BIGGER THAN THIS

Evaluation of Bigger Than This Anti-Racism School Program Pilot

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story

"One of my first memories of explicit racial abuse was in high school. When your first name becomes chink, or 'go back to where you came from' becomes the weekly schoolyard mantra."

what is racism?

what are examples of acting against racism?

what are examples of acting against racism?

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In light of the ongoing high prevalence of racism at schools in Australia (Baak, 2018; Priest et al., 2021; Yared et al., 2023) and its impact on young people's mental and physical health (VicHealth, 2021) there is an urgent need to address racism. Schools are highlighted as crucial settings for young people to engage in anti-racist action (Byrd, 2017) and for developing critical consciousness (Bañales et al., 2021). Schools can be vehicles of change towards attitudes about diversity, culture and race (Elias et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a unique opportunity for school-based initiatives to engage in dialogues that develop racial literacies that build capacities toward anti-racist actions across the whole school.

Bigger Than This (BTT) is an anti-racism program co-designed with young people to reduce the harm and impact of racism in Victorian schools. The initiative focuses on supporting young people recognising and responding to the physical and mental impact of racism and exercising their rights to report racism. BTT is a collaboration between VicHealth and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). It is also part of VicHealth's **Future Healthy** initiative, which began in 2021 and sought to understand through community listening with young people, what was important to them in terms of health and wellbeing. Through collecting stories from young people, Future Healthy has developed a number of youth-lead interventions in response to their stories.

A key focus of BTT has been fostering and sustaining collaborative processes between VicHealth and VEOHRC which moved beyond the usual funder/fundee model and centered a relational ethic across the whole project. This collaborative, relational approach driven by VicHealth permeated all aspects of the project from stakeholder meetings, to development and design, through to supporting and accompanying facilitators in school sessions.

The program was created through the advice of a youth working group. Young people aged 15-25 were invited to join VicHealth and VEOHRC to deliberate on BTT's design, development and delivery. As a result of the extensive collaborative stage, a 100 minute school-based program was developed and included the use of story posters, shared language cards and a creative activity for year 9 students. In addition, a comprehensive facilitator handbook was also developed.

Drawing on their experience in youth-focused, health equity projects, VicHealth led the facilitator selection process and 5 young adults with lived experience of racialisation and racism were recruited. They also had experience in youth facilitation and expertise in creative arts. They were employed by VicHealth and VEOHRC, and ongoing facilitator training throughout the project was provided. Counselling and support services were also made available to the facilitators through an external, culturally responsive psychological service organised by VicHealth. These supporting relationships with VicHealth and VEOHRC were a critical element of BTT given the personal nature and emotional load that anti-racism work can involve for the facilitators.

A call for schools to participate was circulated via the Department of Education and 70 expressions of interest were received, of which 10 schools were chosen to be a part of the pilot. Schools were chosen to represent a diversity of geographic location (regional and urban), school size, and ethnic/cultural diversity. The pilot program commenced at the end of 2023 and was completed in first term 2024.

The sessions were designed to be a mix of content delivery (shared language) and activities focussed on more collaborative, creative learning. A minimum of two facilitators for approximately 30 students was planned and where there were larger groups more facilitators were included. Sessions ran across consecutive periods and for most schools this was the first two periods of the day. A minimum of two facilitators for approximately 30 students was planned and where there were larger groups more facilitators were included.

The evaluation of BTT was informed by critical methodologies that seek to interrogate how contexts, histories and structures shape people's and communities lives (Fine, 2016). It was also underpinned by principles and values of collaborative evaluations which is most suited to evaluation contexts where learning and/or transformational concerns are most important (O'Sullivan, 2012). The key areas of inquiry for the evaluation were collaboratively developed between Victoria University, VicHealth and VEOHRC prior to the program development. The evaluation commenced during the design and development stage and focused on two key areas of inquiry: program process and outcomes. It utilised a range of data gathering methods to build a rich picture of the program and its delivery. Researchers from Victoria University visited 7 of the 10 pilot schools during their BTT program.

The responses from students who participated in BTT clearly illustrated how the program had enabled learning about different forms of racism. They also highlighted the ways racism impacts mental health and the importance of anti-racist actions. From both the data collected and observations, it was also evident that students were at different points on the racial literacy continuum. In light of this, the program offered them a safe space to share their understanding and through the activities they were positioned as having knowledge and expertise around the topics.

The design and format of the program, which was informed and delivered by young people with lived experiences of racism, ignited purposeful conversations around the complexities of discrimination, racism and anti-racism. The sessions offered students a place to have candid conversations with each other and the facilitators in a non-judgemental setting. Importantly this also meant that for some students from cultural and ethnically diverse background, were able to give voice and expertise to their own experiences of racism and anti-racism during the sessions.
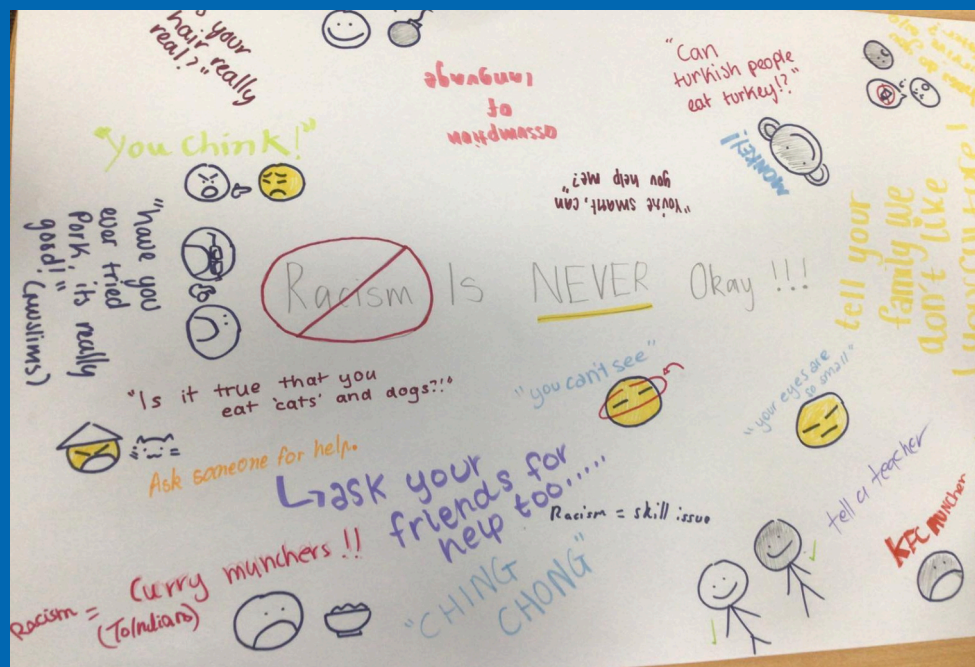
Program artefact 1: Student Collaborative

Creative and collaborative approaches were highlighted as one of the program's many strengths, as creative work in the program became vessels for expression that were fun and engaging for young people but also enabled students to co-create and share knowledge about racism and anti-racism in embodied, visual and dynamic ways.

Through developing racial literacies, BTT ignites the opportunity to have dialogues about racialisation and racism via the accessibility of creative approaches. Importantly these dialogues are facilitated by young people with lived experience of racism and offer students the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with non-judgemental experts. Through a series of fun, creative and thought provoking activities students are simultaneously exposed to a range of anti-racist language and concepts whilst also being able to connect with examples from other young people who developed and designed BTT. The pilot has successfully demonstrated the value and impact of a brief, facilitated school incursion around racism and anti-racism actions. It has also highlighted several possibilities for the future development and sustainability of the program.

Racism in Australia

The 2024 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) report *Mapping government anti-racism programs and policies* paints a sober picture of the racial literacy landscape in Australia. The report found both a reluctance to use the term racism and that there is a "lack of a systemic government-led strengths-based, inter-sectional and coordinated approach to addressing racism in Australian society" and that "generally local government does not see anti-racism work as a consideration, either at local council or their state/national peak body levels" (AHRC, 2024, p.2). This resonates with other research that has described racial literacy in Australia as dismally low (Bargallie, 2023).

One of the key recommendations of the AHRC (2024) report is that racism and anti-racism is addressed in schools "to ensure victims do not leave education facing lifelong disadvantage, and perpetrators do not enter adulthood believing racist behaviours are acceptable and do not attract accountability" (p.5). In light of the ongoing prevalence of racism in Australian schools (Baak, 2018; Priest et al., 2021; Yared et al., 2023) and its impact on young people's mental and physical health (VicHealth, 2021) there is a need to support initiatives that move schools towards anti-racism. Therefore, there is an opportunity for school-based initiatives to engage in dialogues that develop racial literacies with young people and that build their capacity to enact anti-racist actions.

Racial literacies: A continuum

Chávez-Moreno (2022) defines racial literacy as the sociocultural practices surrounding text and discourse that individuals use, consciously or unconsciously, to make sense of racial ideologies and emphasizes that racial literacy encompasses a broad range of literacy practices both within and outside of educational settings. Racial literacy refers to the ways in which people engage with and interpret racial ideas, and highlights the importance of understanding the nuances and distinctions between different racial literacies. It is argued that often anti-racism is oversimplified and overlooks the fact that all individuals engage in literacy practices that shape their understanding of race, whether through racist or antiracist ideologies. The common conceptualization of racial literacy as solely antiracist overlooks the prevalence of race-evasiveness and hegemonic racial ideologies in society. Instead, Chávez-Moreno (2022) suggests a continuum of racial literacies that aims to highlight the spectrum of ways in which people make meaning of race, including through hegemonic ideologies (see Figure 1). This approach moves away from labelling individuals as racially literate or illiterate and instead emphasizes the development of critical-racial consciousness. This model proposes that people become racially literate through a combination of engaging with both racist and antiracist literacy practices. By reframing the discussion around racial literacy in terms of consciousness and connecting it to the continuum of racial literacies, it can promote a more nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate and interpret race in society.

Figure 1. *Continuum of Racial Literacies*

Continuum of Racial Literacies

Whiteness — Race evasiveness

Hegemonic Racial Literacies

Anti-blackness — Indigenous erasure

Anti-racism — Critical racial

Counter Hegemonic Racial Literacies

Decolonial — Social justice

Situated and embedded in social context, practices and experiences

(Chávez-Moreno, 2022)

School Racial Climate

School climate is essentially a person-environment fit concept that seeks to understand how students relate, socialise, connect and feel in the school context. A positive school climate is characterised by "a school environment that makes students feel emotionally and physically safe, part of the school community, that adults in the school respect them, care about them, and have high expectations for their wellbeing and success, and that they have opportunities to provide input in how things work at the school" (Voight et al., 2015, p. 253). There is evidence that a positive school climate is connected to higher levels of student achievement and self-esteem, and lower school/behavioural problems, and lower rates of depression (Voight et al., 2015).

