

Racism is a Moral Issue

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In my job as Race Discrimination Commissioner I am often asked how you should respond to an incident of racism. Imagine being at work and overhearing a colleague making a disparaging comment about someone's racial background. Or imagine being on a train carriage where a fellow passenger has started abusing another passenger because of their race. What should you do? Or, maybe more to the point, what would you do?

Such questions take us into the province of moral psychology. They concern moral judgment, reasoning and development. We are interested here not only in what is the right thing to do - but also how it is that we can come to do the right thing. When it concerns racism, after all, very few people would be in dispute about right and wrong. With the exception of extremists, no one would wish to endorse racism; just about all of us know nasty racist behaviour when we see it. Yet there is not always clarity about the best way to respond, and not necessarily confidence about whether we may have the courage to respond appropriately.

It may surprise you to learn that not everyone would accept us speaking about racism in terms of *moral psychology*, or in anything that approaches moral terms. For example, some on the left of the political spectrum would say that racism is fundamentally political. Manifestations of racism are an expression of a society's hierarchy: a means for a dominant group or elite to maintain its economic and social power. To refer to racism in any other term is apparently to miss the point.

Some on the right, meanwhile, maintain that speaking about racism - as opposed to racial prejudice or discrimination - involves an unjust repudiation of one's fellow members of society. You may call out racist acts or behaviour, but you should refrain from calling someone a *racist*. The suggestion is that the latter involves condemnations of moral character, which supposedly place someone beyond the pale of civilised society.

Clearly, I do not subscribe to either of these views. While racism will have structural qualities, it seems puzzling to reject the attitudinal dimensions of racial discrimination. For then, it becomes too easy merely to blame "the system," whatever that system may be. There can never be any responsibility attributed to racism - you could never hold anyone accountable for racism - because it is all a product of intangible social and political forces. Those who insist attitudes play no role ignore the power of attitudes in shaping social reality.

As for the idea that calling another person a racist constitutes a grave crime against one's fellow citizens, there is also a strange logic at work. At best, there is at play a pedantic concern with avoiding the word "racist." At worst, there is something more disconcerting. Why exactly we should be apologetic for calling out racism as morally bad is far from clear. We do not, for example, go to the trouble of making fine distinctions between hooligan behaviour and hooligans; or between criminal behaviour and criminals. Why must we take such care to avoid offending those who engage in racist behaviour?

Let me be clear at the outset about the moral quality of any honest conversation about racism. There is something moral, because the question of racism involves how we treat others. When an act of racism occurs, it harms the social standing that another person or group of people enjoy. It can also harm the freedom and well-being of its target. Any society concerned with combating racism will necessarily be interested in promoting certain dispositions among its members: tolerance and decency, respect and fairness.

What I would like to do here is expand a little on the moral psychology of racism and how it informs the development of public policy on matters of racial discrimination. Naturally, psychologists have important contributions to make. Research in social psychology can illuminate the social, cognitive and affective processes behind our moral judgment and behaviour. This can, in turn, assist in the development of policy that promotes racial tolerance and cultural understanding. My remarks here will include some explanation of how the National Anti-Racism Strategy - particularly the "Racism. It Stops with Me" campaign - draws upon ideas about the moral psychology of racism. I will also offer some remarks about the current debate about the Racial Discrimination Act and freedom of speech, and some of the moral and political questions that it raises.

The psychology of racism

If it can be hard to talk about racism, sometimes the problem is the manner in which the word is defined or understood. The dictionary definition of racism is not necessarily helpful. For it can lead many people to believe that racism is strictly about a belief that a race or some races of people are superior to others - that races possess certain qualities, which define their place in a hierarchy. This is one reason, I suspect, why many people have an aversion to the word. They believe that the word should be confined to the most extreme expressions of racial superiority.

Racism should not, however, be defined so narrowly. So-called scientific theories about race have long been discredited. In its ordinary usage today, racism refers to anything that has the effect of unfairly disadvantaging someone on the basis of their racial background. This can be expressed not only through belief, but also through behaviour. It is not only about doctrine but also about practice. Racism is as much about unjust discrimination, as it is about stereotypes and prejudice.

