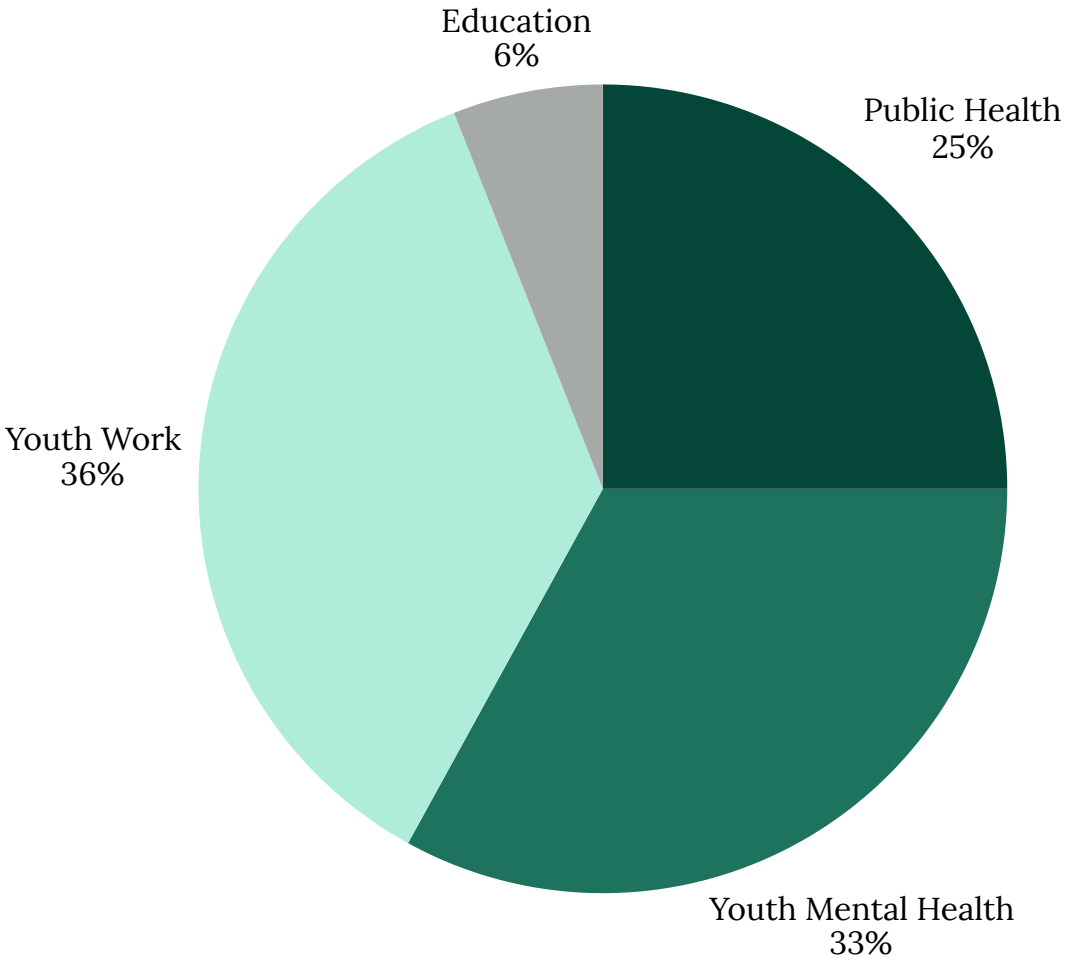

Figure 2. *Industries where participants worked*

2.2 Data collection

We conducted a mix of one-on-one interviews and focus groups with participants between March and July 2023. There were 19 sessions in total, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The number of participants in each session ranged from one to twelve. Ten of the sessions were focus groups with multiple participants (2-12 people in each group), and nine of the sessions were one-on-one interviews. Two interviews were face-to-face (one group and one single), and the rest were done online using Zoom. [42] All interviews were audio recorded with permission and then transcribed by a transcription company.

We used a semi-structured conversational style for the focus groups and interviews, guided by a list of questions and prompts (see Figure 3, below). This flexible style meant that not every participant answered each question; instead, participants could choose which questions to respond to. We also encouraged participants in group settings to respond to each other's comments.

We chose the White members of our research team to lead the focus groups and interviews. This choice was in acknowledgement of research that shows White people may feel less comfortable discussing race and racism in the presence of people of colour.[43] We wanted to allow all participants to feel free to express their views without fear of making mistakes or offending anyone.

*Footnote: In this report "White" is used as a descriptor for being part of the dominant culture in Australia and sharing in dominant cultural views not necessarily as a direct reference to skin colour. See Glossary (vi).

Focus Group Questions

In your experience, what are common issues that affect Aboriginal teenagers?

- Are these issues similar or different to issues experienced by young people? If so, how?
- Why do you think these issues occur for Aboriginal teenagers, specifically?

In your experience, how significant is racism, compared to other issues Aboriginal teenagers negotiate in their daily lives?

How do you define racism?

- Are there different types of racism?
- Does it always require verbal communication?
- Do you have any specific examples?

In your experience, can Aboriginal teenagers accurately identify incidents of racism?

- For example, do they sometimes not realise an experience they had was racism?
- Or do they sometimes misinterpret an action as racism when it wasn't?

Scenario question: Can each of you choose one of these scenarios and talk about whether it is an example of racism and why? *See ***Table 2*** *for a list of scenarios*

What makes someone an effective ally to Aboriginal teenagers?

- What actions do effective allies take to support Aboriginal teenagers?

What strategies do you use to support Aboriginal teenagers when they experience racism?

Can you share a specific example of a time when you supported an Aboriginal teenager who was experiencing racism?

- Or can you share an example of a time when you found out that an Aboriginal teenager was experiencing racism, and you wished that you had supported them in a different way?

Figure 3. NAAAS *Interview/Focus Group Questions and Prompts*

2.3 Data analysis

Both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal researchers on the team analysed the data. We used a step-by-step deductive method to understand participants' responses to the interview questions.[44] We also counted how many times certain answers were given to get important insights (frequency analysis). The data analysis was done in several steps, as shown in **Table 1** (below).

Data transcription and cleaning	All interviews were transcribed from audio recordings and a project research assistant removed all identifying details of participants.
Initial coding and thematic analysis	Three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal project researchers read the deidentified transcripts and took notes of their first impressions and thoughts.
Collaborative discussion	The researchers who completed step two of the initial coding met to discuss their understanding of the data. They talked about trends, standout impressions, and examples.
CAG and YAG input	The research teams' first impressions from the data were shared with the Community Advisory Group and members of the Youth Advisory Group to get their feedback. The members from both groups confirmed that the researchers' first impressions of the data matched their lived experiences.
Descriptive frequency analysis	A non-Aboriginal researcher (Gillis) counted how often the same responses were given to questions on three topics that aligned with key points identified in steps three and four. For example, she counted how many times participants mentioned racism as an important issue without being prompted.
Additional deductive thematic analysis	For questions where counting responses didn't give enough insight, the researchers analysed the responses to each question one at a time to identify themes in participants' responses. Key quotes were selected as examples of each theme for inclusion in this report.
Re-view of the thematic analysis by researchers and CAG	The frequency and thematic analyses were reviewed by research team members and members of the Community Advisory Group. This process ensured that the findings matched input from advisory groups, data from the AAERS study, and the microaggression model by Sue et al., (2019).[5]
Review of draft	A draft copy of this report was reviewed by the researchers, members of the Community Advisory group and our project partner for final input and conclusions.

