



ACTCOSS Celebrates International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

ACTCOSS media release, Sunday 21 March 2021

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) today celebrates the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and calls upon Canberrans to reflect on their personal responsibility in combatting racism.

“This year’s theme is ‘Youth standing up against Racism’, and it is an opportunity to reflect on the power that young people have in shifting narratives and creating change, both online and in person,” said ACTCOSS CEO Dr Emma Campbell.

“Over the past year, the Black Lives Matter movement has brought racism to the forefront of global conversation. In Australia it drew attention to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in our justice system, and reignited conversations about racism and implicit bias more broadly.

“Canberra is not immune from racism. Significant structural inequalities remain that disadvantage Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities living in Canberra. As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, Canberra saw an increase in numbers of racist incidents towards Asian Canberrans. The racial abuse experienced by café owner Vincent Chen just last week gained considerable media attention; but there have been untold similar incidents that have escaped public recognition.

“The responsibility for tackling racism lies with every Canberran, regardless of their age. We all know that racism is wrong, but it can be easier to let things slide than to challenge them. However, remarks and viewpoints that may seem innocuous engender a culture of disrespect and allow people with openly racist viewpoints to feel supported in their beliefs.

“It’s telling your mate that their racist joke wasn’t funny, rather than laughing uncomfortably. It’s calling out comments that perpetrate stereotypes. This can be difficult at times but cumulatively our actions will lead to cultural change.

“ACTCOSS will continue to advocate for structural change in across Canberra to ensure that every member of our community, regardless of their cultural background, is treated with respect and dignity. ACTCOSS will continue to support our members in following inclusive, culturally appropriate practice standards,” Dr Campbell concluded.

ACTCOSS advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

For more information or comment, please contact

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