It is important to understand something of the psychology of racism - the assumptions and motivations behind stereotypes, prejudice of racism and discrimination. Typically, we have understood the basic structure in terms of hatred. But not all racism stems from hatred. It is important to understand the many bases of racial prejudice and discrimination.

There is a general point here to be made. As the philosopher Immanuel Kant argued, the roots of bad behaviour are ingrained in human nature. There is something about us, which almost guarantees that we will, under some circumstances, disregard moral laws about treating others equally and kindly. Whether it is overweening pride, addiction to power, or other malignant inclinations, our moral disposition is always liable to corruption - and it isn't always because of hate.

Racism can be born of fear and anxiety. Fear is, as we all know, a primitive emotion. All animals can exhibit something resembling fear when confronted with perceived threat. And it is not merely a primitive feeling. Fear can also be tied to reason. Though fear in its most immediate sense involves a heightened concern about the immediate safety of one's own body and life, it can also extend to one's culture and community. This has been one thread that has run consistently through the historical fabric of racism: the fear that a certain other poses a danger to a national identity or way of life.

Then there is envy and resentment. Racial hostility can be connected with feelings that members of some groups may possess goods that one does not. It is established, for instance, that general levels of racism can be heightened during periods of economic downturn or recession. But even in more prosperous times, feelings of resentment about the perceived advantages of others can arise. To name one example, it is striking that many of the negative stereotypes rehearsed about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involve a view about the injustice of perceived special treatment that they receive.

Racism can also be the product of ignorance and arrogance. It may not necessarily be the case that those who say or do things with racist implications mean to inflict malicious harm. Sometimes the damage can be done innocently or incidentally - because one simply may not know better. This is the case with so-called casual racism, where someone can make something like a throwaway comment that has the effect of denigrating or humiliating another because of their race. What one person may regard as harmless may in fact inflict some injury on another.

Fear and anxiety; envy and resentment; ignorance and arrogance - these are some of the psychological roots of racism. But they all share one thing in common. They all involve, to varying degrees, a withholding of sympathy or compassion from those who are subjected to racist behaviour.

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, in her recent work on political emotions, writes about the structure of compassion. While Nussbaum frames the matter in terms of what people feel towards those who are in a situation of suffering, I think her insights are instructive with respect to what people feel towards those they may be subjecting to racist prejudice or discrimination. According to Nussbaum, there are four conditions of compassion:

- there is a thought of seriousness: in experiencing compassion, the person who feels the emotion thinks that someone else is suffering in some way that is important and non-trivial;
- to feel compassion typically means that we do not believe a person's predicament is chosen or self-inflicted;
- a person who has compassion will think that the suffering person is similar to them in some important way; and

- where there is compassion, a person will consider the suffering person as one who is connected to their own well-being or goals in life.

These conditions are not met when racism occurs: there is a withholding of sympathy or compassion. Thus, victims of racist abuse can be treated as subhuman. It is no accident that racist speech can often be accompanied by animalistic language or reference to filth. Victims of racist abuse can also themselves be blamed for warranting abuse in the first place. Even when things may not be so ugly, there can often be a failure to understand the impact of one's behavior on another. This is, in turn, something that comes from an inability to see things from the perspective of another, perhaps because that other person is not regarded as similar to oneself or as important to one's own life.

This helps to explain why racism is not confined to those who are merely filled with hate, fear or envy. When it concerns racism, those in positions of social privilege commonly dismiss or underestimate the harm of discrimination. And they frequently fail to understand that sometimes fighting back against racism is not as easy as it may seem. They can fail to understand that the power to which they are accustomed to exercising may not necessarily be exercised by those less powerful.

Public policy: the National Anti-Racism Strategy

Let me turn to the matter of public policy, particularly to the role that psychological understanding can play in shaping our policy responses to racism. In 2012, the Federal Government launched the National Anti-Racism Strategy, an initiative of its multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*. The strategy involves a partnership of organisations. This currently includes the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Attorney-General's Department, Department of Social Services, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Multicultural Council, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils, and National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. I chair this partnership in my role as Race Discrimination Commissioner.

The Strategy calls on all members of the Australian community to respond to racism. It is based on the belief that racism requires individual and collective action. Its aims are to create awareness of racism and its effects on individuals and communities, to promote good practice in combating racism, and to empower people to take action against racial prejudice and discrimination when it occurs. The Strategy identifies a

number of key areas where sustained attention is required, including sport, media, employment, the internet, education, policing and government service provision.