Table 1. *NAAAS Data Analysis Steps*

2.4 Limitations

While our analysis gives important insights, there are some limitations to note. First, there were times when only one or two people in a focus group answered a question while others stayed silent. We don't know if those who stayed silent agreed, disagreed, or had different views. Because of this, when we report frequencies, we count the number of responses, not the number of people who answered. These frequency findings should be seen as general trends, not as statistically reliable findings. Second, at times in group discussions, people who were more comfortable speaking, took a more prominent role in the conversation. Also, participants sometimes responded to others' answers to a question, rather than the question itself. It is likely that these factors influenced the direction of the group discussions. Finally, while this report includes answers to the main questions we asked in the focus groups there are a few additional questions that we left out of this report for the sake of brevity. Future academic articles will report on further analysis of all the responses to focus group questions.

United

'United' includes representation of colours seen within both flags of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The circular focal point seen in the middle of this artwork was created to depict belonging and coming together as flowing shapes were also formed surrounding to emphasise people symbolised within the artwork where coming together from different country, community and background to unite as one.

-Olivia Kalin

03

Findings

In the following findings section, we present our findings by stating the question we asked, summarising the responses to that question and giving quotes to illustrate each of those summarised responses.

3.1 Perceptions about racism

We asked participants to name common issues facing Aboriginal teenagers. We then asked if they thought the issues Aboriginal teenagers face are similar or different to those faced by non-Aboriginal teenagers, and why. Finally, we specifically asked about the importance of racism compared to other issues that Aboriginal youth experience.

3.1.1 Common issues affecting Aborginal teenagers

"In your experience, what are the common issues that affect Aboriginal teenagers?"

This question received 44 responses. As Figure 4 (below) shows, almost half of responses (45.5%) did not mention racism as a common issue, just over a third of responses (36.4%) referred to issues linked to racism without directly calling them racism, and a minority of responses (18.2%) explicitly named racism as an issue.

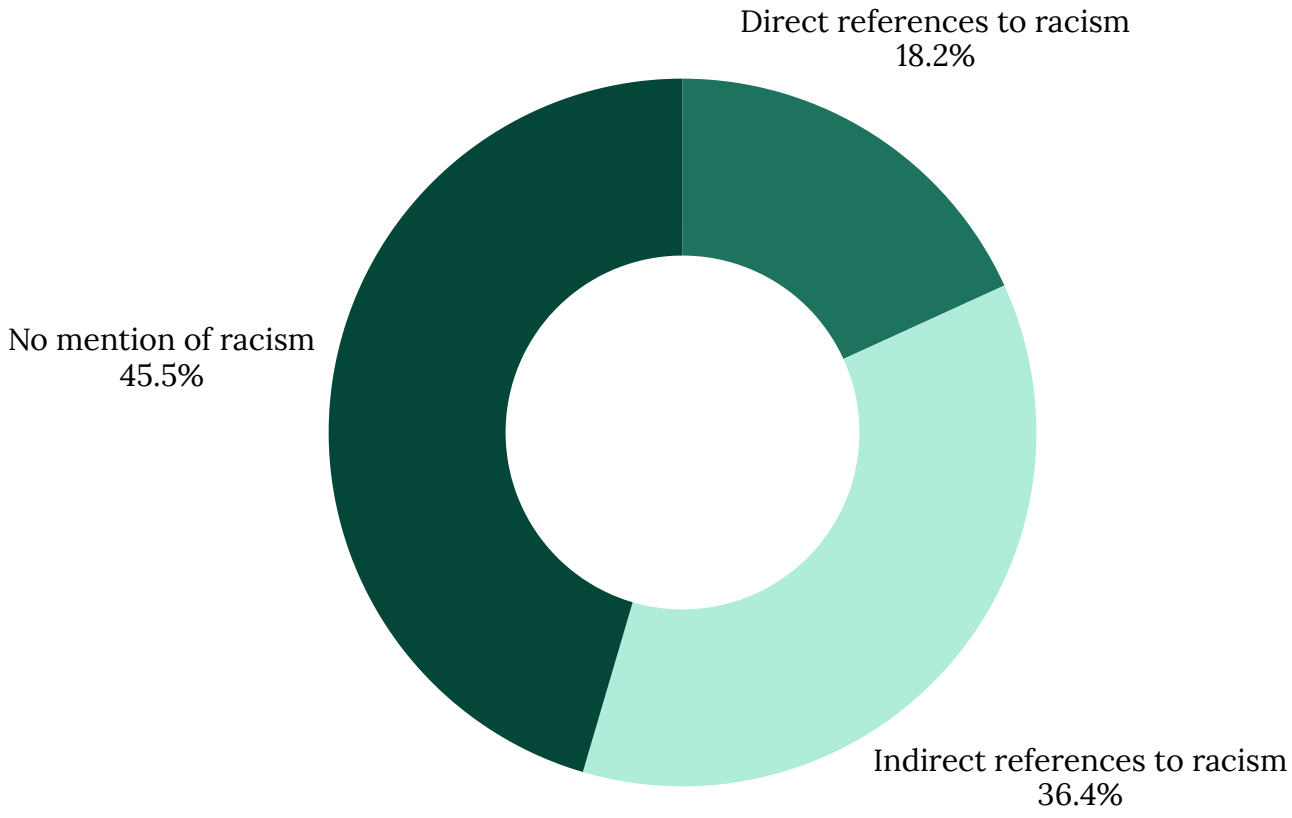

Figure 4. *Common issues named by participants*

Direct references to racism

Comments that directly referenced racism (18.2%) highlighted the discrimination faced by Aboriginal teenagers and their families as well as racism at school.

> *"For Aboriginal young people, Aboriginal families from the day they are born, they face a whole range of discrimination."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I've had some young people report ... more subtle everyday racism, like comments from teachers at school...particularly substitute teachers who are from an older generation."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Some participants talked about how Aboriginal people are often seen in a negative light.

> *"I'd like to acknowledge the racism that exists, and that First Nations people often get spoken about in terms of problems and issues."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Other participants listed multiple stressors for Aboriginal teenagers and acknowledged racism as a factor that made these worse.

> *"Mental health issues, stress, dealing with family feuds... housing... overcrowding... literacy...dropping out of school...not engaging with school... And of course, on top of all that, having to deal with the racism that they encounter all the time."*
> **– Interview Participant**

One participant discussed how racism was embedded in their team's way of working, specifically referencing reports to child protection.

> *"Sometimes I think as a medical team, we do express racism in that way, of being more likely to call [child protection], and it's hard to watch out for that."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Indirect references to racism

Indirect references to racism (36.4%) named processes that are linked to racism such as stereotyping, profiling and stigma without directly naming these as racism.

> *"I would say maybe people's perceptions. I guess within the community people think youth [that are] Aboriginal… are up to no good."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"Some of that profiling stuff… We all know it probably happens in most shopping centres."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Some participants discussed the impacts of structural racism, like over-policing or feeling uncomfortable at school, but stopped short of directly calling this racism.

> *"The impacts of intergenerational trauma, Stolen Generations, or a cultural dispossession … whether it be over-policing and the way that police engage with young people, and the over incarceration of young people in the system, whether it be ridiculous bail checks, paternalistic attitudes towards Aboriginal young people in the system, lack of access to safe and affordable housing, massive issues, just general poverty, discrimination in employment"*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

No mention of racism

Issues other than racism (45.5%), like school refusal, lack of service access, and family problems, were mentioned more often than direct or indirect references to racism. These responses focused on the behaviours of Aboriginal teenagers, their families, and communities, rather than the behaviours of non-Aboriginal people or institutions.

> *"…the number one issue is school refusal."*
> **- Interview Participant**

> *"I find that a lot of the young Aboriginal people that we have coming through our [service] they don't stay long… because obviously our environment isn't what they're used to…our services down here don't seem to be able – nobody seems to work together with us down here with the Aboriginal side.*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Other comments mentioned poverty, trauma, mental health, and family issues, but didn't connect these issues to racism.