Byrd (2017) defines school racial climate as a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of the school environment, including intergroup interactions and school racial socialisation. Intergroup interactions involve the frequency and quality of interactions between different racial and cultural groups within the school, as well as factors like equal status and support for positive interaction. School racial socialisation, on the other hand, focuses on how schools transmit cultural values, promote cultural competence, address critical consciousness, and potentially perpetuate stereotypes. This framework moves beyond simplistic notions of positive or negative climates to consider the nuanced ways in which race and culture influence students' experiences within educational settings.

Schools and Anti-Racism

Schools, directly and indirectly, transmit a range of racial messages that emphasise or de-emphasise, the importance of interracial relations, cultural knowledge and competence, and the relevance of race and racism in society (Bañales et al., 2021). Thus, schools are highlighted as crucial settings for youth to engage in anti-racist action (Byrd, 2017).

Research has explored youth perceptions of school racial messages, and whether acknowledging racism (critical consciousness messages) or denying it (colour blind messages), impact anti-racism action. Bañales et al. (2021) investigated if critical reflection of inequality and anger toward injustice mediated the relationship between school messages and youth action and their findings showed that critical consciousness messages predict involvement in anti-racism action. Despite adolescents having varied beliefs, feelings, and actions toward racism, it was found that when youth are exposed to school experiences that address, rather than avoid, conversations about racism, they are likely to engage in critical actions that challenge racism through interpersonal and communal/political initiative (Bañales et al., 2021). This suggests that increasing opportunities in school for students to interrogate the mechanisms of injustice and oppression, including racism, is an important part of anti-racism school approaches.

An analysis of a school-wide intervention programs in Australia demonstrated the potential benefits of integrating training on bystander responses to racism within the school environment. This approach was found to enhance the school's racial climate and promote anti-racist behaviour among students, such as increasing their knowledge about racism and boosting their confidence and self-efficacy to intervene against it (Priest et al., 2021).

In addition to course content, young people have also reported being meaningfully influenced by teachers who model anti-racist actions in their classrooms and schools by promoting critical dialogues, supporting students' anti-racist efforts, and challenging administrators when necessary (Kiang et al., 2023). In an evaluation with 76 college students at a predominantly White institution, Braimah et al. (2022) found that students who took courses offering opportunities to discuss racism (with support from instructors), engage in self-reflection, and outline specific anti-racist actions they wanted to take, students demonstrated significant growth in their confidence in discussing race in a classroom setting (from 70% at the beginning of semester to 100% by the end) and in social settings which rose from 77% to 98%. Overall, theses studies highlight the importance of structured educational environments in fostering meaningful conversations about race and the potential for students to translate these discussions into actionable steps against racism.

Anti-racism initiatives

Anti-racism approaches are highly diverse, spanning everything from prejudice reduction to conflict resolution to collective social action (Paradies, 2016), and from reducing the incidence of racism to empowering racialised subjects to fostering a radical indifference to race (Hage, 2015).

Interventions should be carefully planned, mapped and well developed, attending to areas like their objectives and materials, while involving a management group and various stakeholders (Donovan & Vlais, 2006; Paradies et al., 2009). Interventions that are theory-driven or based on solid theoretical foundations are considered more effective (Aboud et al., 2012; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Interventions that are considered most effective are those that target structural, systemic and institutional change as well as individual-level attitudes and beliefs (Priest et al., 2021).

Successful anti-racism approaches seek to move beyond simply being about knowledge acquisition and seek to include creative, embodied elements that are able to breathe life into the stories and experiences of racism and articulate the ways in which racism lands on bodies and impacts the lives of people. Prioritising young people of colour in both the development and delivery of anti-racism initiatives is an important way in which this can be achieved (Toraif et al., 2021).

Youth-led and Creative-Collaborative approaches

Several youth-led anti-racism initiatives emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts across ages to support radical hope when young people faced difficulties seeing the impact of their work and feeling frustrated about making a difference tackling systemic and structural racism (Aldana et al., 2021). Interactive creative approaches have the capacity to create a common language to share knowledge, empathy and vulnerability at the same time as challenging inequality and oppression (Catalano & Morales, 2021) whilst also fostering a safe space to share stories, have dialogues about social injustices, and reimagine radical possibilities (Karabanow & Naylor, 2015).

Creative-collaborative approaches can also centre the knowledge and lived experiences of racialised young people, and through these they can become empowered as agents of anti-racist change (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017). Interactive and creative approaches such as poetry and dancing (Catalano & Morales, 2021), theatre (Sonn et al., 2015; Sonn et al., 2018), social media creative content (Gatwiri & Moran, 2022), exhibitions (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017), and image and artwork (Barnes et al., 2024) offer unique avenues for knowledge creation around anti-racism practices and racial literacies. Creative approaches also incorporated embodied reflections, thinking and feeling, which can create authentic relationships, foster dialogues and bring communities together (Catalano & Morales, 2021). They can also support decentering whiteness and centre young people as co-constructors of knowledge production and communication (Gergen & Gergen, 2011; 2014; Hurd et al., 2023; Sonn & Baker, 2016) thus positively reframing lived experiences and empowering young people of colour (Fonseka et al., 2021). These approaches give value to the experience-near wisdom of young people thereby building more authentic and reciprocal relationships for social justice actions (Goessling et al., 2021).

Anti-racism programs focusing on youth have highlighted the value of journaling, having opportunities to discuss racism, and engaging in theatrical improvisations to address and decentring whiteness in racial literacy development (Braimah et al., 2022; Kiang et al., 2023; Tanner et al., 2018). Braimah et al. (2022) found that students, at a predominantly white institution, who undertook courses offering opportunities to discuss racism, engaged in self-reflection, and outlined their preferred anti-racist actions, saw improvements in their skills and confidence for having difficult conversations about racism with their peers.

There are a number of national and international programs, resources and training that deal with racism in a range of ways. From a desktop review of programs and resources publicly available, a brief summary of programs that are developed in Australia are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. *Summary of Anti-racism Programs in Australia*

Title	Organisation	Focus	Delivery	Target(s)
Racism stops with me	Australian Human Rights Commission	A national campaign that provides tools and resources to help people and organisations learn about racism and take action to create change.	Self-taught & online resources Measurement of cultural diversity at workplaces.	General public, and particular emphasis to workplaces.
All together now	All Together Now is an Australian, independent, secular, non-partisan not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2010.	An organisation aiming to promote racial equity projects using an intersectional approach, innovative and evidence based, community driven and partnered approach. Makes emphasis on reporting but clarifies that is not always the decision – outlines multiple organisations to report to.	A range of online and in-person sessions and workshops available. An accompanying phone app is also available	Frontline workers that work with young people. Young people (14-21) living in NSW. General public. Students. Workplaces
Antiracism kit	Developed and designed by young people	A tool kit made by Australian high-school students, for Australian high-school students. The toolkit is divided into three sections: Self, Schools and Society.	Self-taught online resource An interactive website that incorporates art and illustrations from First Nations artist Jessica Williams - Muthi Muthi Woman and educator.	Made for high school students to learn about anti-racism, as there is a lack of anti-racism resources that led to action in Australia.
Schools standing up to racism	Collaboration between the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and the Victorian Department of Education (DE),	Schools Standing Up to Racism encourages a whole-of-school approach, which actively promotes, encourages and supports student voice in order to create meaningful and sustainable change. Linked to Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission community reporting tool.	Offering a range of resources to support schools to address racism and discrimination in their school environment. Web based resources (lesson plans, information sheets, activities, posters), podcasts, videos, professional learning workshops for school staff,	Students, teachers, schools, families and communities
Racism No Way	A national anti-racism education website that is managed by the NSW Department of Education on behalf of all Australian schools.	Aims to assist teachers to deliver anti-racism education within the school environment. The information and resources provided aim to build teachers' understanding of racism and its impact on student learning and wellbeing, assist teachers to build students' understanding of racism and related concepts, and support schools to develop and maintain culturally safe, respectful and inclusive learning and working environments, where racism is actively challenged and addressed.	Web based information (understanding racism, law, history, hate speech, cyber racism), teaching resources (student activities, other supporting resources)	Teachers

The above table is not an exhaustive list and there are numerous websites (both local and international) that offer web-based resources such as anti-racism glossaries or lists of key terms and definitions for conversation about racism. From this brief desktop review it can be said that there is a consistent focus on the role of language and that largely resources are self-directed and require schools and staff to engage with it. A central feature of most of the programs was that they all had knowledge and knowing as a central feature of their programs. While this is an important part of shaping anti-racist racial literacies, research states that this alone is insufficient (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). These findings are supported by the AHRC (2024) report which found that often approaches are "ad-hoc, disjointed, often disconnected from other similar approaches, and frequently reactive to situations arising domestically or internationally" and that there is a "disconnect between emerging academic research and government practice...it is not clear if or where research findings are driving policy and program development or informing practice by government to achieve outcomes for communities" (p. 3). This is echoed by research presented previously which highlights the need for well-planned, theoretically strong, well-founded interventions that work across multiple levels (e.g. Individual, institutional, systemic).

DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING BIGGER THAN THIS

Overview

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) was funded by VicHealth to deliver the Bigger Than This (BTT) project as part of the Future Healthy initiative, which aims to support social cohesion and mental health.

The project aimed to reduce the harm and impact of racism in Victorian schools by developing and testing a pilot school-based anti-racism and mental wellbeing program to support young people to recognise and respond to the physical and mental health impacts of racism and understand and exercise their rights to report racism.

Collaborative partnerships for a cross-sectoral approach

From the early stages of its genesis, BTT was a collaborative project between VicHealth, VEOHRC and Victoria University. Key people from each organisation had pre-existing relationships which enabled the the project to be anchored in a relational ethic that fostered and valued opportunities for critical reflection and invited intellectual interrogation of ideas, concepts and theoretical approaches. This included not only the development and design of BTT itself, but other areas such as facilitator selection and training, connecting with schools, and the logistics of supporting facilitators to travel to schools.

Drawing on their experience in youth-focussed, health equity projects, VicHealth led the facilitator selection process and 5 young adults with lived experience of racialisation and racism were recruited.They also had experience in youth facilitation and expertise in creative arts. They were employed by VicHealth and VEOHRC and ongoing facilitator training throughout the project was provided. Counselling and support services were also made available to the facilitators. These supporting relationships with VicHealth and VEOHRC were a critical element of BTT given the personal nature and emotional load that anti-racism work can involve for the facilitators.

Throughout the collaboration VEOHRC provided strategic advice and support around the details of reporting, discrimination and the promotion of diversity and inclusion. They also provided educational resources and support for facilitators as well as being the employers of the facilitators. Both VEOHRC and VicHealth also provided staff and space for the workshops, and a number of meetings.

