



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION  
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mr Jonathan Davis MLA (Deputy  
Chair), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

### Inquiry into Racial Vilification

**Submission Number: 06**

**Date Authorised for Publication: 30 June 2022**

## CANBERRA MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY FORUM (CMCF) INC.

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**To:**

**Chair**

**Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion  
Inquiry into racial Vilification**

**22 June 2022**

Please find herewith the submission on behalf of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum representing more than 110 community organizations across the ACT.

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc (CMCF) is pleased to take this opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion inquiry into Racial Vilification; in particular, CMCF wish to submit the following statements from the multicultural community's perspectives.

### **About CMCF**

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc is the recognised a Peak body representing more than 110 ethnic and associated community organisations in the ACT and its surrounding areas. CMCF was established in December 2005 to have a unified voice and a single peak body to promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT. The Forum is established to act as the multicultural voice of ACT.

CMCF welcomes the Inquiry into 'Racial Vilification' as an opportunity to inform the committee of the concerns expressed by the multicultural communities of the increasing incidences of verbal racism which has become reflecting on incidences related to its cultural, faith and religious beliefs.

CMCF regularly held community conversations with community leaders to hear and share their concerns associated with their community's experiences with increasing incidences of verbal racism, discrimination in workplace and in accessing government services, especially during the high of pandemic years, where specific communities have been targeted.

### **In addressing the following Term of reference:**

CMCF encouraged the communities to tell their stories / experiences and to report incidences through the appropriate complaining mechanism. Due to the nature of incidences, most of the incidences were not reported, citing issues with the current lack of knowledge on the use of reporting mechanism, the perceived ineffective existing reporting mechanisms and the perceived lack of response from law reinforcement in finding solution or ability to resolving the issues.

In this submission, CMCF set out some of the key issues identified during the course community conversations and put forward recommendations for consideration by the Inquiry Committee as set up in the Term of Reference.

CMCF is happy to appear before the committee to address any incidences or issues that the community had raised during community consultation.

**(a) Social and legal context in which vilification based on race, linguistic diversity, ethnic origin, religion, or status as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people occurs.**

It was noted that racism has historically come in waves as migration trends change.

Since the pandemic, the incidences of verbal racism have increased, as reported by the Human Rights Commission and ACT Policing, specifically, certain ethnic community groups had been targeted and some of the incidences had been reported elsewhere.

Majority of the incidences experienced by various communities had been brought to the attention of their community leaders. Most of the incidences were related to unprovoked verbal abuses and many incidences had occurred in public transport, business premises, workplace and schools and neighbourhood. Many individuals who had experienced such unpleasant incidences have chosen to suppress themselves rather than speaking out for fear of retribution, and / or reluctant to attract unnecessary media publicity.

*CMCF recommends that:*

- 1.0 *Human Rights Commission and Policing working with Multicultural community organisations to publicly taking a stand against such damaging behaviour and demonstrate community's disapprovals and consequences through community awareness education programs.*
- 2.0 *Human Rights commission working with community organisations to develop social media / promotional materials and resources to encourage community to stand up for racism and host regular open forum to increase community awareness and importance of data collection of racial incidences.*

**(b) effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms, both for the purpose of redress in relation to individual incidents and for statistical monitoring of the prevalence of vilification based on race, linguistic diversity, ethnic origin, religion, or status as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT community generally.**

It was noted that in general, community's awareness of the existing reporting mechanism amongst the multicultural communities is low mainly because:

- There is a perceived lack of resource and support to provide public awareness education program that can be accessible to multicultural communities in the language that they can understand.
- The existing complaint mechanism has been noted as ineffective as it requires the complainant to have a good understanding of the process and how to navigate the complaint process system.

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- Due to language barriers and the lack of trust of the complaint processes, individuals often reluctant to document incidence in writing for fear of retribution. Confidentiality and privacy is important to ensure that the community's safety is protected.

CMCF recommends that:

3.0 *Human Rights Commission offers online / face to face seminars to enhance the reporting process and working with the community leaders to assist and support their community in navigating the reporting system. Quite often, the community leaders are able to reinforce message in their own language.*

4.0 *A community led reference group be established with the support of the Human Rights Commission to assist with communities to gain better understanding of the complaint and reporting mechanism and how to manage incidences occurred that are impacting on the communities.*

- (c) adequacy of the existing legal frameworks applying to vilification based on race, linguistic diversity, ethnic origin, religion, or status as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, including any gaps in their coverage, and evidence-based ways to reduce the incidence of racially based vilification.**
- (d) (d) adequacy and accessibility of existing processes and practices of relevant organisations to address vilification based on race, linguistic diversity, ethnic origin, religion or status as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.**
- (e) (e) value of establishing, and possible content of, an anti-racism strategy for the ACT; and**

It was noted that the community in general, would like to report any incidence related to racism to Police promptly. It would expect that the police could respond to the complaints in timely manner.

Community leaders identified that:

- That it is difficult to report incidence to police unless there is adequate evidence including witness who are willing to support the complaints.
- Individuals found it difficult to report and document the incidence without assistance due to language barriers and often found the existing online reporting mechanism difficult to navigate.
- Individuals affected would prefer a face-to-face interview with the police rather than lodging the incidence via online portal and follow up with progress report on the incidence.

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- New and emerging communities, who may be unfamiliar with the law and reinforcement system are less likely to report incidence, and mostly unwilling to interact with Police due to perceived fear of law enforcement.
- Community groups and in particular, the at-risk groups who have experienced open racism and who had reported incidences through appropriate channels often become disillusioned with the perceived lack of active response from the Police / Human Rights complaints portal.
- There is a lack of reliable data collection due to under-reporting for reasons mentioned as above.

CMCF recommends that:

- 5.0 *Human Rights Commission working with the peak community leaders to develop community champion sponsorship program that community groups could identify and host open forum to hear of their experiences and support individuals to report their experiences to the police / Human Rights Commission.*
- 6.0 *Human Rights Commission working with multicultural community leaders through peak multicultural community organisation to develop community awareness strategies and education sessions to encourage better interaction with the police and law reinforcement and know how to report their experiences.*

Adequate reporting

- 7.0 *encourage the multicultural community to stand up and take appropriate action, the existing processes for reporting racist incidence must be made easier and adequate support should be provided to assist individuals affected by such damage behaviour.*
- 8.0 *Community led reporting forum could be established with the support of the Human Rights Commission, whereby community could regularly attend to share experience. Such reporting experience provides an impetus for community to report and collect meaningful data of types of incidences, frequency and identify common circumstance surrounding the incidence, opportunity to create and reporting incidences through the complaint channels.*

**(f) any other matter the committee considers relevant.**

This submission contributes to the current consultation process by adding the views, concerns, and suggestions of the ACT's multicultural community.

CMCF will look forward to taking part in future consultation process, as required.

Chair, Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc.