

**RACISM.  
IT STOPS  
WITH ME**

**RACISM.  
NOBODY WINS.**

**GUIDELINES FOR  
ADDRESSING SPECTATOR  
RACISM IN SPORTS**



**Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission**



# RACISM. NOBODY WINS.

## GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING SPECTATOR RACISM IN SPORTS

### FOREWORD

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Sport is an arena in which values of equality, fairness and participation are celebrated. Sport also holds a unique place in Australian society and can contribute to building social cohesion. However, spectator racism at sporting events is a difficult matter to address. There have been recent occurrences at professional sporting events across different sporting codes. Anecdotal evidence from sporting codes also suggests it is a challenge that exists at community sporting events.

These guidelines are intended to promote best practice responses to spectator racism. At all times, responses to spectator racism should centre on the experiences of those targeted by racism, and others (including witnesses) who may be affected by it. Sporting codes, clubs, venues and associated stakeholders are encouraged to implement these guidelines as part of broader strategies to address the ongoing issue of racism in sports, including racism perpetuated online.

The guidelines seek to identify actions that can be taken consistently across sporting events to ensure that spectators, officials, and players alike are safe, and aware of what to do and how to respond to incidents of spectator racism. They also propose measures that are proactively focused to prevent racism from occurring in the first place.

Feedback during the development of these guidelines indicated that sporting codes and venue operators would appreciate guidance that supports their policies, procedures and other efforts to address racism. While there will be variance in the nature, prevalence and type of racism experienced, there are common foundational elements to responding to racism where it exists.

These materials are developed as part of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign, which has often worked with sporting codes to promote anti-racism initiatives, and to educate sports fans and participants on racism and racial discrimination. This experience has placed the campaign in a unique position to develop, promote, and share common guidance and practice.

In developing these guidelines, the Commission notes that experiences of racism also intersect with other discriminatory practices (e.g. discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability or sexuality). Responses to racism should factor in the intersectional experience of those targeted and respond to the entirety of the harm experienced.



Resources to support the implementation of these guidelines are available at <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/guide-addressing-spectator-racism-sports-2021>.



## THE GUIDELINES: PREPARE

**Be prepared for the reality of racism and the possibility of racist incidents occurring at sporting events.**

- 1. Create policies that explicitly state a zero-tolerance approach to racial discrimination and racial vilification. These should include:**
  - clear definitions of racial discrimination and racial vilification
  - concrete steps that will be taken by officials/staff when racist incidents occur
  - inclusion of terms and conditions of entry to games in ticketing arrangements that reflect a zero-tolerance approach to racism and vilification
  - recognition that responses to racism should be appropriate to the age and understanding of perpetrators, especially in the case of children and young people, is important.

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- 2. Have in place clear procedures for the safe and swift reporting of racist incidents. This should include:**
  - avenues through which:
    - spectators can alert officials/staff to incidents of spectator racism (such as SMS hotlines, web-based tools on sporting code websites)
    - players can alert officials/staff to incidents of spectator racism (such as stopping play or alerting team captain)
    - officials/staff can alert nominated officials about incidents of spectator racism (such as SMS hotlines, managers or nominated match officials (such as a game day Integrity Officer).
  - ensuring the safety of players, spectators and others, by creating:
    - clear processes for handling incidents and who is responsible.

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- 3. Train players, officials and staff (including security officers) in relevant policies to ensure their application. Training should:**
  - identify referral pathways, including to security officers or police
  - identify de-escalation techniques, incorporating a trauma-informed approach and anti-racist practice
  - occur on a regular basis and be of a high quality.

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- 4. Publicise the position of sporting codes and venues on spectator racism on a regular basis, including creating resources that educate spectators about racism and inform them of:**
  - the implications of a zero-tolerance approach to racism
  - what to do in the event of an incident (including how to engage in bystander intervention, record an incident of racism and support the target)
  - how their complaint will be handled (including what is required of them as the complainant).

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- 5. Clearly communicate policies and educational resources to supporters and spectators.**

## THE GUIDELINES: ADDRESS

**Decisively address incidents of spectator racism.**

6. Sporting code, club and venue officials take decisive action to immediately respond to racist incidents. This might involve removing the spectator from the grounds.

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7. Incidents of racism are appropriately recorded and monitored. Sporting codes set reporting standards across clubs and relevant venues and undertake reviews of progress on addressing racism. These review processes incorporate guidance and partnerships with diverse players, staff, spectators, and community organisations.

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8. Sporting codes and venues take decisive action in response to spectator racism whenever possible. This might include membership pauses, bans or making re-entry contingent on participation in anti-racism training.

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9. Sporting codes support both the targets of racism (see further below) and those who report or engage in bystander interventions (e.g. such as providing information on free/affordable and culturally sensitive counselling and social support services).

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10. Sporting codes and venues provide education and support mechanisms for spectators to engage in bystander intervention when they witness a racist incident (as long as it is safe and practicable to do so). This might include supportive in-venue or social media messaging.

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## THE GUIDELINES: SUPPORT

**Ensure targets of racism are heard, supported, and that appropriate action is taken.**

- 11.** When responding to racist incidents, sporting codes, venues and clubs should:
  - provide opportunities for targets of spectator racism to speak about their experiences
  - provide targets of spectator racism with access to free/affordable and culturally sensitive counselling and social support services
  - ensure that all investigations into racist incidents guarantee procedural fairness and provide avenues for redress.

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- 12.** Sporting codes and venues should reflect on organisational culture and consider organisation-wide improvements, including:
  - communications to players, staff, supporters, cheer squads members and sponsors about the club's position on racism and cultural diversity
  - review of the management of racism and race hate on a club's social media platforms
  - ways to actively promote anti-racism initiatives such as events, workshops and campaigns.

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- 13.** Sporting codes provide senior leadership support for anti-racism initiatives, and look to address racism in a holistic manner by ensuring inclusive practices that positively reflect on the value of diversity to the club and that promote social cohesion (as a necessary complement to addressing racism).

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This resource has been created by the Australian Human Rights Commission, in collaboration with national, state and territory-based sporting organisations and venues. For additional resources and information about the project, please visit <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/guide-addressing-spectator-racism-sports-2021>.