> *"I've noticed a lot of family breakdown, especially for young youth has been a bit of a struggle."*
> **- Interview Participant**

> *"Poverty, trauma, intergenerational unemployment..... drugs, alcohol. Everything that comes with poverty and trauma... disengagement from school or recurrent suspensions."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

3.1.2 Are these issues experienced by other teenagers'?

"Are these issues similar or different to those experienced by other teenagers? (and if so, how?)"

When responding to this question, some participants, who hadn't originally mentioned racism, noted that racism makes a difference to the problems Aboriginal teenagers have to face, especially in comparison to the problems confronting their non-Aboriginal peers.

> *"They are different. Other young people aren't told they can't walk around in groups at the shopping centre. They aren't being like, "Oh, you look like that other white kid that used to come in here and yell." It doesn't happen; they're not experiencing it."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"As we move into the referendum for The Voice, we're seeing nationally a bit of a theme of racism emerging, and we see it in the mainstream media...like open, pretty disgusting marginalising and hate, all those terrible words around treating people badly, and acting in racist ways. That impacts Aboriginal young people and is quite different to non-Aboriginal people."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Other participants noted that racism makes other problems worse.

> *"Similar in some ways but exacerbated. Just being Aboriginal increases their risk factors, and obviously the added burden of racism as well, makes everything a lot harder… So, they carry a lot more than other young people their age."*
> **- Interview Participant**

One participant used this prompt to reflect on differences between how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teenagers are treated by police.

> *"The stories I hear from the Aboriginal young people I work with is that police will pull them up on a lot more minor infringements of law than the non-Aboriginal young people"*
> **- Interview Participant**

A few participants spoke about the strength of Aboriginal family structures in providing safe spaces for teenagers.

> *"One of the differences that I see for the younger ones, is the family systems that they've got in place around… that they generally do have a family system in place that they can go and stay and feel it's a part of their home and it's safe and stable. And for a lot of non-Aboriginal young people don't have that same opportunity in that same extended family system."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

3.1.3 Causes of issues facing Aboriginal teenagers

"Why do you think these issues occur for Aboriginal teenagers, specifically?"
When asked why some of these issues occur for Aboriginal teenagers specifically, some participants acknowledged systemic racism and the dominance of white power as possible causes.

> *"I suppose that it does stem back to all sorts of policies that were in place and really poor government practices - racism, essentially."*
> **- Interview Participant**

> *"Especially in our [regional area] because we're white, we're still…the dominant ethnicity and I think it's when you start challenging power structures it – and if you don't do it in a safe way, people feel attacked. When you start challenging those systems in not the right way, a defence mechanism – a wall gets built."*
> ***- Focus Group Participant***

Others referred to negative stereotyping.

> *"I've certainly experienced young people being typecast, 'You can't do that at school because maybe you're not smart enough,' but that is implied, because of their culture."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I think because they are profiled on mainstream media… You can understand why people think that way, because that's what's put in front of them. The riot at [a local youth detention centre], who's up on top of the building? Well, we know who is up there, that's on the news…It's just compounding and confirming people's biases and their thought processes."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"So, young people stick together because they're scared that they are going to be isolated and picked on. And then they're seen as more intimidating, and people seem to be scared of them.... It's like the general community is afraid of Aboriginality, or the anger that is portrayed as Aboriginality."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Other responses focused on Australia's failure as a nation to address inequality or to celebrate Aboriginal success.

> *"Colonisation is active and still occurring…we are still seeing particularly…in the Northern Territory, you're still seeing income management, you're still seeing children being removed from their homes, you're still seeing nearly 100% of young people in the youth justice system being First Nations young people. … We haven't moved into a space yet as a country where we recognise the strengths and traditions and values of our First Nations peoples and engage with pride and respect and have that as our entry point."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Others spoke about teenagers and their parents not being consulted or listened to.

In rare instances, participants suggested that the issues stemmed from Aboriginal caregivers not having the skills or motivation to help their teens.

> *"There's so much exposure to family violence, alcohol and other drugs, unemployment, violence and conflict resolution, skill sets being minimal. I believe it's lack of trust in a White man's rules."*
> **- Interview Participant**

> *"it's like these kids' developmental needs aren't… being recognised…it seems like there's maybe a distrust of the school system… or it can be quite easy to be black and white and be like "the school is bad". There's no "let's see where we can work to really fight for the supports that would help my child keep engaging".*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

3.1.4 Racism compared to other challenges

"How significant is racism, compared to other issues Aboriginal teenagers negotiate in their daily lives?"

With this question, we wanted to understand how participants ranked racism compared to other issues Aboriginal teenagers face. Many saw racism as a major issue and the cause of other problems.

> *"I guess in terms of their impact or significance of racism it also intersects with all of the other issues like the difficulties with school engagement, the poverty, like the intergenerational trauma is also informed by racism, really."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"…there's so many issues like overcrowding and things like that. But at its core, the only difference is that it's racism, because low sociodemographic families who are White, are experiencing the same things, but it's like the removal of the additional barrier, it's the racism."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Others noted how common racism is in everyday interactions.

> *"I've certainly worked with young people who are not Aboriginal who have shocked me by saying some quite racist comments and perceptions around their fellow peers at school. Again, from quite lovely young people".*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"...even someone like my mother who wouldn't harm a fly, but some of her language is so outdated. She'll say, 'When I was a child, that's just how we spoke, and nobody took offence to that'. I said, 'Well, maybe they did take offence to it, but nobody ever asked them if they did'. I think it's quite high and it impacts your self-worth and the way you see yourself and your standing in your community affects your ability to function and feel strong about who you are."*
> **- Interview Participant**

Others reflected on the negative effects of racism on mental health, which impacts teenagers' overall well-being and functioning.

> *"I went to a training [where it was] mentioned that there's research done, where racism has the same effect on the brain that trauma does. And that fact alone if you're experiencing it regularly, the effect that it must have on Indigenous people is massive. And that will correlate to everything else that happens. ..I think it's off the scale of importance."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I think racism's quite significant for Aboriginal youth. We just look at teenagers and their stages of development and what they've all got going on, and then it's an added pressure or added issue that they are needing to deal with on top of everything that's going on."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I believe racism, is a big issue, because you realise a lot of kids from school, they got bullied because of racism. You see some people racially abusing them, and it's quite disheartening when you see kids from small being bullied, insulting people's skin colour."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

A small number of participants said that racism has a relatively minor impact.

> *"I think it's kind of like – it's probably not very high up there. There's always so much, they've got so much going on for them and that might be happening in their family or at an individual level or they've had so much trauma happen in their life that racism just pales in comparison, I feel."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

"I think pretty minor. Maybe as an adult it would be higher because they've got more experience, more knowledge, more understanding of society and the systems, but as a young person I think most young people are just – Yeah, shrug it off."
- Focus Group Participant

3.2 Participants' understandings of racism

The second part of the focus group sessions focused on participants' specific understanding of racism. We were interested in their awareness of the power structures that maintain racism (including institutional or systemic racism). Finally, we wondered how participants saw their own role in relation to racism.

3.2.1 Participants' definitions of racism

When asked to define racism, participants offered a range of responses. We organised their 78 responses into eight categories.

1 Dictionary Definition

Eight responses defined racism in general terms, as prejudice or discrimination based on race or culture, including fear of people who are seen as different.

"I think it's when an individual or a group of people are discriminated against because of their race."
- Interview Participant

2 Stereotyping

Fifteen responses defined racism through examples of stereotypes. These were mostly negative stereotypes, such as assumptions about someone's criminality or substance dependence. However, there were a couple of examples of positive stereotypes including that all Aboriginal people are good at sport.

"I think there's a real deficit lens that if you're Aboriginal, then you're more likely to be a criminal, you're more likely to engage in drugs and alcohol."
- Focus Group Participant

3 Discrimination Based on Skin Colour

Fifteen responses focused on discrimination based on skin colour. This mostly included examples of someone being discriminated against for having darker skin but there were also a few examples given of someone's Aboriginal heritage being questioned based on them having lighter skin.

"I think racism is when you treat someone different based on the colour of their skin."
- Focus Group Participant

4 Overt Racism

Eight responses defined racism as intentional and interpersonal, referencing overtly racist comments with harmful intent, such as making jokes about someone's cultural background.

"Anything that is specific, malicious, and targeting a specific race to ..... belittle a race for any reason."
- Interview Participant

5 'Unintentional' Racism

Fifteen responses included 'unintentional' forms of racism, such as patronising comments, denial of the experience of racism, and 'accidental racism'. Some participants said that racism should be defined by the person who experiences it, not by the intent of the person perpetrating it.

"I think racism doesn't always have to be with the intent – like that's people's intention. But it actually can just be part of processes that don't get questioned, or lack of education."
- Focus Group Participant

One participant mentioned microaggressions specifically:
"Microaggressions. Those little, tiny things where you're like, "You're really pretty for an Aboriginal girl.", those little backhanded compliments."
- Focus Group Participant

6 School-based Racism

Six responses referenced school-based racism, including the overrepresentation of Aboriginal students in suspensions, insincere cultural inclusion, underestimating Aboriginal students' abilities, and parental backlash to Aboriginal cultural knowledge being taught in schools:

"At one of the schools that I go to [visit for my work] someone told me that they have an elective unit which is learning about Indigenous culture.....and learning about the Menang Noongar language. .... One of the dads, actually pulled their child out of that class and said, 'I don't want them learning that.', that's a form of racism."
- Focus Group Participant

7 Systemic Racism

Seven responses talked about racism built into social systems, including, power structures based on race, widespread racism, and negative racial stereotypes in the media:

"...the more overt parts – are improving. But the underlying structure and processes were built on racism. And so, there are parts of that, that we don't even notice, and that are harder to weed out, because they just seem like normal business."
- Focus Group Participant

8 White dominance and Privilege

Four responses recognised that racism involves power and dominance over others, and unearned privilege that comes from being in a dominant racial group

"Racism, is power and privilege, unearned privilege, and those in a position of dominance, which is power, and how they exert control, govern societal rules."
- Focus Group Participant.

3.2.2.Participants' understandings of the cause of racism

While not specifically asked, some participants shared their thoughts on the causes of racism. There were two main perspectives:

1. Racism is Human Nature

Some participants thought racism is a natural part of being human:

> *"It's my instinctive evolutionary psychology."*
> **- Focus Group Participant.**

> *"I would describe it as fear...It's a survival technique that you are afraid of what you don't know."*
> **- Focus Group Participant.**

> *"Babies are racist, it's this internal thing within humans that we need to work on and acknowledge, rather than just being, 'No, I treat everyone exactly the same'. No-one does that."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

2. Racism is Learned Behaviour

Others believed that racism is something people learn:

> *"You hear these things, 'kids don't see colour', ...and I thought well, so how do you go from there as a 6-year-old, to being 15 or 28 or 50, and develop these racist thoughts or opinions?"*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

3.2.3. Aboriginal teenagers' awareness of racism

"In your experience, can Aboriginal teenagers accurately identify incidents of racism?"

We asked participants if they believed Aboriginal teenagers could accurately identify racism. Here we wondered whether participants believed Aboriginal teenagers' claims of racism. We also wanted to know if they could identify racism that Aboriginal teenagers might not yet understand. Participants answered 'yes' or 'no' to this question but many of them also gave different reasons to justify their answers.

YES

Aboriginal teenagers can identify racism

Three reasons participants answered "yes" were:

1

Aboriginal teenagers can identify racism, even if they do not name it:

"They might not use the racism word, or the racist word, but it might be that they say something else that is essentially saying, 'I'm being othered [excluded],' or 'I'm being treated differently, or unfairly, in a bad way.'"

- Focus Group Participant

2

They are the only ones who can define the racism they experience:

"I guess my initial reaction would be to say yes, they can misinterpret it, but I think that the whole point is that it's my opinion doesn't matter – that it is there – if that's how they've experienced it, and what they have experienced growing up, then yes."

- Interview Participant

3

They see racism that I do not (as a non-Aboriginal person):

"Aboriginal young people I work with, they're the ones that if anything, have educated me around racism, because I don't see it as a White person, as easily as they do, because they're experiencing a lot more of the microaggressions, rather than blunt racism."

- Focus Group Participant

NO

Aboriginal teenagers cannot always identify racism

Two main reasons for answering“no” were:

1

Sometimes Aboriginal teenagers think something is racism when it isn’t.

“I think the word racism gets thrown around a lot and sometimes it's used to incite a response, and it's incorrectly labelled as racism.”
- Interview Participant

“I also have seen that hypervigilance to anything that might be construed as racist and when I was a teacher in care schools that was hard to demarcate sometimes.”
- Focus Group Participant.

2

Sometimes they might not be aware that they have experienced racism.

“... it may not always be identified as racism that the young person is experiencing but I think what you are seeing when a young person disengages or displays behaviour that comes from a basis of hurt or anger or whatever, that they’re experiencing the racism and it is having a negative impact on them in some way, shape or form, whether (or not) they identify that it is racist.”
- Focus Group Participant

“I don’t know if they might always be able to recognise they’re being racist, or if it’s built into the systems of how the country runs, and it’s always been this way and it’s the norm. Because I think so many people don’t recognise that it’s racist. So, I think for young people, they might just think, “Oh, this is just how it is.”
- Focus Group Participant

3.2.4 Scenario question and discussion

"Can each of you choose one of the scenarios in the chat box and talk about whether it is an example of racism and why?"

We examined participants' capacity to identify racism experienced by Aboriginal teenagers by presenting them with scenarios and asking whether they were examples of racism. The scenarios were based on common microaggressions identified in research[45], which had been adjusted to an Aboriginal youth context.

Table 2 shows a list of the scenarios participants were shown. We asked participants to choose one scenario from the list, tell us whether it showed racist behaviour and discuss the reasons for their answer. The table shows a tally of participants answers, and examples of quotes from participants explaining the reasons for their answers. Some participants did not choose or talk about any of the scenarios, and some sessions did not allow enough time for this activity, which is why the number of responses is relatively low for each scenario.

Welcome to Country:

The scenario most often identified as racist was when an Aboriginal teenager was asked to perform a Welcome to Country while off-Country. Most participants who chose this scenario felt the events depicted were racist because people working with Aboriginal youth should take the trouble to learn about cultural protocols.

Followed in a Shop:

The scenario that was the second most frequently identified as racist, involved a teenager being followed around a shop by an employee. Most participants who chose this scenario recognised it as racism and several suggested it was the most harmful of all the scenarios.

Encouraged to Play Australian Football League (AFL):

A scenario where a teacher encouraged an Aboriginal student to play AFL was often regarded as not being racist. Participants focused on the teacher's intent, which was seen as innocent and helpful, not derogatory.