The Strategy includes the "Racism. It Stops with Me" campaign. This campaign invites individuals and organisations to take a stand against racism. In a little over a year-and-a-half, more than 230 organisations have joined as supporters, from business, sport, education, government and civil society. Among other things, the campaign has highlighted the importance of bystander anti-racism. It has encouraged people to consider the role they can play in responding to racism that occurs in settings where they are a witness or a stranger.

Bystander behaviour has been a long area of interest in your field of social psychology. There is, of course, Rosenthal's classic study, involving Kitty Genovese, who was murdered in a New York City street in the presence of 38 witnesses, none of whom offered any assistance to Genovese or contacted police. As cases such as this one unambiguously highlight, personal responsibility in bystander situations cannot be taken for granted.

While the data remains surprisingly limited, some studies indicate that bystander behaviour in situations of racism may not be as forthcoming as what we might hope. One study of women's responses to anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and sexism found that while three-quarters of participants considered making an assertive response, only 40% in fact did so. Another study found that in 44% of incidents of race-based bullying at school, some or all of the bystanders did nothing, with one quarter in fact encouraging the bullying.

Such insights have informed some of the messaging of "Racism. It Stops with Me." The very message of "It Stops with Me" can be regarded as a direct response to bystander complacency. The idea is that we can and should do something when we see a racist incident. Bystanders do, of course, evaluate the costs and benefits of an intervention: many can quickly conclude that the potential price of speaking out against racism outweighs the benefits of doing so. But when bystanders speak out against racism, it can have profound effects. Hearing or seeing a bystander intervention can foster increased expressions of anti-racism. It can also combat some of the conditions of racial prejudice, given that those who racially abuse others tend to believe that their attitudes are shared by those around them. That is to say, bystander action stops someone committing an act of abuse from thinking that the community accepts their behaviour.

Fostering bystander action does require attention to skills in intervention. People will only stand up when they believe they are well equipped to act. This may involve knowing, for instance, just what it is that you can say or do when confronted by racist behaviour. One consistent theme of the "Racism. It Stops with Me" campaign is that one should always consider actions including the reporting of racist behaviour, or offering support and comfort to a victim of racism. We are also mindful not to encourage people to take action, if they do not believe it is safe to do so.

The body of psychological research on bystander behaviour will continue to inform the work of the National Anti-Racism Strategy. It is fair to say the work of bystander anti-racism has only begun. There remain many barriers to bystander action. As much of the existing research indicates, group identity is a key variable: under most conditions, bystanders are most likely to help those they regard as similar to themselves (reiterating my earlier point about sympathy). There is also more that can be done to identify conversational strategies for dealing with racist speech. This is especially important as racist speech frequently serves to maintain social relationships. If this is truly the case, as researchers such as Bernard Guerin argue, interventions from bystanders may need to counter this social function more directly. Social psychologists may be able to play a valuable role in devising or refining strategies on this matter.

Racism and the law

Changing social attitudes on something like racism requires time; the task is generational in character. For this reason, it is sometimes said that you cannot legislate for virtue, that you cannot eradicate racism through laws. This is true in one sense: it would be naive to believe that legislation alone can solve society's ills. Yet it would be even more naïve to believe that laws should therefore be no part of the solution at all.

This is, of course, the position of the libertarian, who typically believes that anti-discrimination laws are unnecessary. In its purest form, the argument proceeds along the following lines. Combating discrimination is best left to the market. Since discrimination is economically inefficient, all that we really need to do is step back, and let the forces of competition do their work. In the case of racist abuse and harassment - namely, those forms of racism that fall short of violence - it is said that hate speech can be best fought with good speech. If people wish to air their prejudices and bigotry, so it is argued, then let them be censured or ridiculed with the speech of others.

This view is wrong for a number of reasons. Not least, the marketplace of ideas is not one of perfect competition. As with all markets, it can fail. It is simply not reasonable or realistic to believe that racist speech can be fought with well-reasoned rebuttal - for the simple reason that that racist speech often is not rational in the first place. When confronted, for example, with a racist rant on a bus, a burst of rational speech may do nothing to change the mind of the one doing the ranting.

