

Victoria Legal Aid

Cultural diversity and anti-racism action plan

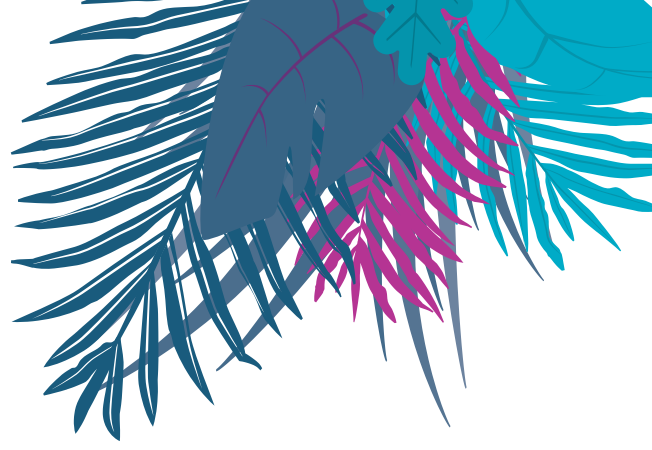
**Update for
2024–25**

 Victoria Legal Aid



Acknowledgement of Country

This plan was written on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Traditional Custodians throughout Victoria, including Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the strength and resilience of all First Nations people who today are still arrested and imprisoned at rates far higher than other Australians.



Four focus areas to shift behaviour

We have a genuine commitment to create a culturally safe and inclusive organisation for employees and to build a workforce that reflects the diversity and experiences of the Victorian community. We have a responsibility to make lasting systemic change to eliminate racism for the benefit of our clients, staff and partners. Our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives build year on year to make that change.

We recognise our platform is a powerful tool for positive change and we undertake to leverage our influence to drive lasting impact that benefit staff, clients and the sector.

Insights from a review of our first cultural diversity and anti-racism (CDAR) action plan informed the actions in this new action plan. The 2024-25 action plan aims to move us beyond simple inclusion, committing to short term tangible actions targeting both individual and systemic impacts of racism.

The four focus areas for action in the new CDAR 2024-25 plan are:

- **Understanding racism, its impact and taking action**, recognising that understanding racism and its impact is critical to driving behaviour change.
- **Meeting the needs of culturally diverse people**, reflecting the plan's focus on both staff and clients.
- **Leadership development**, recognising the importance of buy-in from leaders across the organisation to drive this work.
- **Expertise and advocacy**, seeking opportunities for collaboration to address racism and drive change.

Other recommendations and priority areas identified in the review will be addressed in future plans. Some 2024-25 actions will be the initial or scoping phase of work. In 2025, we will seek to address intersecting forms of discrimination when we develop the new DEI strategy. The development of the new strategy and action plan will provide opportunities for further staff consultation.

Accountability and progress will be monitored by the DEI program through six-month reporting. The CDAR steering committee will drive change across Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) by keeping these actions on team and organisational agendas.

We are committed to eliminating racism as we continue to build an inclusive, equitable and accessible workplace. We recognise that staff will have different degrees of knowledge, understanding and experience but that we all have a responsibility to learn and take action to address racism and its impact.



Cultural diversity and anti-racism action plan

FOCUS AREA 1

Understanding racism, its impact and taking action

Staff-focused actions, led by Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team

- Race and justice training (legal staff).
- Psychological safety training (all staff).
- Inclusion training (all staff).

Sector-focused action, led by DEI team

- Conduct a Racism in the workplace survey across directorates.

VLA-focused actions, led by Strategic Resourcing team

- Conduct intersectional gender impact assessment of recruitment process.
- Complete talent career attraction audit.
- Audit pathways programs and scope new opportunities.
- Develop inclusive recruitment guidance.
- Audit and update of recruitment practices.

Client-focused actions, led by Client Intake and Inclusion (CII) team

- Develop culturally responsive practice guidelines for client-facing staff.
- Develop an intersectional information hub with resources on migrants and refugees in Victoria.
- Identify and prioritise opportunities for improving access to information and advice in language.
- Begin development of e-module – understanding and unpacking power and privilege in a lawyer-client context.

FOCUS AREA 2

Meeting the needs of culturally diverse people

Staff-focused action, led by DEI team

- Source and pilot professional development opportunities designed for culturally and linguistically diverse staff.

VLA-focused action, led by Health, Safety and Wellbeing team

- Audit of EAP culturally responsive practices to ensure culturally appropriate responses.

Client-focused actions, led by CII team

- Review information collected to identify culturally diverse clients.
- Update questions for child clients to more accurately identify cultural identity.



FOCUS AREA 3

Leadership development

Staff-focused action, led by DEI team

- Deliver training for senior leaders on understanding racism in the context of power and white privilege.

VLA-focused action, led by DEI team

- Audit Leadership and Mentoring Program (LAMP) with an intersectional diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility lens.

Sector-focused action, led by DEI team

- Develop diversity, equity and inclusion data and speaker notes for staff use when engaging with external stakeholders.

FOCUS AREA 4

Expertise and advocacy

VLA-focused action, led by DEI team

- Establish an intersectional allies' network to help drive change and reduce the cultural burden.

Client-focused actions, led by CII team

- Explore the possibility of developing a multicultural community women's organisations' forum.
- Establish and strengthen relationships with multicultural youth organisations.

Sector-focused action, led by DEI team and chief operating officer

- Collaborate at Executive level with sector partners to address racism in the justice sector.



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