Victoria University were engaged to undertake the evaluation, however, the collaborative approach was also adopted for the evaluation whereby researchers met with VicHealth and VEOHRC to co-design the evaluation plan and relevant concepts. In addition, academics from the research team were a part of the workshops with young people, the facilitator training and other parts the program development. This enabled key concepts and theories to be brought into the process and to be shared with facilitators and stakeholders.

The development and design of BTT was underpinned by a youth-led collaborative approach that focussed on inclusion and diversity. A youth working group informed a lot of the development and design of BTT but also collaborated with other experts from Victoria University, VEOHRC and VicHealth.

BTT Youth Working Group

TVEOHRC recruited the BTT Youth Working Group to provide advice on the design, development and delivery of the project. BTT Youth Working Group members discussed and reviewed the overall development of the program activities and were also be involved in the evaluation of the program. Members are between the age of 17-23 years old and represent a diverse cross section of the Victorian community.

Design Consultancy

VEOHRC engaged a strategic design consultancy, Today Design, to facilitate a co-creation process with the BTT Youth Working Group. Taking a human-centred design approach, they led a series of participatory workshops with the BTT Youth Working Group and project team to create a prototype for BTT anti-racism and mental wellbeing program to support young people to be active agents in their healthy futures. Today Design also ensured diversity and inclusion was a central feature throughout the design and consultation process. Three key milestones were a part of the design process: foundation workshops, ideation workshop and concept development, pilot program concept

Foundation workshops

Four foundation workshops with stakeholders from VEOHRC, VicHealth and Victoria University to develop an initial program hypothesis to take to the Ideation Workshop with the BTT Youth Working Group.

Insights from the workshops:

- Learning anti-racism is multi-channeled with a need to use non-traditional learning methods such as arts-based practices;

- Teaching anti-racism requires a complex unpacking of self and situating yourself in society and;

- Program format needs to consider how to deliver content in a time pressed environment (100 minute double period) in a school setting

Ideation workshop

The ideation workshop was held on 5 November 2022 with the Working Group to explore a program hypothesis to design an incursion program concept for high school students.

Program concept

The BTT Youth Working Group designed a 100-minute program to be delivered by external facilitators.

Program objectives:

- Build understanding of the harmful impacts of racism on young people's mental health and wellbeing;

- Reduce racism among students in secondary schools in Victoria;

- Empower young people who experience racism to take action;

- Contribute to a culture of safety for racially diverse students.

Learning objectives:

- Students understand racism

- Students understand anti-racism

- Students can connect anti-racism to mental wellbeing

WHY SCHOOLS WANTED BIGGER THAN THIS

Over 70 schools in Victoria submitted an expression of interest (EOI) after information about the program was circulated via the Department of Education newsletter. Apart from demographic information, schools were asked to respond to the following questions in their EOI's: *My school is interested in participating because:...*and *The current anti-racism programs delivered in my school are:*

There were a range of reasons schools cited for being interested in participating in BTT. The main themes that emerged are listed below with a sample of quotes from schools illustrating each theme

To address and prevent racism

"We have incidents of racial bullying at our school, including casual racism within friendship groups which is put down to 'banter'"

"We are interested in building a culture...whereby students can understand the harmful impacts of racism and be equipped with the tools and language necessary to address it appropriately"

"We hear from students and their families about their experiences of racism on a regular basis and it is difficult to counter at the school level"

To promote respect and understanding

"We want all students to be respectful and responsible for what they say and do and understand impact on others"

"We feel that educating teenagers about discrimination and its negative effects can lead to long term behaviour change and students will be more likely to carry these values and behaviours into adulthood"

We want to establish our school as a safe space where students can express themselves without fear of judgement or mistreatment"

Challenges with diversity and inclusion

"We have very poor results from the annual Attitudes to School Survey data around acceptable of any form of diversity"

"We have limited racial diversity within our whole school cohort, however, we are faced with issues for our few diverse students as the majority do not know what is considered appropriate or not and lack empathy for differences"

"In a regional school with very low diversity, we get regular reports of racism and other discrimination towards anyone from a different background"

Need for educational support

"Our school community are in desperate need of external supports in regard to educating our students and families regarding racism, inclusivity and being open towards cultural diversity"

"We have a low number of culturally diverse and EAL students however the naivety towards culturally diverse people is something that requires further support in"

"We have run in house anti-racism programs and would like to be better supported to explore this more in depth with our current program"

Building on existing approaches

"We have a close working relationship for local Indigenous community organisations', but there can be a separation between those involved in those programs and those who are not"

"We are interested in building a culture in the College whereby students can understand the harmful impacts of racism and be equipped with the tools and language necessary to address it appropriately"

"We have tackled racism as an issue as it has arisen in a very reactive way and we would like to bring in much more proactive approaches"

Link between racism and mental health

"The objectives of the program would benefit our students to understand the link between racism and mental health"

"It is really needed. Most students are great, there is this pocket of very narrow minded students who are using language in an unacceptable way and really harming the mental health of others"

"Providing further information on the impacts it can have on an individual's mental, emotional, physical and social health and wellbeing"

Other themes

Geographic and demographic challenges - some schools spoke of the lack of diversity in their wider communities and the impact of being geographically isolated from more multicultural contexts.

Integration with School Programs and Curriculum - several schools saw benefits in linking BTT with existing programs and curriculum content.

CURRENT ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS

In their EOI's, schools were asked '*The current anti-racism programs delivered in my school are'* and the following are the main themes that capture the responses to that prompt and a selection of quotes that illustrate them.

Celebration of Cultural Events and Days - "We celebrate Harmony Day in a big way at our college, it's probably one of the biggest and best days of the year at our school."

Implementation of Values and Respectful Relationships Programs - "The Respectful relationships program is delivered in mentor time. It involves students undertaking activities at all year levels to build empathy."

Professional Learning and Development for Staff - "Diversity celebration days Professional Learning for staff focused on inclusive language and inclusive curriculum."

Curriculum Integration of Intercultural Understanding and Anti-Racism - "Educational information about racism and the impacts are discussed in cohort assemblies, is displayed on google noticeboards and google sites and linked into our school value 'Respect All'."

Invited Speakers and Collaboration with External Programs - "We recently had a Speak Out presenter who spoke to Year 7-10 students about the power of words in the context of racism."

Building Community and External Partnerships - "Made connections with several community organisations in order to support our students and families."

Absence of Specific Anti-Racism Programs

While many schools were able to connect anti-racism to pre-existing programs and strategies to combat discrimination more broadly (e.g. Respectful Relationships), nearly a third of them stated that there were limited or no specific anti-racism programs and resources.

"Nothing specific - just lessons in various subjects that touch on the issue"

"We do not have any anti-racism programs currently delivered in our school"

"We have not had any formal programs addressing anti-racism alone"

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

The EOI's were evaluated by VicHealth and the ten pilot schools were selected so as to offer a broad cross section of schools in terms of geographic location, cultural diversity and size.

The demographic information of the 10 schools that participated is depicted in Figure 2 including total number of students (bubble size), regional or major city (bubble colours). Also included on the axis is percentage language background other than English and index of community socio-educational advantage.

The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for schools. For more information https://www.myschool.edu.au/media/1820/guide-to-understanding-icsea-values.pdf
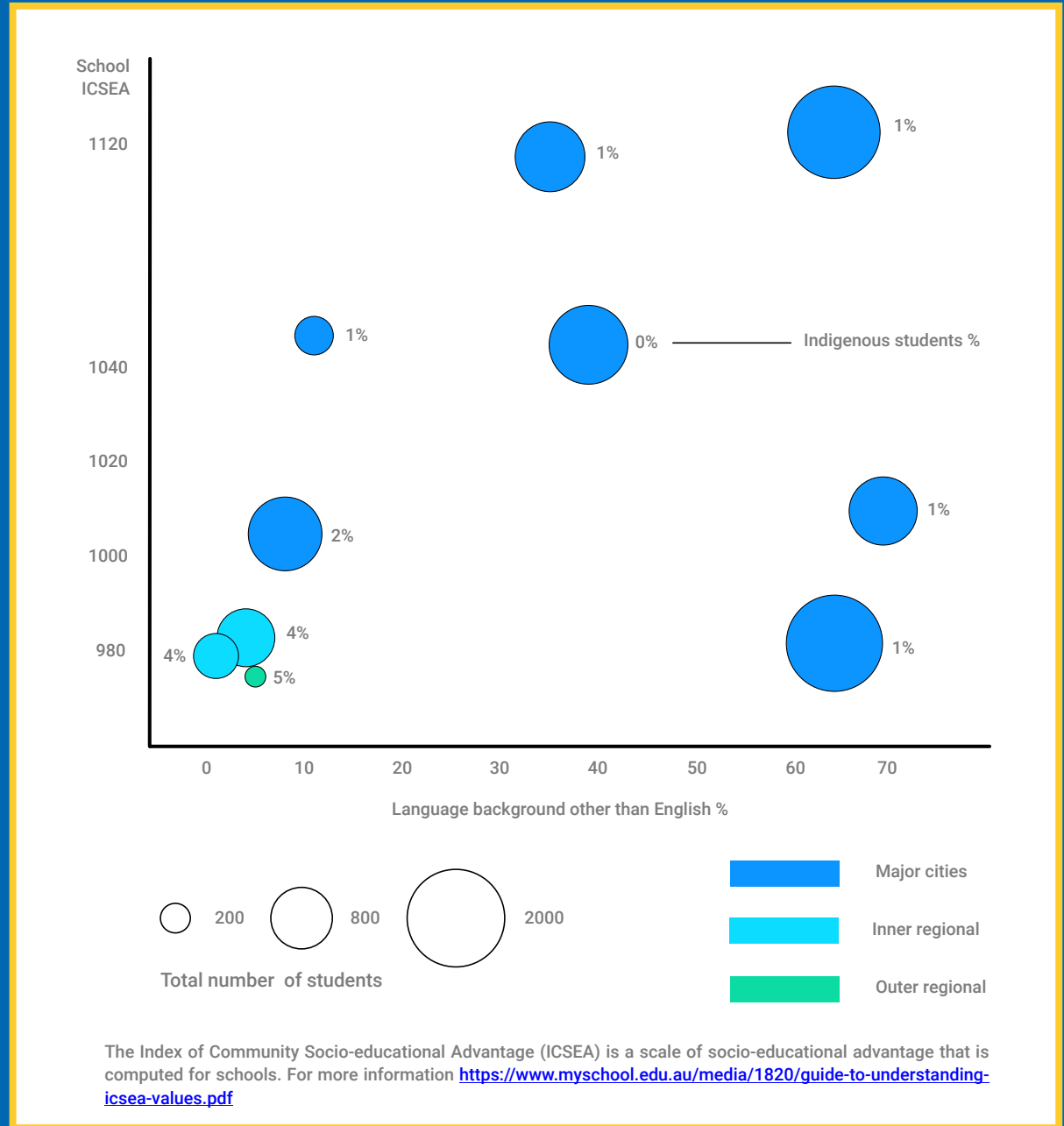
Figure 2. *Demographic information for participating schools*

Figure 3. *Student responses describing their ethnic or cultural background*

Ethnic and cultural backgrounds

In the pre-session surveys, students were asked the question '*How would you describe your ethnic or cultural background?'* From 58 responses across 3 different schools, their responses are depicted in the word cloud image.