Scenario Discussion

Scenarios analysed, with tally of responses and quotes from participant rationales

Scenario	Response Frequency	Rationale Quotes
An Aboriginal teenager was asked to do a welcome to country at school when the teenager was from a different area.	Total responses = 9 Racism = 6 Unsure = 1 Not racism = 2	**Racism:** "*...it happens very often and it's 100% not taking the time to engage in what the cultural protocol means and understanding it and paying it due respect*" - Focus Group Participant **Not racism:** "*I don't know if that's racism. I just think the person who asked is uneducated or doesn't understand the difference between a welcome and an acknowledgement.*" - Interview Participant
A teacher notices that an Aboriginal student has not signed up for any sports or activities. He encourages the student to sign up for AFL.	Total responses = 6 Racism = 0 Unsure = 2 Not racism = 4	**Unsure:** "*There is a racist undertone...it depends on the intent*". - Focus Group Participant **Not racism:** "*I think it's a bit of stereotyping, really, if all Aboriginal kids like AFL. But I wouldn't call that racism necessarily.*" - Interview Participant
An Aboriginal teenager was followed in the shop by an employee.	Total responses = 6 Racism = 4 Unsure = 2 Not racism = 0	**Racism:** "*Yes, that's certainly, there's a bias there*" - Interview Participant **Unsure:** "*...is definitely a harmful assumption, so I'd put that in a different category potentially than some of the other ones up there.*" - Focus Group Participant
An Aboriginal teenager was asked by classmates if they can play the digeridoo.	Total responses = 3 Racism = 1 Unsure= 1 Not racism = 1	**Racism:** "*It is a gross assumption..... Yeah, I think inherently it's racist.*" - *Interview Participant* *Unsure:* "*... [it may be because] culturally, they're aware that Aboriginal people are the only ones who are allowed to play didgeridoos.*" - Interview Participant
During NAIDOC week a teacher speaking to the class about Aboriginal cultures called on an Aboriginal student to share some cultural practices with the class.	Total responses = 4 Racism = 1 Unsure = 2 Not racism = 1	**Racism:** "*I think it's a very subtle form of racism but although coming from a - generally good, well-intentioned place.*" - Focus Group Participant **Unsure:** "*it is difficult within schools... a lot of students ...are not really connected to their culture. So, by asking them, 'Okay, well, what would you like to share about your knowledge?' I think for some of them would be very embarrassing.*" - Interview Participant

A young Indigenous person confides in a worker that they think one of the other workers is racist because they give them dirty looks. The worker consoles them that the colleague does this to everyone when they are grumpy and were probably having a bad day.	Total responses = 3 Racism = 1 Unsure = 1 Not racism = 1	**Unsure:** "*...if you... have experienced trauma in being discriminated against...just based on your race. Actually, you're more likely to be very vigilant to people's facial expressions ... actually saying that they were grumpy and were having a bad day...it would actually be quite invalidating.*" - Focus Group Participant **Not racism:** "*I had a similar experience to that one in an outpatient department, when a parent wanted to make a formal complaint about racism...the admin officer, who is quite abrupt in her personality, had asked the parent to go back and get a GP referral, which is her job...and she's abrupt to everyone. But that parent experienced it as racism, because he had had negative experiences multiple times previously.*" - Focus Group Participant
An Aboriginal teenager was asked to do an Aboriginal dance by classmates who then laughed and imitated it.	Total responses =1 Racism n = 1	**Racism:** "*...putting them on the spot like that, and just assuming that: One, they know how to do an Aboriginal dance I think would maybe fall more under microaggression – I guess it could be argued that they were trying to be curious, and maybe open to learning about it, but the imitating and laughing at it, could be seen as racism... I think that would be racism*" - Interview Participant

Table 2. *Scenario Discussion*

3.3 Allyship: definitions, examples, strategies and racism prevention

In the final part of the focus groups, we looked at how participants defined allyship. This included identifying the characteristics they attributed to potential allies and the steps they have taken or would recommend others take to effectively support an Aboriginal teenager experiencing racism.

3.3.1 Effective allies

"What makes someone an effective ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers?"

Participants defined effective allyship as involving a variety of components, as illustrated below.

Self-education

"I think wanting to further your education for sure, being open to learning – I think recognising mistakes you've made as well, and owning them, and being willing to change too."

- Interview Participant

Acknowledging and challenging biases

"It can be worth reviewing your own bias and working actively to remove it."

-Focus Group Participant

"...[allies are] willing to tolerate the criticism and take it in. Because a lot of the time, when patients give us negative feedback ...we do go into that defensive mode."

- Focus Group Participant

Creating space for Aboriginal people

"I think allies make space for Aboriginal people or share space with Aboriginal people. So, uplift their voices rather than talk over them...especially when it comes to leaders and management."

- Focus Group Participant

Authenticity, standing up for what is right, even if it is not part of your job

"I think it's that going beyond. Are you doing it because you are working with young people, because you're in a paid environment to do that? Or is it internalised, the same way racism is internalised."
- Focus Group Participant

"And standing up ... 'You can't sit on the fence. You are one way or the other. ..... you're either supporting this [racism], or you're standing up. You can't be in the middle. Because if you're in the middle you're supporting the negative, as such.'"
- Focus Group Participant

"Because you're an ally all the time, not just when it's convenient."
- Focus Group Participant

3.3.2 Effective allies take action

"What action do effective allies take to support Aboriginal teenagers?"
Participants mostly agreed that being an ally means taking action. They talked about many important things that "good" allies do, like stopping racism, pushing for changes at work, supporting Aboriginal ways of living, and building trust with Aboriginal people.

Some participants said that taking action to stop or prevent racism is an important part of allyship.

> *"The reason you have an ally is because, I'm sorry it's war, right? You're at war with white supremacy."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**
>
> *"...probably top of the list would be an advocate... standing up or going into bat for them or whatever. Even if it gets tough, rather than step down, you might go, 'Nah, I've signed up for this, given a promise, I'm going in.' That's your ally."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**
>
> *"Speaking up...I think not being a bystander and (not) being complicit in someone else's racism."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**
>
> *"I respectfully challenge [racist] conversations."*
> **- Interview Participant**

Other participants said allies should advocate at the organisational level to make services more culturally respectful and welcoming to Aboriginal young people.

> *"One thing that I tend to do is just evaluate what gaps in knowledge there are in the organisation...and then advocating for funds ... to address that knowledge gap in some way."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"We have people from so many different backgrounds, if they rocked up and it was just a bunch of white ladies, then I think something would be quite off. That's strategic in a way to want to foster a really diverse team where people are not feeling like an 'other' [excluded]."*
> **- Interview Participant**

This included working as an organisation to value and include Aboriginal ways of understanding and doing things.

> *"A couple of things we do at [my organisation], firstly we've got an overall Aboriginal healing framework that guides all of our work, all of our programs."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I just want to reinforce... doing work where you're actually starting from a First Nations frame so you're flipping it from a Western perspective to a First Nations perspective and that's your starting point, is really important."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Lots of participants said that being an ally means, doing things that help build trusting relationships with Aboriginal teenagers.

> *"When I have seen colleagues, allies and friends work (well) with Aboriginal communities and cultures, it is that they take the time to get to know them, they're there for the long run."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"...it comes back to, if you say you're going to do something and you do it, you always follow through. That's really, really important because then they know they can trust you."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I think just taking time to listen and learn about individuals' backgrounds and stuff if that's what they want to share."*
> **- Interview Participant**

"Good listening abilities……that's a huge part of it 'cause often we think we know what people might need which has been the case so often in the past, one of the things that's really been a challenge for our White Australians is to have that connection in a really respectful way."

- Focus Group Participant

"So, at a school setting, quite a few of the Aboriginal students would make a comment about a particular deputy …a lot of the Aboriginal boys particularly said, 'He's really cool Miss, He sees us' …he had quite a gentle, caring way. But to most people he wasn't anything flashy, but he was consistent and respectful of everyone."

- Focus Group Participant

3.3.3 Strategies to support those who experience racism

"What strategies do you use to support Aboriginal teenagers when they experience racism?"

We asked participants what strategies they use to support Aboriginal teenagers experiencing racism. Participants' strategies ranged from emotionally supporting young people to advocating for them, to try to stop or prevent the racism they were experiencing. Below are examples of some of the themes we identified in participants' responses.

Recognising Aboriginal young people experience racism, and supporting them through their experiences, was a strong theme.

"Trusting …victims' feelings around it because I know that a lot of times it can be so subtle and often feeds into longstanding attitudes… also trusting people's own description of their experiences and valuing their voices."