Moreover, it can be unrealistic to prescribe that those who are subjected to racist abuse should only fight back with speech, and speech alone. One of the effects of racist speech is that it can impair the ability of its targets to exercise their freedom of speech. Racism can silence its targets. Only those who do not understand the profound wound inflicted by racist words can overlook this effect. It is one thing for someone occupying a privileged social position - whether through social background or education or other attainment - to speak back when confronted with abuse; they are coming to the situation from a position of power. It is another for someone who may be speaking from a more marginal or vulnerable position to do the same. For such a person, the only consolation they have from the libertarian is the paternalistic comfort that one's fellow citizens can come to one's rescue - though not the law.

The law should have a role in this. The law regulates many aspects of our social life, after all. Why should it not also have something to say about abuse and harassment that violates another person's dignity and freedom? Why should it not play a part in setting a civil and tolerant tone in a liberal democratic society? And if we do affirm that racism is abhorrent, and that we should endorse actions designed to ameliorate behaviour, why should we not use the law to set civil standards?

Here, Nussbaum again makes some pertinent observations, referring to the impact of laws on race relations in the United States:

"Laws and institutions protect us against the damage of bad civic passions, and law often precedes and guides the creation of decent sentiments. We certainly don't want to wait until most people love each other before we protect the civil rights of the vulnerable ... the force of the law was essential in starting, however painfully and slowly, a process of emotional change that is still taking place. The armed federal guards who protected the young men and women who integrated the universities of the South preceded emotional change in the southern states. But they were a beacon of hope and a protection for the oppressed, and in this

way they contributed to a gradual change of sentiments. All this seems obvious enough."

You would think that this were obvious enough. But judging from some of the current debate about racial vilification laws, it may seem far from the case. The Federal Government has put forward an exposure draft of proposed changes to the *Racial Discrimination Act* - namely, to Part IIA of the Act, which prohibits forms of racial vilification. More about this matter very shortly. What is striking, though, is the manner in which some of those supporting these proposed changes have characterized the existing law.

It has been argued that Part IIA of the Act, which came into force in 1995, has failed to eradicate racial vilification in Australia. This is used to suggest that there is cause for repealing the Act's current provisions concerning vilification. That such an argument could seriously be made in public debate is, at one level, absurd. For instance, we have laws that make murder a crime. No one, though, would argue that the mere persistence of murder in society is therefore a reason for getting rid of our law against murder. It is nonsense to judge the success of one piece of law against whether it succeeds in eliminating a social ill - particularly if, as discussed earlier, a capacity for bad behaviour is indeed embedded in our very human nature.

In the case racial vilification laws, they have, during the almost two decades they have been in operation, done a number of things. Not least, they have influenced the "emotional climate of the public culture," setting the tone for our multicultural society and signalling what is unacceptable behaviour in public. They have provided all Australians with a legal means of holding others accountable for public acts of racial vilification that have the effect of degrading them. They have bolstered the assurance of security to which every member of a good society is entitled - the sense of confidence that everyone will be treated fairly and justly, that everyone can walk down the street without having to fear abuse or assault.

***The Racial Discrimination Act* - Exposure Draft**

Let me say a little in more detail about what has been proposed in the Attorney-General's exposure draft. I do not support the proposals to amend the Racial Discrimination Act. There is no good reason for changing laws that have been in place for close to 20 years, and which have worked well to provide legal remedies for racial vilification. The law should stay as it is. Now is not the time to be weakening legal

protections against racism. Now is certainly not the time to be elevating a right to bigotry over a right to be free from bigotry's effects.

The main proposed changes concern the removal of the current sections 18C and 18D of the Act. Section 18C makes unlawful an act done in public that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or group of persons on the grounds of race. Section 18D protects anything that is done in the course of artistic expression, scientific inquiry, fair comment or fair reporting of an issue - provided it is done reasonably and in good faith.

The proposed amendment would additionally remove sections 18B and 18E for reasons that have not been explained. It would make unlawful anything that is reasonably likely to "vilify" or "intimidate" on the grounds of race (though as I will explain, these terms are narrowly, even capriciously, defined). Whether an act is reasonably likely to vilify or intimidate is "to be determined by the standards of an ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community, not by the standards of any particular group within the Australian community." The exposure draft also contains a wide category of exception covering anything that is communicated "in the course of participating in the public discussion of any political, social, cultural, religious, artistic, academic or scientific matter."