Notably, many students described their ethnic and cultural backgrounds in hyphenated ways. This indicated a level of critical consciousness about the diversity and complexity of their identities and an awareness of how these are regarded in the Australian context (Bañales et al., 2021). This is detailed by the following examples from students:

"I would describe Maori's as very cultural, and family driven"

"Heavily European (Dutch, English, German, Irish)"

"White Australian"

"Not diverse"

Year level and group sizes

Students participating were all from year 9 at each school. Whole year levels were chosen so as to be as inclusive as possible. Depending on the size of the year level, in some instances more than one group of year 9's were chosen by their school to participate. While the desired group size (based on the number of BTT facilitators) was around 30, on a few occasions there were more than this

WHAT A BTT SESSION LOOKS LIKE

Program facilitators

Facilitators were selected by VicHealth and employed by VEOHRC to deliver the program in schools. They were chosen as people who have lived experiences of racism and anti-racism, but also had expertise in creative arts and youth facilitation. It was planned that there would be 2 facilitators for school groups of 30 or less and any larger would require more. At most of the pilot schools the facilitators were joined by supporting staff from VicHealth and researchers from Victoria University.

Session content

Each session ran for 100 minutes and included activities that enabled young people to learn about the various types of racism and understand how to enact anti-racism in everyday settings.

The program was divided into 5 parts:

Introductions: The facilitators opened the session with an Acknowledgment of Country. They then each introduced themselves to the students.

Group Values Activity: Facilitators then worked with young people to forge values that would guide the sessions and be held by all participants. Some of the values that were suggested to be upheld during sessions were "confidentiality", "respect", "active listening" and "no judgment".

Sharing language: This activity involved young people learning about the different forms of racism, such as "interpersonal racism", "institutional racism" and "casual racism". Cards were used to depict each of the terms and facilitators engaged in discussion about each type of racism, using examples and role-plays to depict how they manifest (see a selection of the cards next page).

Story posters: The young people were invited to read real-life examples some from public figures (e.g. Adam Goodes) and others everyday examples from young people involved in the development of the program. and stories of racism displayed on large posters around the room. They were then asked to place a sticky note or sticker on the stories they resonated with the most or found most striking. They then engaged in a group discussion about what types of racism were depicted and why these scenarios reflected racism (see a selection of the posters next page).

Demonstrating anti-racist understanding : In the last activity, the young people were introduced to the 5D's which reflect the 5 ways to enable anti-racism (Distract, Discuss, Delegate, Disagree, and Direct). They were put into small groups and asked to express and communicate these anti-racist actions using creative practices of their choice. Young people engaged in poster making, creating songs, or performing role plays to convey the 5Ds.

STORY POSTERS

story

"One of my first memories of explicit racial abuse was in high school. When your first name becomes chink, or 'go back to where you came from' becomes the weekly schoolyard mantra."

story

"Every now and then a troll calls me white. I am not quite white, not quite blak enough. I wish I was blakker on the outside; as blak on the outside as I feel on the inside. I'm a Vegemite sandwich on brown bread."

story

"I had a friend in kindergarten and during recess, her friends asked 'Why are you playing with her? She's different.' She looked at me, I looked at her, she walked away with them and I walked in the other direction. I haven't spoken to her since and that has always stayed with me."

story

"Why don't you go play on the monkey bars?"

SHARED LANGUAGE CARDS

Shared Language

Racism

Racism is when you treat someone badly and take advantage of them socially, economically or politically because of their race.

Source:
https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism

Shared Language

Microaggression

Microaggressions are when you use words or actions that are negative to target people based on their race.

Source:
https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies

Shared Language

Internalised Racism

Internalised racism is when you believe negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about racial and ethnic groups.

Source:
https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/racism-racialdiscrimiation-child-and-youth-health

Shared Language

Race Discrimination

Race discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of your race, skin colour, ancestry, nationality or ethnic background.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, race means a person's:
- colour
- descent or ancestry
- nationality
- ethnic background
- any characteristics associated with a particular race.

Source:
https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/discrimination/

Shared Language

Systemic/Institutional Racism

System and institutional racism are policies, conditions or practices that disadvantage certain groups. This includes but isn't limited to education, housing, employment, online, social media, health care, policing and criminal justice systems.

Source:
https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/racism-racialdiscrimiation-child-and-youth-health

THE EVALUATION

Design

The evaluation was informed by critical methodologies that seek to interrogate how contexts, histories and structures shape the lives of people and communities lives (Fine, 2016). It was also underpinned by principles and values of collaborative evaluations which is most suited to contexts where learning and/or transformational concerns are most important (O'Sullivan, 2012). Collaborative approaches to evaluation are able to respond more aptly to specific localised contexts and is a way to make use of local knowledge and expertise about a context or culture thus empowering individuals and communities.

The key areas of inquiry for the evaluation were collaboratively developed between Victoria University, VicHealth and VEOHRC prior to the program development. Two key areas of inquiry were program process and outcomes.

Program process

Program efficacy in:

- Raising awareness about racism as social determinant

- Understanding of physical and mental health impacts of racism

- Expanding understanding of everyday racism, rights and avenues for reporting

- Build skills to counter racism and building bystander capacity to act

Outcomes, resources & value

Outcomes - What are the ways the project has influenced understandings of racism in schools? What have students, teachers/school staff learnt or experienced from participating in the program?

Resources - What resources have been developed from the program? What will be sustained in-schools after the program?

Value – How has the program benefitted by being youth centred? What has been the impact to school climate for the program being for the program having been youth-centred?
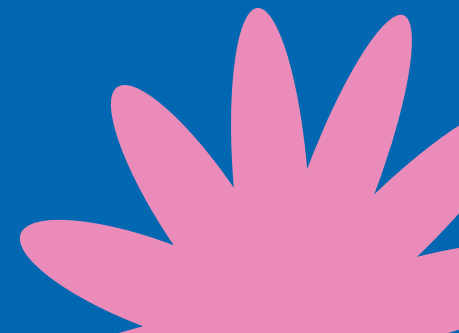
THE EVALUATION

Data collection

The evaluation drew on a range qualitative approaches to build a rich picture of many aspects of the program and its delivery.

Observations

Observations were conducted during five of the BTT program sessions. Four researchers who were present in the BTT sessions conducted the observations and took field notes of program delivery, settings, people present, and interactions during the program. Pictures and audio recordings were also taken to capture the spaces that the programs were delivered, the set ups, and the artefacts produced by young people during the programs. These included drawings, posters, written slogans and raps.

Interviews

School staff - Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine staff members of different schools who were in contact with the BTT program. They were teaching staff, wellbeing and counselling staff, and school leadership.

Program Facilitators - Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with two facilitators who delivered the program about their experiences, what they felt worked best and what they thought could be improved.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom or in person at a time that suited the participants, and the data was de-identified and analysed using thematic analysis (Patton, 1990).

Surveys

Pre-session surveys were designed to collect information that would help inform facilitators about the school context they were going to deliver the program in. They were based on the concept of school climate for diversity (see following section for details)

The post-session survey was designed to capture how students felt about the BTT session and what they had learned. The following were the open ended questions in the survey,

- What were the most fun elements of BTT

- What are three things you learnt from being in the BTT program

- From what you learnt in the BTT program, can you describe some of the ways racism impacts mental health?

- Describe something you learnt about anti-racist actions. What actions can you take when you hear, see, or notice racism?

PRE-SESSION STUDENT SURVEY

How students felt about diversity, school and learning

Figure 4. *Pre-Session Survey - Stereotypes around School*

Your cultural or ethnic background is seen in stereotypical ways at school
- Doesn't apply to me — 8.3%
- Completely true — 5.3%
- VeryTrue — 16.7%
- Somewhat true — 20%
- A little bit true — 28%
- Not at all true — 21.7%

Students here have a lot of stereotypes about your cultural of ethnic group
- Doesn't apply to me — 8.3%
- Completely true — 11.7%
- VeryTrue — 25%
- Somewhat true — 16.7%
- A little bit true — 13.3%
- Not at all true — 25%

Teachers and principals believe negative stereotypes about your culture or ethnicity
- Doesn't apply to me — 8.3%
- Completely true
- VeryTrue
- Somewhat true
- A little bit true — 18.3%
- Not at all true — 61.7%

Teachers are prejudiced against certain cultural/ethnic groups
- Doesn't apply to me — 11.7%
- Completely true
- VeryTrue
- Somewhat true — 8.3%
- A little bit true — 28.3%
- Not at all true — 46.7%

You ethnic or cultural group is represented in stereotypical ways in text books and class materials
- Doesn't apply to me — 10%
- Completely true
- VeryTrue
- Somewhat true — 8.3%
- A little bit true — 11.7%
- Not at all true — 61.7%

Surveys of students' perceptions of their school climate were collected in pre-session surveys. The pre-session survey included questions from the school climate for diversity scale (Byrd, 2017) specifically from the three domains of Stereotypes Around School (students' perceptions of stereotypes and prejudices held by teachers, principals, and other students), Equal Status (captures how students' perceive the amount of fair treatment and equal opportunity at school) and Critical Consciousness Socialisation (how students' feel about learning opportunities around culture, discrimination and inequality in school).

