MOUNT ELIZA
SECONDARY COLLEGE

RACISM PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

Mount Eliza Secondary College is committed to safe and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be our primary focus of our care and decision making.

AIM

1.1 To provide a safe environment (physically, psychologically, emotionally and culturally) in which all students from any background have the best opportunity to learn and achieve.

RATIONALE

2.1 MESC is committed to the elimination of all forms of racism and discrimination in school. No student, employee, family, guardian or community member should experience racism within the school environment.

2.2 The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Equal Rights Commission identifies racial discrimination as: "any act where a person is treated unfavourably because of their race, nationality, colour, descent or ethnic origin". It includes: ⌟ The degrees and forms it can take from name calling and stereotyping, to vilification, abuse and violence. ⌟ The fact that it can involve direct and indirect exclusion from services, employment, education and opportunities. ⌟ That it occurs systemically as a result of policies, conditions and practices affecting a broad group of people.

2.3 This policy is underpinned by legislation including the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, and the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975, as well as the Victorian Government's Multicultural Policy Statement and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies to all school employees – paid, voluntary and sub-contractors, as well as all participants and visitors.

3.2 This policy applies to all students, parents, families, or guardians attending the school.

POLICY

Definitions

"Racism takes many forms and can happen in many places. It means treating someone poorly because of their skin colour, ethnicity or where they come from.
Racism can be revealed through people's attitudes, as well as their words or actions. It can also be reflected in systems and institutions. But sometimes it may not be visible at all. Racism includes all the barriers that prevent people from enjoying dignity and equality because of their race."
Australian Human Rights Commission, (2020)

Responsibilities

4.1 Preventing expressions of racism in the school environment, and challenging attitudes that allow them to emerge, is the shared responsibility of all school staff.

4.2 Principals and senior school staff have a responsibility to: ⌟ Promote a culture of respect and non-discrimination across the school community. ⌟ Review and monitor school policies, procedures and practices to ensure they embed inclusion and respect for diversity, and do not promote or perpetuate racial discrimination. ⌟ Provide employees with opportunities to participate in continuous professional development regarding culturally-responsive practice. ⌟ Identify opportunities and develop a strategy for the inclusion of education regarding racism and discrimination for students. ⌟ Respond to all incidents, allegations and complaints of racial discrimination in a fair, efficient, effective, and
transparent manner. ⌟ Respond to all incidents and allegations of racial discrimination in a manner that seeks shared understanding, repair and resolution. ⌟ Where serious incidents of racial discrimination have been substantiated, implement appropriate behaviour management processes and penalties. ⌟ Ensure that parents, families and guardians are aware of the school's position and policy regarding racism and discrimination.

4.3 All employees have the responsibility to: ⌟ Monitor their own behaviour to ensure that they do not commit or enable racial discrimination. ⌟ Complete incident reports for all incidents and allegations of racial discrimination so that matters can be appropriately investigated and addressed. ⌟ Support students to develop an understanding of racial discrimination, and their rights and responsibilities under this policy. ⌟ Role model respectful behaviour to students. ⌟ Participate in continuous professional development regarding culturally responsive practice.

4.4 Students have the responsibility to: ⌟ Understand their rights and responsibilities under the school's policy regarding racism and discrimination. ⌟ Monitor their own behaviour to ensure that they do not perpetrate or perpetuate racial discrimination. ⌟ Seek support from school staff when they are aware of an incident of racism.

4.5 Parents, guardians and families have the responsibility to: ⌟ Understand their rights and responsibilities under the school's policy regarding racism and discrimination. ⌟ Monitor their own behaviour to ensure that they do not perpetrate or perpetuate racial discrimination. ⌟ Role model respectful behaviour to students. ⌟ Notify school regarding any concerns regarding incidents, events or allegations of racial discrimination. ⌟ Participate appropriately, when necessary, in the school's procedures regarding racism.

Delegations:

5.1 The school commits to monitor and enact policy to address racism through:
a) Formation of a committee/ interest group/ working group.
b) Implementation of a regular agenda item in whole of school meeting, and/or
c) Nomination of representative person or persons from the school leadership team, who will be responsible for the following:

- Dedicated and consistent review of policy and procedures to ensure compliance.
- Provision of advice to senior school staff regarding implementation of the policy and any issues that may arise.
- Develop strategies to include feedback from all members of the school community regarding the implementation of the policy.
- Ensure adequate response to complaints, feedback and reports regarding racism and discrimination.
- Demonstrate leadership and innovation in terms of good practice in the area of non-discriminatory practice.
- Identify opportunities, and develop a strategy, for the inclusion of education regarding racism and discrimination for students.
- Monitor incident reports in relation to events or allegations of racism to identify potential themes, risk areas and solutions.

5.2 Incorporate student voice and action through student leadership channels, or the development of a dedicated student committee for the purpose of providing feedback and student-led initiatives to address racism and promote inclusion and belonging in the school community.

Racism Prevention

5.1 Mount Eliza Secondary College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents racist behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

5.2 Anti-Racism at Mount Eliza Secondary College is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives from the Schools Mental Health Menu that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying and help us to build a positive and inclusive school climate.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- We are a Lead School in the Respectful Relationships initiative, which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal History, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer displaying racist attitudes or behaviors.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers about any racism they have experienced or witnessed.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Mount Eliza Secondary College

6.1 Racism is not tolerated at our school. We ensure racist behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All complaints of racism will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

6.2 Students who may be experiencing racist behaviour, or students who have witnessed racist behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate racism is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Mount Eliza Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to Year Level Coordinators. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, school social worker, Assistant Principals etc.

6.3 Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed racist behaviour at Mount Eliza Secondary College should contact the relevant Year Level Coordinator by phone 9787 6288 or by emailing them via Compass.

Investigations

7.1 When notified of alleged racist behaviour, teaching staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations via Compass using the racism tab
2. Inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator and discuss consequence (following investigation)
    - Intent to cause harm may be met with a suspension
    - Racism as a result of ignorance and lack of education met with a Principal detention
3. Issue the mandatory MESC racism module to be completed by the student at home and notify parents/carers. Parents/carers are to be encouraged to complete the module with their young person. A deadline for completion of the module must be given (approximately one week).

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=XJ0ihBw9pEarwmZHPptbR7GELcv1bBhBjYEY51 8O2FtUQlQ0UDNOWk42VFc1SFNINlBYTzNRWDJaTi4u

7.2 School staff that are witness to racism or have racism reported are responsible for investigating allegations of racism in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of racism, school staff may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parent/carer(s) of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above

All communications with the Year Level Coordinator in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations should be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged racism is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged racism will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

7.3 Racial and religious vilification is against the law. The legal definition of vilification is “behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule for a person or group of people, because of their race or religion”. https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/race/#What-about-vilification

Response

8.1 The Year Level Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to racist behaviours:

- Mandatory completion of MESC anti-racism online module (in student's own time) within a time frame negotiated between the student and Year Level Coordinator (roughly one week).
- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Wellbeing Team, SSS, or an external provider to:
    - the target student or students
    - the students engaging in the racist behaviour
    - affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has displayed racist behaviours and forgiveness by the person who has been vilified.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in racist behaviour.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in racist behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

8.2 When the Year Level Coordinator has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged racism and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with the Wellbeing Team, teachers, SSS, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to racist behaviour, Mount Eliza Secondary College will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the behaviour, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in racist behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the behaviour took place in a group or one-to-one context

- whether the students engaging in racist behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website MESC – Mount Eliza Secondary College
- Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data to inform this review will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student representative groups and school council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2025
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2026