These changes would constitute a radical departure. "Vilify" is defined as the incitement of racial hatred, as opposed to its more ordinary meaning of speech that degrades or denigrates. This means that the law would no longer be concerned with the harm that racist behaviour inflicts on its target. Instead, the consideration would be the effect of the behaviour on a third party or public audience - namely, whether it could incite feelings of racial hatred. Such an incitement test has proven extremely difficult to satisfy in existing state racial vilification laws. Fundamentally, it would mean that the effects of racial abuse in degrading a target would be irrelevant, no matter how serious or severe the vilification. One could be abused by co-workers, customers or strangers in public as a "filthy coon," "stupid boong," "slit-eyed gook," "shifty Jew," "sand-nigger" or "Arab terrorist." But unless such abuse is capable of inciting a third party, the proposed law would leave the target without an avenue for seeking redress.

The definition of "intimidate," meanwhile, is confined to situations where someone apprehends physical harm; forms of intimidation that do not involve fear of physical harm would not be covered. This is again concerning, for it fails to capture the harms

that are caused by racial vilification. There has been for some time now a considerable body of research that has highlighted the seriously adverse health effects of racism. Repeated exposure to racial abuse can contribute to conditions including hypertension, nightmares, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychosis. The psychological harms of racism are also well-documented: victims can feel not only anger, but also humiliation and self-loathing. No matter how much victims of racial abuse may resist, they can often end up absorbing messages of hate and inferiority.

The introduction of a test based on an "ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community" would be another significant departure from the status quo. As the courts have interpreted the current law, whether something is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate on the basis of race is to be judged according to the reasonable member of the particular group of the community that has been maligned. But under the proposed changes, the reaction of the target of racial vilification would not be considered. There are a number of questions worth posing about the ordinary reasonable member test. Who exactly is this person? What kind of cultural background does this person have? Is this person someone who embraces cultural diversity, or someone who is sceptical of it? Does this person have prejudicial thoughts about some or all ethnic minority groups?

Professor Simon Rice of the Australian National University, a leading authority on anti-discrimination law, has described this new proposed test as "a double whammy to a victim of vilifying conduct," as it involves a "blithe assertion of a dominant cultural perspective."

The most disturbing deficiency of the exposure draft concerns its remarkably broad category of exception. This exception covers anything that is done in the course of participating in public discussion. But the draft changes remove the current requirements in Section 18D for protected speech to be conducted with reasonableness and good faith. The proposed exception is so wide it is hard to imagine what, if any, conduct the law would prohibit.

The effects of having such an exception would likely be profound. For example, under the proposed law, a case such as that involving Frederick Toben, who published on his website material denying that the Holocaust had ever occurred, together with derogatory generalisations about Jewish people as a group, could enjoy the exception outlined for participation in "public discussion." It would be immaterial that Toben could

not demonstrate that he acted reasonably or in good faith (as the Full Federal Court found, in light of his proven lack of *bona fides* and deliberately inflammatory language).

Or consider the circumstances in *Clarke v Nationwide News*. In that case, commenters on the Perth Now website were found to have racially vilified Aboriginal people. But such commenters could claim under the proposed new law that they were making comments in the course of participating in a public discussion - namely, about whether the people of Perth were "fed up of" the crime, drunkenness and bad behaviour of Aboriginal Australians, and whether or not Aboriginal Australians could behave themselves at their children's funerals. Such discourse may be of no real value to public life in Australia, but it would nevertheless constitute "public discussion" of a social issue.

Such examples raise a particular question that is worth asking. Earlier this month, the Liberal federal Member for Reid Craig Laundy spoke about his objections to the exposure draft, which he believed would permit acts "that have no place in our wonderfully multicultural communities." His motivation, he said, was that as an elected representative, he "should always seek to add value for our children, not take value away." One potential danger with the exposure draft is that its enactment may have the effect of exacerbating racist speech, particularly online, which may be defended in the guise of "public discussion." Were this to happen, there may be especially destructive consequences on children and young people. Children and young people may end up being exposed to a higher level of racial hate speech on the internet. Recent experience warns us against any complacency. Last financial year, the Australian Human Rights Commission received a 59% increase in racial hatred complaints under section 18C - an increase largely driven by cyber-racism on social media and video-sharing websites. The prospect of a change in the law intensifying racial discrimination is well within the bounds of possibility.