Students were prompted to answer the following:*These are a series of questions designed to give the people who will run your session some ideas about how you feel about your school. You do not have to complete the questions if you don't want to and you will still be able to take part in the workshop even if you don't answer them. Think about your school. How true are the following questions?* 60 students across three schools responded to the pre-session surveys and the results are illustrated in Figures 4-6. The survey respondents came from three school, with the majority of responses coming from a larger major city school with a culturally diverse student population (39% language background other than English).
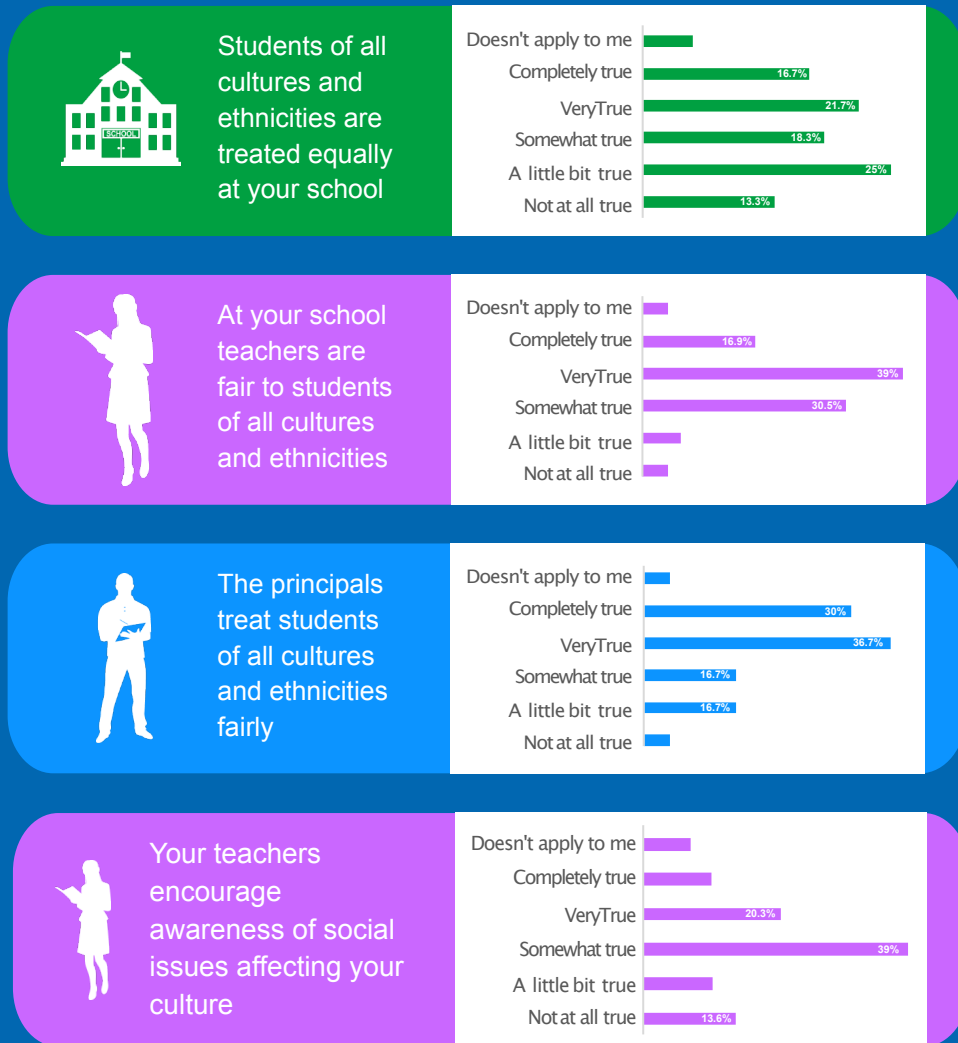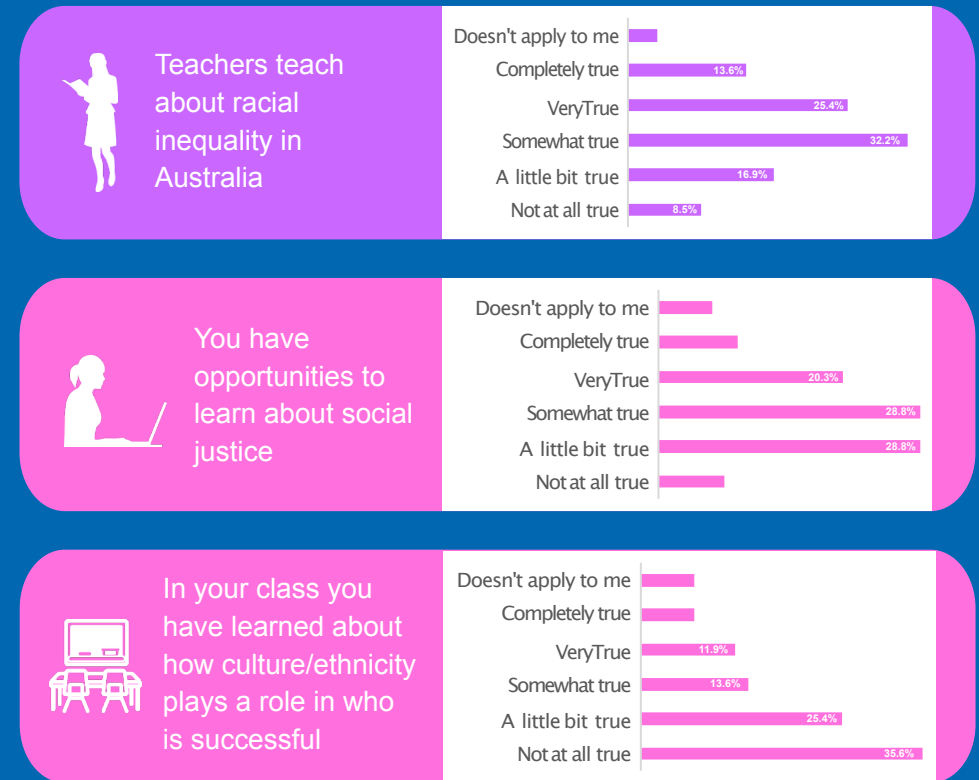
Figure 5. *Pre-Session Survey Equal Status*

Students of all cultures and ethnicities are treated equally at your school

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	16.7%
VeryTrue	21.7%
Somewhat true	18.3%
A little bit true	25%
Not at all true	13.3%

At your school teachers are fair to students of all cultures and ethnicities

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	16.9%
VeryTrue	39%
Somewhat true	30.5%
A little bit true	
Not at all true	

The principals treat students of all cultures and ethnicities fairly

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	30%
VeryTrue	36.7%
Somewhat true	16.7%
A little bit true	16.7%
Not at all true	

Your teachers encourage awareness of social issues affecting your culture

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	
VeryTrue	20.3%
Somewhat true	39%
A little bit true	
Not at all true	13.6%

Figure 6. *Pre-Session Survey Critical Consciousness Socialisation*

Teachers teach about racial inequality in Australia

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	13.6%
VeryTrue	25.4%
Somewhat true	32.2%
A little bit true	16.9%
Not at all true	8.5%

You have opportunities to learn about social justice

Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	
VeryTrue	20.3%
Somewhat true	28.8%
A little bit true	28.8%
Not at all true	

In your class you have learned about how culture/ethnicity plays a role in who is successful

|	
Doesn't apply to me	
Completely true	
VeryTrue	11.9%
Somewhat true	13.6%
A little bit true	25.4%
Not at all true	35.6%

Based on the results from these pre-session survey, students seem to have a generally positive feeling about their school climate in relation to stereotyping and equal status. This is confirmed by previous research which found students reported their perceptions of teacher empathy to be high (Priest, et al., 2019).

Students seemed a little less positive about their opportunity to learn more about social justice and how culture/ethnicity plays a part in who is successful. This supports existing research which suggests that deliberate efforts are necessary to help young people cultivate anti-racist attitudes and behaviours and that schools can play a vital role in systematically equipping young people to participate in anti-racist actions (Hurd, et al., 2023).
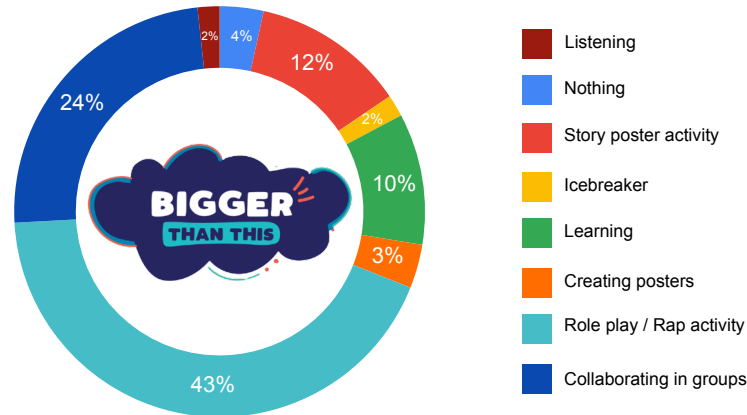
POST-SESSION STUDENT SURVEY

Open-ended responses to the post-session survey were analysed utilising a content analysis which quantified the presence of the main theme present. Direct quotes from the survey illustrate some of the main themes.
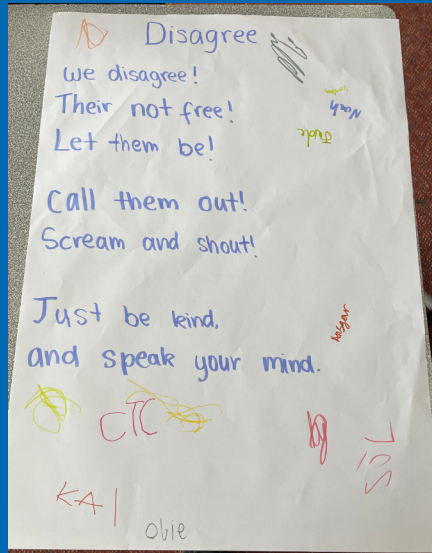
Program artefact 2: Student Collaborative Poster

Figure 6. *Post-session survey: BTT Fun Elements*

What were the most fun elements of the Bigger then This Anti Racism program?

Legend:
- Listening
- Nothing
- Story poster activity
- Icebreaker
- Learning
- Creating posters
- Role play / Rap activity
- Collaborating in groups

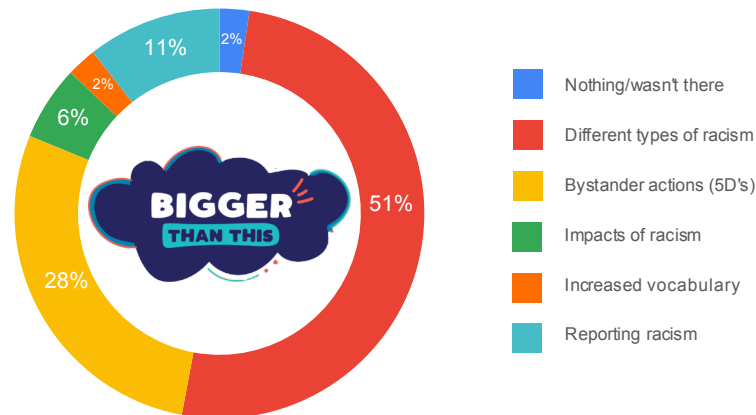Values: 2%, 4%, 12%, 2%, 10%, 3%, 43%, 24%

"The best part of the bigger than this anti racism program was that everyone was involved. I didn't feel excluded from the discussion"

"Be able to show your knowledge on what you learnt"

Figure 7. *Post-session survey: BTT Learning*

What did you learn from being in the Bigger then This Anti Racism program?

