



Engaging and responsible council

Social cohesion and racism

Merri-bek

Our Ask:

Establish a statewide
Community Cohesion Action
Fund for grassroot initiatives.

Make the Local Anti-Racism
Initiatives Grants Program an
ongoing, recurrent funding
stream with minimum annual
funding of \$2.5 million, grants
up to \$150,000 per project
and multi-year funding options
to sustain local partnerships.

Council recognises the harmful impacts of racism and discrimination for individuals and communities, and in undermining social cohesion. Merri-bek's Human rights Policy and Social Cohesion Plan provide the framework for Council's commitment to advancing inclusion, belonging and anti-racism and to promoting a respectful, equitable and culturally diverse community where all people can participate and thrive.

Australia's National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF), released by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2024, provides a vital 10-year roadmap with 63 recommendations to eliminate racism through coordinated action in law, health, education, and workplaces. Yet, without government endorsement or funding, implementation remains stalled. This is occurring amid surging racism, including rising abuse against First Nations Peoples, antisemitic attacks, Islamophobia, anti-Arab/Palestinian incidents, anti-immigration rallies in major Australian cities and rising racism targeting people of Indian heritage.

Merri-bek also supports place-based action through the Hume Merri-bek Anti-Racism Network and local initiatives such as the Merri-bek Democracy Lab, which builds civic awareness and stronger social ties through trusted community relationships. Council provides the venues and local networks where cohesion is built, including libraries, hubs, neighbourhood houses and community events, but this work is often funded through short-term grants that end before partnerships can be sustained.