Indeed, the overall practical effect of the proposed changes to the *Racial Discrimination Act* may be to permit a wide range of behaviour that has the effect of offending, insulting or humiliating another person or group of people on the grounds of race. If the proposed changes were enacted, they may also protect a wide range of behaviour that may incite racial hatred or intimidate others, given they remove the requirements for protected free speech to be reasonable or to be conducted in good faith. As long as something is done in the course of participating in public discussion, one could use racial epithets or be acting in bad faith, but invoke the protection of free speech and enjoy an exception. There would be no distinction, then, between venting racial hostility and conducting

legitimate public debate about ideas. Yet it remains far from clear, at least to me, how the use of racial epithets or slurs contributes to the ends of public debate that free speech in a liberal democracy should serve.

A moral debate

There is, as I have argued, a clear moral dimension to racism. Of course, there is a moral dimension to racism. Morality, at its essence, concerns how we treat others. At times of late, this aspect of the phenomenon has been lost. Some have been sheepish about using the word "racist" for fear that they will be regarded as moralists merely seeking to find fault with the behaviour of fellow citizens. The situation is not helped by those who may too readily level the charge of racism, without also debating the merits of a given case.

Too often, we end up with a perverse debate where sometimes calling out racism is regarded as a bigger moral crime than the perpetration of racism itself. Those who deign to speak up about racism are labelled as purveyors of grievance politics, as though people would revel in the victimhood of racism. There is an irony in this, given that the same people who would dismiss racism in such terms are also those who accuse others of bad faith and assuming the worst of their fellow citizens.

But there is also a moral blindness at play. Those who are inclined to regard complaints about racism as mere identity politics fail to understand one thing. For those on the receiving end of racism, the experience of racism is not an excuse for political posturing; it is an experience that wounds and diminishes one's quality of life. Those who experience racism would prefer not to be talking about it at all. They would prefer that it never happened in the first place.

Discussing the issue of racism in terms of moral psychology allows us to shed some light on the assumptions and motivations behind prejudice and discrimination. It is on this point that I would like to conclude - namely, on some of the assumptions of our ongoing debate about bigotry, free speech and the law.

A lot has been said about liberal values and free speech. But while those advocating a change to the *Racial Discrimination Act* have often invoked liberal political philosophy, one liberal principle is rarely mentioned: the exercise of one's freedom should not inflict harm on another. The liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin once cautioned against privileging liberty above all other values. "Equality may demand the restraint of the

liberty of those who wish to dominate," he wrote, because "total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs."

Indeed, there has been something deeply conservative in the moral assumptions behind the case for repealing section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. In the calls for change, and for greater freedom to express one's bigotry, we hear not so much the voice of liberalism but the voice of reaction. It is a voice that gives expression to a psychology of loss. In those celebrations of free speech, including a freedom to abuse and harass others on racial grounds, what we are really hearing is a longing for a time when Australians could give expression to their prejudice; a time when Australians could be bigots without having to worry about social disapproval.

There is something also deeply reactionary in the idea that Australians who experience racial vilification in public should accept denigration as part of the price of living in society. The seminal conservative thinker Edmund Burke wrote about the "delightful horror" of the sublime. He celebrated the extreme emotions one felt when confronted with pure danger or terror. While we may be diminished by the experience, we may also swell when conversing with "terrible objects." This explains why some believe minorities who experience racism should simply develop thicker skins. Apparently there is something edifying, after all, in having someone call you a "boong," "nigger," "chink" or "sand-nigger" in public.

Racism is not, however, about political ideology. One major reason why Australia has succeeded as a nation of immigration, as an emphatically multicultural society, has been the political leadership exercised on matters of race. Racial tolerance has been one of the pillars of contemporary Australian public morality. We have been fortunate that leaders in this country have regarded racial tolerance not as a prudential or political requirement, but as a requirement of morality. There is an urgent need to affirm this.

As the debate about bigotry and free speech continues, we should make sure we are asking the right question. It is not, "Do we have a right to be bigots?" The question is rather, "What kind of society do we want Australia to be?"

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