Legend:
- Nothing/wasn't there
- Different types of racism
- Bystander actions (5D's)
- Impacts of racism
- Increased vocabulary
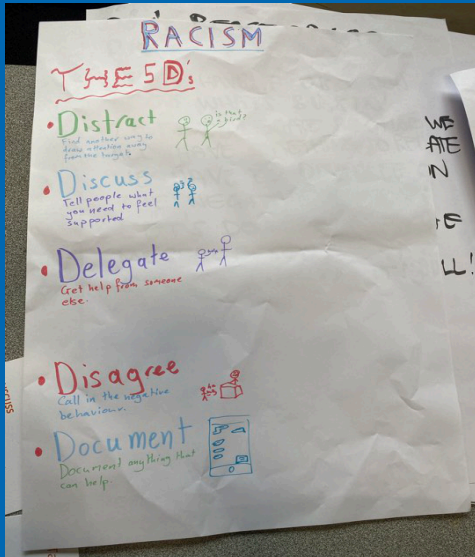- Reporting racism

Values: 2%, 11%, 2%, 6%, 28%, 51%

"I learnt that there are different types of racism, I learnt about different peoples hardships, I also learnt about how we need to spread more cultural awareness in our school to prevent racism"

"It is never okay to just watch someone be racist. Don't judge anyone on their race or ethnicity everyone is human, call someone out for being racist let them know even if they don't think they are tell them its never okay"
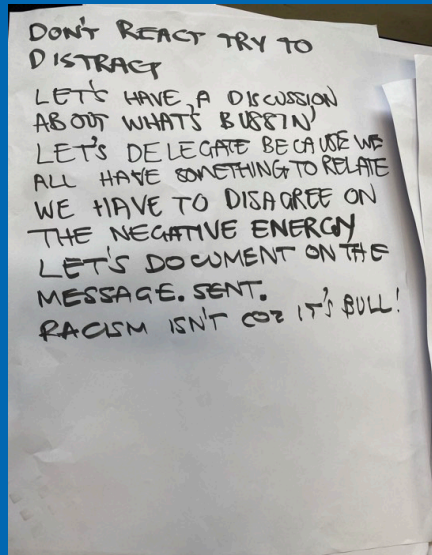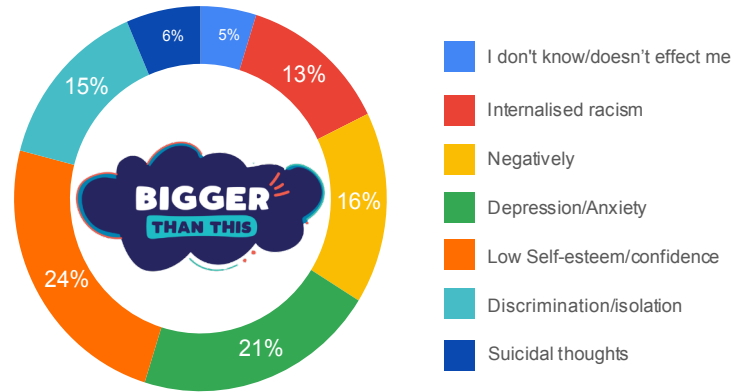
Program artefact 3: Student Collaborative Rap

Program artefact 4: Student Collaborative Poster

Figure 8. *Post-session survey: BTT Racism & Mental Health*

From what you learnt in the the Bigger than This Anti Racism program, can you describe some of the ways racism impacts mental health?

- 5% I don't know/doesn't effect me
- 13% Internalised racism
- 16% Negatively
- 21% Depression/Anxiety
- 24% Low Self-esteem/confidence
- 15% Discrimination/isolation
- 6% Suicidal thoughts

"It can make you hate yourself which is not fun i know from personal experience and it can make you depressed and give you suicidal thoughts and hurt yourself like me!"
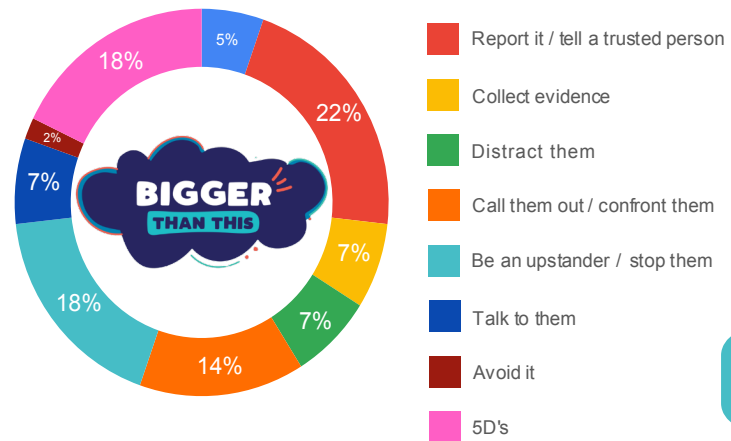
"It can make people that are being racially discriminated against feel depressed and left out just because of where they're from"

Figure 9. *Post-session survey: BTT Anti-Racism Actions*

- 5% Don't know
- 22% Report it / tell a trusted person
- 7% Collect evidence
- 7% Distract them
- 14% Call them out / confront them
- 18% Be an upstander / stop them
- 7% Talk to them
- 2% Avoid it
- 18% 5D's

Describe something you learnt about anti-racist actions. What actions can you take when you hear, see, or notice racism?

"You can speak up and say something to them. You would also go tell someone that can handle it better than what we can"

"Notice a limit or if they are actually cool with the jokes or statements you say to someone"

Program artefact 5: Student Collaborative Poster

The responses from the post-session survey indicate that the interactive and creative elements of BTT were not only the considered the most fun by students, but were also appeared to assist in anchoring the concepts, language and learning around racial literacies and anti-racist actions. These responses are supported by other data collected during the evaluation such as interviews, observations and program artefacts such as the posters. These are elaborated on in the following section.

IMPACTS, OUTCOMES & STRENGTHS

BUILDING ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF RACISM

APPLYING AND TRANSFERRING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

THE EXPERIENCE AND ROLE OF FACILITATORS

CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO RACIAL LITERACY

MAIN THEMES

Four main interconnected themes emerged from the collective data analysed.

Building on Young People's Understanding and Awareness of Racism

This theme refers to the ways the program was seen to not only bring new knowledge, language and experiences to the sessions, but also the ways in which it amplified the existing knowledge of students and fostered opportunities for them to share and collaborate. As evidenced from the post session survey and through observations of the sessions, when prompted, students were able to name different types of racism, and in some instances offer sophisticated definitions of them. When facilitators enacted scenarios in front of students and asked what kind of racism it might be, several were able to name the relevant kind. Importantly, students were able to apply this knowledge in the creative aspect of the session where they created role-plays, rap verses, and posters that demonstrated not only the language around racism and anti-racism, but were able to communicate what they had learned in terms of anti-racist actions. Allowing students to create their own collaborative responses meant they could weave their own knowledge and understanding within them.

When asked to reflect on young people's learning through the BTT program, school staff and teachers stated that many students came into the program with relatively high racial literacy that was built upon throughout their engagement in the program. This emphasised how young people have literacy around racism in addition to the vitality of the program in schools to build upon what they know:

> **I learned that our students have greater understanding of this issue than I originally anticipated which highlighted the need to make this common practice within our cohorts (Nina, school leadership)**

Facilitators of the program recalled the ways that young people participating in BTT were able to engage in dialogue that led to moments of realisation about specific types of racism. They also shared how students identified and made connections about the ways racism manifests, which they had not understood before:

> **When students started to open up about what we had in the program, we'd have like little conversations, little group conversations when we talk about stuff and when this when the students will talk about "Ohh I remember you know my mum telling me about this story but I never understood. But now I do". And those little, those little smiles, all those little ohh, those little "aha moments" from students was definitely high for me (Molly, facilitator)**

Also evident in student's knowledge about racism were the impacts on wellbeing and mental health. From the post-session surveys it was clear that students understood the negative impacts and the way racism can diminish self-esteem and self-confidence and lead to specific conditions like depression.

> **[Racism] Could make someone feel bad about them self. Low self esteem and self worth (Student)**

> **It can make people doubt themselves making them feel like they don't belong (Student)**

In terms of knowledge and understanding about anti-racist actions, the surveys and observations illustrated how the majority of students from in sessions could recall the 5D's presented by facilitators in the session. While often they could not recall all five, they were able to elaborate on the details of the ones they could recall.

> **I learnt about the 5D's, about micro aggressions (Student)**

> **Three things i learnt from being in the program is systemic racism, the 5 D's and micro-aggressions (Student)**

> **I learnt that there are different types of racism, I learnt about different peoples hardships, I also learnt about how we need to spread more cultural awareness in our school to prevent racism (Student)**

In sessions, students used their knowledge of the 5D's to inform their creative-collaborative work and from observations this was a useful vehicle to prompt, encourage and engage them with language they understood. It was also observed that students were also able to weave into their work some of the different types of racism. For instance, one group performed a role play around microaggressions and systemic racism related to hiring staff. Another group drew on the ideas of stereotyping, microaggressions and racist language around people and food.

Facilitators also reflected on responses they received from young people when they asked students what they learnt. They recalled young people gaining knowledge about the distinct forms of racism that can be perpetuated and anti-racist practices. In addition, facilitators conveyed how this information and messaging in the BTT program were powerful and effective which resulted in these aspects being key takeaways of the program:

> **When we did get the time to ask the question "One thing you learned, one thing you loved" [in the sessions] a lot of the time they spoke about the different types of racism. They didn't know that there were so many different types [of racism] , so now they can articulate it and understand, you know, that it's not just about hurling insults at the next person... Also a lot of them really like the five D's on how to be an anti-racist. So, I think just having those kind of short, punchy things that they can really take on board is staying with the kids (Laura, facilitator)**

These instances demonstrate that with a relatively brief incursion students are able to learn some of the complex and nuanced elements around racism and anti-racism.

Applying and transferring skills and knowledge

This theme illustrates how elements were applied and put into action in everyday interactions and settings. It also reflects how learnings from BTT were transferred and shared by young people to peers, family and community. After learning about anti-racism responses through BTT, young people conveyed that they aimed to be vigilant and proactive in being an **"upstander",** instead of a bystander, against racism. In addition to the 5D's, they emphasised their responsibility of **"stepping in, in more than one way"** and shared how they themselves would engage in anti-racism when they witness or experience racism.

Teachers and school staff also spoke about how aspects learnt in the BTT program were implemented instantly. During their school's BTT session, one school staff member had a conversation with students about an incident that had occurred in their school. They reflected on how, during this conversation, they used what was taught in BTT to demonstrate the ways that actions were perpetuating racism:

> I think it's [BTT] made a difference to some of those kids because they certainly didn't understand... A staff member of African heritage here, some of the kids were touching his face a lot before... I would have felt that that was inappropriate and wrong, but I wouldn't have understood exactly what that meant. So, in that class [BTT] they did a role play about touching, like touching someone's hair or something like that, and they [facilitators] explained that as a microaggression and that you are doing it [touching] because they're different... [and] it's making them stand out even more. I was able to verbalise that to students that did it, and they were all a little bit shocked... I said "whether you feel it or not, that's what it is [a microaggression]. So, you need to stop", and they have stopped" (Susan, school staff)

In addition, staff also conveyed the transferability of what was learnt in BTT sessions

> I think that [what they learn] will trickle into home life... I'm hoping... that they would... go home and say "ohh actually that's not the right thing to say" and pass it on to younger siblings, you know, parents [who] may not be on board with all of that"(Susan, school staff).