- Focus Group Participant

"…accepting it as true and theirs, rather than trying to make excuses for it."

- Focus Group Participant

Helping young people deal with racism was another idea mentioned.

"When a young person approaches us and explains the situation, … That gives us an opportunity to help them build that base for what they should do in the situation moving forward as opposed to flying off the handle."

- Focus Group Participant

The importance of having Aboriginal organisations or staff involved when helping Aboriginal teenagers deal with racism was also noted.

> *"I think getting some Aboriginal services involved. One of our young people at the moment attends with his Tribal Warrior mentor, and I think that is a real support for him. But also getting the Aboriginal liaison officer to attend important meetings in the inpatient setting."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"In my previous workplace we had an Indigenous midwife embedded in the local Aboriginal health service down the road from [the] Hospital and really separate from our antenatal clinic… So that would be hugely advantageous for us… as clinicians we could be introduced to them by people that they had established relationships with."*
> **Public health worker – Focus Group participant**

Another strategy mentioned was stopping racism as it is happening, instead of waiting to react later.

> *"… I've noticed they've all been a part of those microaggression sort of comments. And calling out those ones are very important, because people just don't know what they don't know".*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"We were doing our pilot program with a whole bunch of schools and we'd set up that we were wanting to deliver a socioemotional wellbeing program to First Nations students … [one school wanted to] send non-First Nations students home and say, 'You can go to the shops, have free time, whatever, and all you First Nations students, you need to stay back in class and do a suicide prevention program for Aboriginal kids.'… So, we then did a whole lot of work… to basically say, 'Look, I think you're putting these students in a position where they're actually feeling discriminated against and being told that First Nations kids must do wellbeing and suicide prevention, and non-First Nations kids don't need to and can go to the shops.' "*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"You need to call out those behaviours so they can see that you're calling it out, that you're not okay with it and you won't stand for it."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

3.3.4 Examples of supporting Aboriginal teenagers who experience racism

"Can you share a specific example of a time when you either, supported an Aboriginal young person experiencing racism or when you found out that an Aboriginal young person had experienced racism, and you wished you had supported them in a different way?"

We asked participants to give us real life examples of when they had supported an Aboriginal teenager who was experiencing racism. Most participants were not able to recall a specific time when they had done this. A few participants gave examples of times they had advocated for the teenagers they work with.

> *"There have been situations where we've had to speak to centre management about the way their security are treating young people. Yes, that's a big one. Especially when we know the young people weren't doing anything wrong, other than loitering around the shops like every other young person."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I'm always pretty quick to act if there is something. ...There was an event where there was a teacher who had said something... [and a student was] ...refusing to go back into the classroom. They were able to actually have a bit of a mediation and a bit of a conversation around that, the staff member apologised profusely and agreed that there was some learning to do."*
> **- Interview Participant**

One participant gave an example of empowering an Aboriginal teenager she was working with to advocate for herself.

> *"I've said, 'This is what we could do. I mean every time you get bullied, every time you get called a _____, or a _____, whatever by students or every time something gets said to you from a teacher, you have a right to make a complaint to the school. That is your power as a student...' So, the next session ... I can help her write that [complaint]."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

A few participants also talked about how frustrating it can be to speak up for change, especially when those in charge do not listen.

> *"…an Aboriginal young woman came to the youth centre, and then the police attended the youth centre to arrest them. I thought, 'This is a safe space, I am going to go inside and talk to the young person, I'm going to ask them to come outside, and you [the police] can talk to them, and we can call the parents.' And then the police officer didn't respect what I asked them to do, and [they] followed me…the fact that they didn't understand that what they were doing was further stigmatising and embarrassing this young person, by coming into a communal area where there are other young people around, [and] parents, they didn't give them that dignity. …I don't know, that was really, really frustrating."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

Finally, some of the participants reflected on times when they wished they had done a better job of supporting Aboriginal teenagers who were experiencing racism. Many spoke of hesitation due to fear of retribution, and there were several examples of regret at not speaking up or being stronger.

Some participants said they needed more courage or skill to confront racism when they recognised it.

> *"…some of the backlash that you get when you do step in is quite offensive and frightening. And for being a woman, sometimes it's like I've got to do self-preservation… afterwards, I'm like, 'I should have said something', like 'don't be afraid' but at the same time, I'm like, 'sometimes I just have to keep my head down and keep walking because I'm going to cop it.' "*
> **- Interview Participant**

> *"I feel like there's scenarios where I probably should've followed up with a formal complaint and didn't necessarily do so because I was worried about making the situation worse or I was conflict averse for whatever reason."*
> **- Focus Group Participant**

> *"I'd like to have more strategies…around - particularly when challenging those more authoritative systems -around what might be perceived as racism."*
> **- Interview Participant**

One participant said that the pervasiveness of racism meant that it was too difficult to intervene every time they came across it.

> *"...when you go to those smaller communities and those remote locations where it's a high population of Aboriginal people... racism is still really high ...I think I'm always standing in a space of regret...But it's that it happens so frequently that I would be spending so much of my day responding and advocating, that it just becomes - part of it, it becomes - a bit tiresome. But the other part is, I'd never get anything done if I'd be constantly jumping in... But at the same time, is it my right, is it my role?"*
> **- Interview Participant**

Empowerment of Colour

'Empowerment' represents the differences between culture and coming together as one. The variations of neutral tones and hands seen create a symbolic representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The mountain symbolism featured in the foreground and background symbolises strength and determination to come together.

-Olivia Kalin

04

Summary and Recommendations

The Non-Aboriginal Adult Allyship Study (NAAAS) provides important insights into the understanding of racism and allyship among non-Aboriginal adults working with Aboriginal young people. The findings reveal a range of experiences and perceptions that highlight the complexities of addressing racism and supporting Aboriginal teenagers.

4.1 Main takeaways

4.1.1. Hardship-racism gap

Participants generally acknowledged that the harms caused by colonial settlement of Australia have caused intergenerational trauma and present-day inequality in areas such as income, education, and employment. However, many seemed to avoid linking these historical events to racism. This is despite the established link between intergenerational trauma and racism.[46,47,48] Others acknowledged historical racism as being responsible for ongoing harms that impact Aboriginal people, including intergenerational trauma, but they did not go further to link the inequality that Aboriginal people experience to their present-day experiences of racism.

Historical evidence shows that racism and the erasure of Aboriginal culture were central to colonialism in Australia. For example, the colonial government removed Aboriginal children from their families based on race, using ideas like "blood quantum" to decide who would be taken.[49] Children with mixed ancestry were often targeted for assimilation into White society. Those who were removed were sent to industrial schools where they were indoctrinated, forced to work, and trained to serve settlers.[50] Their families were also placed on missions where their movements, resources, and cultural practices were tightly controlled.[51] In some cases, children and their families could see each other from a distance, but were not allowed to be together or pass on cultural knowledge. (See Figure 5 for an example of this on Noongar Country.)

Similar systems were used to control Indigenous peoples in other colonised countries, such as Canada.[52] These actions, and the racist beliefs that justified them, have left lasting impacts. Many Aboriginal families today remain rightfully protective of their children. The harmful ideas that supported these past practices still exist in different forms, contributing to the inequality Aboriginal people continue to experience.