This highlights the important role that programs in school settings have in creating space and encouraging dialogue about racism. It also illustrates the potential these conversations have in being transferred and continued beyond the program (Barnes et al., 2024). In addition, it conveys how the learnings from BTT became a catalyst for conversation starters and further thinking and action that young people passed to others beyond their school settings and into their families, friends and community.

Reporting racism was a central feature of the sessions and the creative-collaborative work produced by students. From the post-session surveys it was evident that nearly all students were able to name some form of action to take.

> Distract either the victim or the perpetrator, assist the victim after the fact, step in to stop the perpetrator (Student)

> Talking to the person about what they said and why its wrong (Student)

> You can distract the target, disagree with the situation, and take action on the racism (Student)

School staff from specific schools spoke of how this, as they conveyed the program's emphasis around reporting racism to adults and trusted channels such as VEOHRC:

> [students] could feel empowered that they could go "No, this shouldn't be happening" and that they could say something or they could come and report it and a teacher could manage that. I think that's probably one of the biggest things in the school yard and in a classroom because kids are always surrounded by other students. I think that would be one of the biggest takeaways (Liz, School leadership)

This highlights how the BTT program enabled young people's response toward racism in proactive ways as it gave them techniques, resources and methods to address racism but also tools to engage in communicating, addressing and formally escalating these incidents.

In light of the ways that BTT was applied and transferred by young people, facilitators conveyed that their interactions with the students highlighted how young people were advocates for anti-racism, and how the program of BTT equipped them with further knowledge and expertise about racism that advanced their action and enabled them to be "stronger advocates":

> **Kids really got it. Like they're really into it. You know, some kids were so stressed just by the conversation like "this [racism] is ridiculous. How does this even happen?" And so it's really nice to see that. There are already advocates planted in our communities and in these schools without even having these conversations, and that you can see. That they're really gonna take this on board and like, be even stronger advocates as a result of us coming to that school (Laura, Facilitator)**

Experience and role of facilitators

Facilitators being from racialised backgrounds and having lived experiences of racism was noted as a positive feature of the program. In conversations and interviews with school staff and leadership they noted how learning about racism from people with lived experience helped to build a more detailed and realistic picture of racism for the students. School staff shared that their schools were at capacity in many areas, and that having external people deliver BTT was vital in their ability to host the program:

> **We don't have enough staff, we are struggling to keep staff so... somebody else coming in and running a program was great because it took it off my shoulders. So, it was an outside resource that just eased the load in the school system, having someone else come in (Susan, School staff)**

This conveys how school's being supported with external resources and people in program delivery is highly valued, and how the format of the incursion worked for staff in lessening the load. The inclusion of facilitators in BTT is also a distinction from other anti-racism programs in Australia, which often enable learning in self-paced modes and that do not provide external delivery.

School staff highly commended facilitators representing the BBT program, labelling them as **"engaging", "personable"** and **"enthusiastic"**. They conveyed the importance of handling conversations about racism with care, and illustrated how facilitators approached conversations with warmth and respect:

> **You have to show an extreme amount of empathy and caring in the beginning of a conversation [about racism]... and the people running it were brilliant...they seemed very comfortable with being able to address any racist issues as they came up and were probably happy to do that and to call somebody out, which was which is really good (Susan, school staff)**

Students also reported that facilitators created a setting of inclusion.

> **The best part of the bigger than this anti racism program was that everyone was involved. I didn't feel excluded from the discussion (Student)**

Inviting and involving young people into conversations, and welcoming their interactions, ideas and input in decision-making within a space reflects key processes of effective youth-engaged spaces, particularly when discourses such as race are being discussed (Catalano & Morales, 2021; Gatwiri & Moran, 2022).

In addition to the facilitators delivering the program in engaging, personable and open ways, the relatability of facilitators was also highlighted as a strength of the program. School staff shared how the facilitators being young people themselves enabled students to further connect with the program:

I think the presenters seemed really personable and, you know, quite young, which kids always like as well (Liz, senior school staff).

Facilitators being from racialised backgrounds and having lived experiences of racism was also highly noted as an effective and positive feature of the program. Participants shared the great impact of learning about racism from people with lived experience as they conveyed how perspectives and knowledge from those who have experienced racism helped to build a more detailed and realistic picture of racism for young people.

I think we need programs of people coming in, with lived experiences and able to actually say how it feels for them as a person and understand microaggressions, little things. Just little things that [students] are doing that they will feel have no impact at all. But the impact that they don't realise is there. I really believe we can make a difference with it (Susan, school staff)

Facilitators also spoke of how their presence and own identity positions helped to start conversations that helped to dissolved stereotypes about particular ethnic and racial backgrounds:

Yeah, a lot of the kids are like "Miss... what background are you from?" and I'll say... "from the Pacific Islands". And they'll be like, "where's that?", you know? And I got to actually talk about [it]. I'm like... "do you watch rugby? ... Half of the boys there that play rugby, they're Tongan" so kind of breaking out of the whole "You're not from New Zealand type of thing" and having that good communication" (Molly, Facilitator)

This shows how facilitators' presence and identities enabled additional and productive dialogue about stereotypes and racism in the BTT sessions.

Facilitators also shared the impact of being facilitators of an anti-racism program. They reflected on their own experiences of racism growing up as young and racialised people, and how they gravitated toward the facilitating role of BTT because of these experiences:

Yeah, I guess going to school... racist terms were being played out as normal. So I grew up in a in an era where being called coconut was just a normal thing and being called fresh off the boat... no one really stood up for it... It just sat with us...[Being a facilitator] quite like a full circle moment. It's like, OK, the things that I did just take normal. I'm actually standing up and just educating the next Gen.. That's that's making my heart full (Molly, Facilitator).

This reflection highlights the pervasive presence of racism in schools throughout time, and how learning about taking action against racism is integral for racialised young people. It conveys the deep value of having those with lived experiences lead spaces for young people to learn about racism and anti-racism in school settings as their knowledge and experience enriches the learning process (Barnes et al., 2024; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017). Lastly, it demonstrates how BTT gave facilitators an opportunity to give back and share their expertise around racism, whilst engage in work of healing and consciousness raising themselves.

Creative and collaborative approaches to racial literacy

This theme focuses on the advantage and benefits of the creative practices used within BTT which were regarded as fun, powerful and supportive in enabling the expression and co-construction of youth's knowledge and learning.

Facilitators spoke of how the creative components of the program were a highlight with the young people, and how the inclusion of young people being able to visualise and create was highly and effortlessly engaging:

> **I think it targeted the kids pretty well in terms of the simplicity of how we taught it and the artistic part of things because they all loved the arty part of things (Laura, Facilitator)**

This highlights the ways that creative practices are highly effective when engaging with young people particularly as a tool to guide conversations about race dynamics (Sonn et al., 2015; Sonn et al., 2018). While creative practices are engaging and fun, they also provide opportunities to share knowledge and convey meaning (Catalano & Morales, 2021). School staff shared how the creative components of BTT provided an opportunity for young people to express their feelings and thoughts about racism:

> **I love the posters because it brought out how people were feeling. It was very intentional (Kelly, School staff)**

This supports literature around the ways that creative vehicles and practices can provide young people with vessels to express and share messages in ways that are embodied and felt (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017; Sonn et al., 2015; Sonn et al., 2018). Creative practices not only enabled young people to engage in meaning-making and convey their emotions, but empowered them to produce meaningful artefacts that spoke to anti-racism.

Although all creative methods used in BTT were deemed appealing, the role plays were a particular creative practice that was highlighted by participants. They were conveyed to be helpful in visualising racism and also picturing ways to call it out:

> **I think for me, some of the role play I saw... was more impactful. If there was something occurring, like a scenario occurring in the yard, you know discrimination occurring to someone, they could go [to say] "Actually that is not ok" and it doesn't need to escalate (Liz, School leadership)**

The creative components of BTT emphasised how learning through creativity can be a vehicle in developing racial literacies (Ellis, 2017). It shows how these aspects promoted young people to translate the knowledge they learnt about anti-racist practices and platform them in visual, auditory, dialogical and embodied ways. It also reflected how creative vehicles enable young people to be co-creators of unique imaginings (O'Donnell et al., 1993). This showcases the benefits of creative and art practices which give young people opportunities to communicate and disseminate knowledge, and provides a vessel to generate knowledge regarding social change and demonstrate their capacity for action in creative ways (Gergen & Gergen, 2011, 2014; Sonn & Baker, 2016).

The flexibility young people had in being able to choose their preferred creative practice for the 5Ds activity was also praised, as it gave young people the ability to engage and showcase the anti-racist practices learnt in ways that felt comfortable for them:

> **It's fun, it's interactive, but it does send a message and I think that's really important for young people to have it [the program] interactive, to have a bit of fun, to be creative, be able to be flexible to change (Anna, School staff)**

As young people engaged in creative approaches to produce role plays, raps, posters, diagrams, and drawings, the BTT program enabled them to also connect and support others throughout the creative process.

> **It's been really great to see the confidence that some of these kids end up having, you know... a lot of them end up getting up and do the role plays or creating art, you know, or rapping or, you know. And for the most part, I've found that the other kids have been really. Supportive. Of each other. They've hyped each other up which was really cool to see (Laura, Facilitator)**

This is supported by literature that emphasises how processes of engaging, developing and disseminating creative work is not only vital in conveying community stories and learnings, but has the protential to bring communities together and forge relationships and connections (Catalano & Morales, 2021). In BTT, the creative components contributed to fostering reciprocal participation and connections with participants (O'Donnell et al., 1993). Such connections can foster safe and brave spaces for dialogue, and nurture work that speaks about and dismantles injustices (Karabanow & Naylor, 2015; Sonn et al., 2018). This emphasises how racialised youth are the agents of anti-racist cultural productions, and how creative vehicles can be a tool for action in this work (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2017).