4.1.2.Racism as human nature

Some participants perceived racism as human nature, which implies that attempts to prevent it are pointless. It further supports the idea that instead of trying to prevent racism, efforts should focus on helping people cope with it when it inevitably occurs. This contradicts anti-racist principles[53] which view racism as a learned behaviour that can be unlearned with the right information and a willingness to change.[54] To address this, **anti-racism initiatives must debunk the belief that people are "born racist"** and correct the misinterpretation of evolutionary theories, such as that of Darwinism, that are used to support this idea.[55]

4.1.3.Negative stereotypes

Many participants shared examples of how negative stereotypes harm Aboriginal teenagers. Some said that assumptions that Aboriginal teenagers are criminals lead to them being unfairly targeted by police, security guards, and the public. Others noted that stereotypes about Aboriginal parents not caring for their children can cause schools to exclude those parents when dealing with behavioural issues. Some participants made comments that suggested that their own views had been influenced by negative stereotypes. For example, some said that Aboriginal families don't value education or don't know how to make good decisions about their children's wellbeing. Others said that Aboriginal teenagers are more likely to fight or steal. These views are perhaps not entirely surprising, as negative stereotypes are deeply embedded in our society.[56] [57] Passed down through families and reinforced by media and social platforms, they can shape our beliefs and behaviours; even without us realising it.[58] These stereotypes help sustain racial oppression.

4.1.4. Positive stereotypes

Whilst some participants mentioned positive stereotypes as a form of racism that impacts Aboriginal teenagers, other participants seemed reluctant to identify positive stereotypes as racist. Positive stereotypes such as "Aboriginal people are good at sports" may seem like a compliment because they portray Aboriginal people's abilities in a positive way. However, not only can they set up unrealistic expectations for Aboriginal people who may not be gifted in that particular area, they also reinforce the idea that people's abilities are determined by race. This in turn indirectly supports negative stereotypes that suggest Aboriginal people lack ability in other areas, such as academic achievement.[59]

4.1.5. Subtle racism

Participants in this group, all of whom had experience working with Aboriginal teenagers mostly struggled to identify more subtle forms of racism. This indicates a need for anti-racist interventions to focus on subtle microaggressions as awareness of these is not something that comes easily. [5, 60] Unlike overt racism, which most people know is wrong and often has deliberate intent, the types of racism which may be denied or viewed as ambiguous need greater focus. [8]

4.1.6. Racism: intent or experience

When participants tried to determine whether something was racist, they mostly focused on intent. Some participants raised concerns that racism might be reported in a context that is difficult to navigate. An example given was that one Aboriginal teenager might accuse another Aboriginal teenager of racism. Such situations could be challenging for non-Aboriginal adults working with young people, because they may not fit their previous understandings of how racism happens. [61] Nonetheless, this should not be an excuse to dismiss reports of racism. **Adults who work with Aboriginal young people need to be provided with the skills, confidence and support to address all reports of racism, even in unexpected contexts, because every incident has the potential to cause harm.**[8]

Another side to this issue is that most participants focused more on the perspectives of those who perpetrated racism than on the experiences of Aboriginal teenagers.[60] This may reflect a lack of awareness about the harm caused by subtle microaggressions, making some more inclined to give perpetrators the benefit of the doubt.[5] [60] When non-Aboriginal adults fail to consider these experiences from the perspectives of Aboriginal teenagers, it can lead to dismissal or inaction, which may discourage teenagers from reporting racism in the future.[5] This must be addressed to ensure safe, racism-free environments for Aboriginal young people.

Anti-racism research shows that allies who are aware of their racial privilege have a more flexible understanding of racism, which includes being open to the idea that even actions done with good intentions can be unintentionally racist [14, 62]. Thus, it is important to support non-Aboriginal adults, who work with Aboriginal teenagers, to deepen their understanding of racism, so they can recognise all forms of racism and take action to stop or prevent it.

4.1.7. Self-reflection

In line with the previous observation, most participants did not seem to consider their own potential to unintentionally enact racial microaggressions. It is important for non-Aboriginal allies to reflect on their own role in a society that maintains racial privilege and discrimination. This kind of self-reflection can reduce the discomfort involved in recognising and addressing ideas that may contribute to unintentional racism. [14, 63]

4.1.8. Allyship principles

When asked questions about being an ally, most participants showed that they had thought about this topic. They mentioned educating themselves by reading books by Aboriginal authors, seeking advice from Aboriginal community members, and incorporating Aboriginal knowledge into their practice. Some highlighted actions they had taken like educating family and friends about Aboriginal issues and addressing gaps in staff knowledge within their organisation. A few participants mentioned the importance of challenging racism and standing up for what is right. Many shared strategies for building relationships with Aboriginal teenagers such as taking the time to listen and get to know them, having a flexible approach to meet their needs, keeping their promises and being kind and caring. These comments demonstrate that participants value allyship and are willing to work hard to support Aboriginal young people. However, few participants described allyship as a process of actively learning about and disrupting racism.

4.1.9. Strategies for responding to racism

When we asked participants how they support Aboriginal teenagers who have experienced racism, a few were able to describe actions they had taken to intervene, for example, confronting and educating the person responsible or raising a formal complaint. However, most participants could not recall a time when they had directly intervened. Instead, they tended to focus on listening to the teenager's reports and validating their experiences. Some had never considered direct advocacy, while others feared that speaking up might make things worse for the young person or lead to personal consequences. These are common challenges faced by people who want to be allies.[64] **This highlights the need for anti-racism interventions that build confidence and equip allies with the skills to intervene safely and effectively.**[65]

4.2 Recommendations

This report emphasises the need for non-Aboriginal people to actively identify and address both obvious and subtle racism. Unlike overt racism, subtle racism can be missed or overlooked, especially by those who don't experience racism themselves. Strong support systems are needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal teenagers, including non-Aboriginal allies who are confident and skilled in combating racism.

If you are a non-Aboriginal person working with Aboriginal teenagers, here are some actions you can take to become a more effective ally. The following section also includes resources to help support these actions.

4.2.1. Recognise the links between historical oppression and systemic racism

Non-Aboriginal people working with Aboriginal teenagers have a responsibility to learn how colonisation has affected Aboriginal communities in the area where they work. Figure 5 highlights examples of harmful government actions and colonial policies that impacted Aboriginal people on Noongar Country (in southwest Western Australia),[50, 66, 67], where much of this report was prepared.

Learning about these historical events is an important first step in understanding how systemic racism continues to affect Aboriginal people today. Throughout Australia, colonisation was supported by laws and policies that enabled the displacement and control of Aboriginal communities for the benefit of settlers.[40,47] Although racial discrimination is no longer legal,[71] systems such as the justice system[72,73,74,75] and the child protection system[76,77] continue to disproportionately affect Aboriginal people. Systemic racism refers to the ways in which racial bias is embedded within the structures and practices of institutions, influencing decision-making and outcomes.[5,40] As a result, systems intended to provide support or protection may instead contribute to harm or exclusion. [78,79,80] Increasing understanding of these structural issues can support efforts to challenge racism and promote equity within services and institutions.

Some important dates

on Noongar Country

1829
Sovereignty assumed of Noongar lands
Begins Noongar dispossession. Resistance leads to massacres and mass incarceration.

1874
The Industrial Schools Act, WA
Begins an ongoing process of Aboriginal children being removed from their families and forced to work for settlers. This is a predecessor of the Children and Community Services Act 2004, WA.

1901
Adoption of the White Australia Policy
Makes racism Australia's official policy resulting in Aboriginal people being excluded from town, and from jobs and local schools'.

1905
The Aborigines Act
Established the Chief Protector of Aborigines, who was recognised as the legal guardian of Aboriginal children. This legally enabled the forced removal of children from their families.

1927
Perth Exclusion Zone
Establishes segregation. Banning Aboriginal people from entering much of Perth city.

1936
The Native Administration Act
Includes measures to "breed out the colour" by assimilating lighter skinned Aboriginal people into White society.

1965
The Freedom Ride
Aboriginal activist Charlie Perkins leads the protest through regional NSW, confronting segregation and exposing racism experienced by Aboriginal people.

1967
Referendum
On 27 May 1967, 90.77% of Australians voted to amend the Constitution to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, major public shift, though systemic racism persisted.

1997
'Bringing Them Home' report
Exposes the devastating impacts of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, calling it a gross violation of human rights.

2023
Voice to Parliament Referendum
A proposal to enshrine an Indigenous advisory body in the Constitution was rejected nationally and in all six states, with 60.1% voting 'No' and 39.9% voting 'Yes'.

2025
'Are you waiting for us to die'
report condemns the failure of governments to act on the recommendations from Bringing Them Home (1997) and 20 Years On (2017) reports, highlighting the continued harms of systemic racism and intergenerational neglect.

2025
WA's Stolen Generations Redress Scheme
is a formal initiative acknowledging and compensating Aboriginal people removed from their families before 1st July 1972 under assimilation policies where they endured institutional child abuse.

Figure 5. *Some key events in the history of colonisation on Noongar Country*

4.2.2 Recognise racism and microaggressions

Take time to educate yourself about how racism is experienced by Aboriginal teenagers today, including through microaggressions. This awareness not only strengthens your ability to recognise racism when it occurs, but also lays the foundation for having more informed conversations with others. Resources in the final section of this report may assist with this.

4.2.3 Ongoing self-reflection

Self-reflection means taking time to consider how your racial worldview may be shaping your perspective, and recognising where your thinking might be influenced by implicit bias. Acknowledging your racial privilege is an important step toward walking together with Aboriginal people. It also involves being open to feedback from Aboriginal people about how your behaviours may be communicating racial bias.

4.2.4 Consume Aboriginal Media

It is helpful to consume Aboriginal-made content including social media, podcasts, writing and literature. This exposes you to a variety of issues from Aboriginal viewpoints.

4.2.5 Educate others

If you hear someone using a racial stereotype, they might not realise it is a form of racism. You can gently educate that person by: [5]

- Asking for clarification in terms of what they are trying to say about Aboriginal people.
- Showing that their understanding is based on a stereotype.
- Challenging the truth of the stereotype.
- Appealing to the person's values and principles.
- Showing empathy by acknowledging that the person might not have intended to say something racist.
- Explaining that their comment could impact someone negatively.
- Pointing out how we all benefit by building a world that is free of racism.

4.2.6 Disrupt racism

Sometimes educating a person is not enough. They may continue to make racist comments or engage in racist behaviour. You can respond to this by:[5]

- Expressing your disagreement with the comment or behaviour.
- Saying that this sort of comment or behaviour is not okay with you.
- Interrupting the person and redirecting the conversation.
- Using non-verbal communication to show that you do not agree.

4.2.7 Report racism, offer support

If you know that racism is harming someone else and you're unable to stop it on your own, there are still ways you can offer support:[5,1]

- Asking for support from coworkers or other trusted people to help address the situation.
- Offering to support the person affected by racism if they would like to report it.
- With the person's permission, arrange a meeting with your organisation's leadership to report the racism.
- With the person's permission, making a complaint, in person or by email, about racism that occurred at a different organisation.
- Offering to act as a witness if the person wants to report the incident to an official body, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Contributing to anti-racism research by reporting the incident via the Call It Out app.

4.2.8 Address racism at the organisational level

There are things that you can ask your organisation to do to help prevent racism against the Aboriginal teenagers you work with:[1]

- Check if your organisation has an anti-racism policy, and if not, establish a process for developing one.
- Make sure your organisation has a procedure for reporting and addressing racism. This should include a way to address implicit racism in ways that are educational and have accountability.
- Ask your leadership to clearly state your commitment to antiracism in your organisation's values and mission statement.
- Display posters or other communication materials from antiracism and human rights campaigns, such as "Call It Out"[2] and "Racism. It Stops with Me."[1]
- Provide training for all staff that includes education on recognising bias, self-reflection, and addressing racism.
- Support community self-determination by consulting with local Aboriginal community members and organisations to help guide the work your organisation does with Aboriginal teenagers.
- Build partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to provide better support in your organisation, including referrals to programs, and improving culturally safe care.[77]

4.3 Suggested Resources

Here is a list of suggested resources that you can use to support the allyship actions discussed in the recommendations section.

4.3.1. Racism and microaggresions

The Invisible Discriminator [video] - Beyond Blue: Short scenes featuring examples of microaggressions in everyday contexts.
Racism Myths and Misconceptions [website] - 'Racism. It Stops with Me': Educational information to improve knowledge about different forms of racism.

4.3.2 Self-reflection

Using Self Reflection in Medical Practice [video] - Short cartoon featuring examples of how implicit bias can prevent effective health care and how medical professionals can prevent this.
ARK Anti-Racism Toolkit [multimedia resource] - The Australian Highschool Anti-racism Kit: A multimedia educational tool developed by and for Australian high school students.

4.3.3 Educating others

The Southern Poverty Law Centre [Article] - Tips on how to gently educate others about racism and bigotry.
ANTAR Anti-Racism Resources [website] - Links to anti-racism educational resources and campaigns.
Racism, No Way [website] - Anti-racism focused curriculum resources and school lessons.
Narragunnawali Program - Reconciliation Australia: Professional learning and curriculum resources for reconciliation action.

4.3.4 Disrupting racism

The Bystander Antiracism Project [website] - Short scenes featuring real life examples of how to challenge racism when you see it.
ARK Anti-Racism Toolkit [multimedia resource] - The Australian Highschool Anti-racism Kit: A multimedia educational tool developed by and for Australian high school students.
Tips on responding to racism [webpage] - Racism. It Stops with Me: Tips on taking action to respond to racism

4.3.5 How to report racism

Call it Out [website, app] - Reports can be made by people who experience racism or those who see it happening.
Responding to Racism - [webpage] Racism. It Stops with Me: Tips on reporting racism

4.3.6 Taking action at organisational level

Guide for developing anti-racism policy [website, pdf] The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: Anti-racism policy development guide
Creative Equity Toolkit [website] - Educational resources to help your organisation build an antiracist workplace culture.
Organisation Anti-Racism Self Check-Up [checklist] – ANU: Checklist to measure your organisations progress on eliminating racism against Aboriginal people.

4.3.7. Stolen Generation

The Good Mind Podcast [podcast] - Cultural Ways: A member of the Stolen Generations shares her experiences. Content warning: this episode describes child abuse that may be upsetting for some.
The Industrial Schools Act [historical information] – Information on the Industrial Schools Act and subsequent legislation leading to the removal of Aboriginal children from 'Find and Connect'
Stolen Generations resources [website] - Bringing Them Home: Materials for self-learning, professional learning, and school lessons.
The Healing Foundation [website] - Educational resources on the Stolen Generations and information on healing for survivors.
Genocide in the Wildflower State [documentary] – an account of the violent, state-run system of eugenics, racial absorption, and social assimilation in twentieth century, Western Australia. Content warning: this episode describes child abuse that may be upsetting for some.
Yokai [website] - Advocacy and support group for members of the Stolen Generations, campaign information and educational resources.

4.3.8. Media

Deadly Indigenous Australian Social Media users to Follow [article] - The Conversation: Suggestions of Aboriginal thought leaders to follow on social media.
Paint it Blak [YouTube channel] - Noongar journalist Emma Garlett, provides an Indigenous Lens on current issues.
Braden Hill [TikTok account] - Noongar educator challenging misinformation around Aboriginal people in politics and popular culture.
indigiTUBE [audio visual platform] – A space for First Nations creators to share song, dance, language and lore; showing evolving and living culture.
Deadly Story [website] - A list of Aboriginal news & current affairs sources.
IndigenousX [digital newspaper] - Original content from Indigenous writers across Australia.
First Nations Media [radio digital resource] - Resource for finding local Aboriginal-run radio stations.
ABC Listen Indigenous [podcasts]- A variety of podcasts by Aboriginal creators with a focus on Indigenous culture and perspectives. There is even a podcast for the kids.

05

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RAAYS

Research Team

raays@ecu.edu
www.raays.net