Summary and staff reflections

Staff who were in contact with BTT and who attended session saw a real need for BTT and the value of having a space the enabled discussions:

> **There's nothing else that speaks directly to racism [in our school]. There's nothing that really addresses it. We're all about celebrating cultures... but even then they're [speaking about racism] is not really implemented. So I think it's [BTT] great because they're [students] not having that discussion elsewhere (Diana, school staff)**

Staff were overwhelmingly supportive of the pilot and were encouraging about the ongoing need for BTT:

> **We definitely want them back again next year (Diana, school staff)**

> **There's definitely a need to continue it. By all means, there's definitely a need for it. I don't know 100% how that looks... but there is definitely a need to continue the racism discussion (Logan, school leadership)**

> **I would like not to be just a one off, so in another six months or something, they came back with the same group of kids with the same facilitators if possible and did us a second stage with that...(Anna, school staff)**

> **More programs for more year levels would be great (Nina, school leadership)**

The responses from students who participated in BTT, along with school staff and facilitators, conveys how the program fostered learning about racism and anti-racism for young people in relation to the different forms of racism, the ways racism impacts health, and anti-racist practices to implement. The format and nature of the incursion, which was informed and delivered by young people with lived experiences of racism, enabled the program to be tailored to young people. BTT being led by those with lived experiences, from it's conception to the program's delivery, enriched student's understandings of the intricate nature and impacts of racism and furthered the reliability of the content and dissemination. Finally, creative practices were highlighted as one of the program's many strengths, as creative work in the program became vessels for expression that were fun and engaging for young people but also enabled students to co-create and share knowledge about racism and anti-racism in embodied, visual and dynamic ways.

EVALUATION SUMMARY
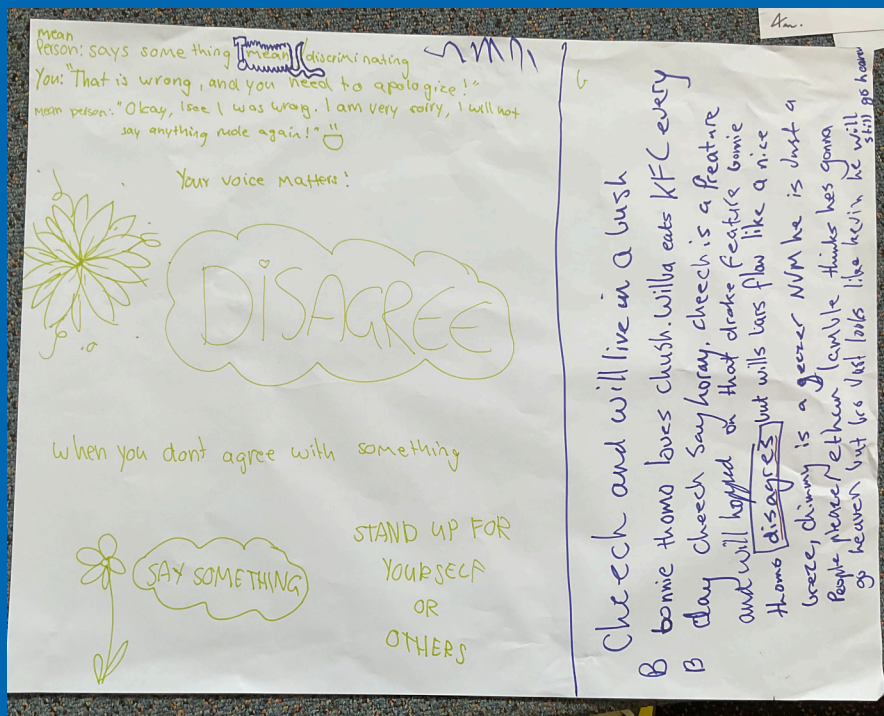
Program artefact 6: Student Collaborative Poster
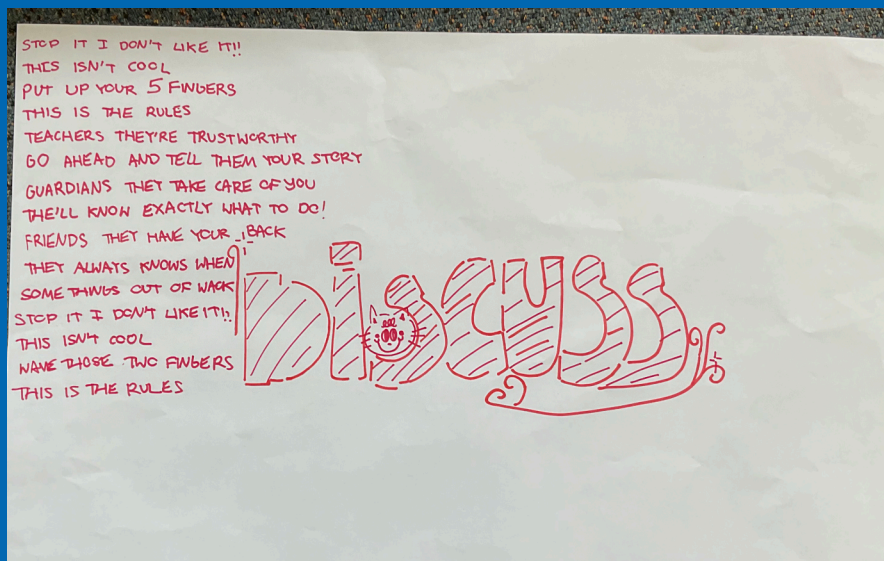
Program artefact 7: Student Collaborative Poster

Having young people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds at the centre of the design and development of BTT ensured the program was anchored in language and ideas that would resonate with participants of the program. They were also integral in conceiving activities that would be engaging and fun for young people. While not all elements of the original design were ultimately delivered in schools and further refinement of the program delivery is required to streamline the sessions and have a clear pedagogical approach, overall the program content was very successful.

The responses from students who participated in BTT clearly illustrated how the program facilitated learning about various forms of racism, their effects on mental health, and strategies for taking anti-racist actions. it was also evident that students were at different points on the racial literacy continuum but that the program offered them a safe space to share their understanding and through the activities they were positioned as having knowledge and expertise around the topic.

The design and format of the incursion, which was informed and delivered by young people with lived experiences of racism, ignited purposeful conversations around the complexities of discrimination, racism and anti-racism but did so in a non-judgemental manner. The sessions offered students a place to have candid conversations with each other and facilitators. Importantly this also means that for some students from cultural and ethnically diverse background, sessions meant they were able to give voice and expertise to their own experiences of racism and anti-racism. At times this was challenging for facilitators to manage so that activities didn't become an occasion for students to enact harmful racist language and microaggressions. No instances of the sessions getting out of hand were observed.

Finally, creative and collaborative approaches were highlighted as one of the program's many strengths, as creative work in the program became vessels for expression that were fun and engaging for young people but also enabled students to co-create and share knowledge about racism and anti-racism in embodied, visual and dynamic ways.

Through developing racial literacy BTT ignites the opportunity to have dialogues about racism via the accessibility of creative approaches. Importantly these dialogues are facilitated by young people with living-experience of racism and offer students the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with non-judgemental experts. Through a series of fun, creative and thought provoking activities students are simultaneously exposed to a range of anti-racist language and concepts whilst also being able to connect with examples from other young people who developed and designed BTT. The pilot has successfully demonstrated the value and impact of a brief, facilitated school incursion around racism and anti-racism actions. It has also highlighted several possibilities for the future development and sustainability of the program.

COMMENDATIONS

A number of notable successes and achievements emerged from the delivery of the program across the ten pilot schools.

Fun and engaging

Both students participating and staff in attendance commented that the sessions had been fun. Researchers observed high levels bof engagement by students in most instances. Given the relatively short session time for each school (100 minutes), this is a testament to the youth-led development and design, but also the skill, experience and thoughtfulness of the facilitators.

Personable and accessible facilitators

Students and staff commented on how friendly and personable the facilitators were and this was key in them building rapport with students quickly. Facilitators also shared personal stories of racism and its impacts which was observed to have a positive impact on the way the students related to the facilitators. This humanised the topics for students and enable respectful conversations to open up. It was also observed that it enabled students of colour to speak to their experiences of racism.

Successful navigation of sensitive topics

Not only did facilitators successfully navigate the intended topics and learning outcomes, as evidenced by the work produced by students and their post-session responses, but they also fielded difficult questions around racism and discrimination that were a part of the current context (e.g. Anti-semitism, racialised violence, war). It was observed that they were able to weave these into discussions and make connections to the shared language in sessions.

Welcomed extra resources and a desire for it to be ongoing

In conversations and interviews with school staff in the program, they all expressed gratitude that there was some assistance in dealing with racism and anti-racism. Some teachers specifically expressed how the program had been able to take some of the load off them as often schools did not have a specific person or department dealing with racism. School staff welcomed the extra resources that came with the program, such as reporting racism postcards, and expressed a desire for the program to continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected and the collaborative discussions between evaluators, VicHealth and VEOHRC the following recommendations are made for the ongoing development of the program.

Greater school community inclusion

While the incursion itself is only 100 minutes and is aimed at students, in order for a whole-school approach to racism there is a need for the program to be supported by connecting with school staff and leadership so that racial literacies can be woven into existing elements of school and curriculum. This could include initiating school-based action groups involving teachers, wellbeing staff and students in order to develop their own anti-racism approaches and to build a community of practice and learning around racial literacies. This is in line with current recommendations outlined for a whole-school approach for the Respectful Relationships strategy.

Supporting incursions and empowering facilitators within local school contexts

Given several schools cited a lack of relevant resources and expertise, the incursions delivered by facilitators is a crucial aspect of the program that that takes pressure off schools and fills capability gaps within teaching staff. As people of colour, with lived experience of racism, the facilitators offered unique and valuable perspectives to the program and were key to being able to ignite critical conversations with students. This could be supported by ensuring facilitators have time and access to schools and relevant staff prior to them delivering the program so they are able to gain greater insight into the school culture and climate. This would empower them to deliver the program in a way that is more targeted to school issues and concerns.

Increased focus on creative collaborative approach

Although there was a component of the program that contained creative approaches to anti-racist actions, it was observed that often there was not a sufficient amount of time for students to complete these activities and in some cases perform them (rap, role-plays). Some of the content delivered (especially shared language element) could be better integrated into the other activities in the session and some could be re-designed as resources for students and schools to take with them or have access to digitally. This would free up time for the more creative-collaborative activities which ensures students are more positioned as active agents and their experience-near wisdom is elevated in the process.

Greater clarity of program objectives and pedagogy

Some school staff and facilitators commented that while they felt the content and activities were successful and had potential, it seemed as though the program was a bit lacking in a priority focus and tried to cover too much ground in a relatively short period of time. This impacted the delivery and timing of some sessions and as stated by a facilitator "[we need to decide on] what is the priority area because we can't cover every single thing, so we need to relook at what the actual priority is, so that we're not being mediocre with everything, but being really strong at least parts of things". This sentiment was echoed by some school leadership. This may include exploring other ways to deliver supporting material or draw on some of the emerging youth-designed material such as **Anti-Racism Kit**

Logistical and timing improvements

As with any school-based program, finding a suitable time to deliver an incursion within a busy school schedule is a challenge. Having the session in the first period of the day often made it difficult for facilitators to have early access to set up and staff were often busy with before school duties. This meant there was not a lot of time for facilitators to get to know the staff present and set up the room. It was also observed that on occasion having quite in-depth topics at the start of the day was not the best for student engagement. Greater consideration of these logistics would improve how school staff

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