



# Social commentary, racism & Covid-19

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A case study on opinion pieces in Australian mainstream newspapers



Like all of our work at All Together Now, this report was researched and written on unceded Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We acknowledge their Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge that Australia was, is and always will be Aboriginal land.

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# Executive summary

*Social commentary, racism and COVID-19* is an inquiry into the racialisation of COVID-19 in mainstream Australian social commentary, specifically the opinion sections of certain mainstream media publications. This case study was born out of the need to better understand how and why discussions of COVID-19 have negatively racialised Asian and Asian-Australian communities. It responds to, and builds on, repeated concerns expressed by various sections of civil society – including in the *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report*<sup>1</sup> – that the outbreak of COVID-19 has seen a rise in racism towards Asian-Australian and Asian communities in Australia.

This report demonstrates how the language used in opinion pieces published in Australian mainstream newspapers can contribute to and perpetuate racism against Asian and Asian-Australian people. We encourage our readers, including the general public, media workers and representatives, as well as policy-makers, to use it as a tool to support a deepened understanding of racism. The study identifies five key techniques that mobilise and perpetuate anti-Asian racism in contemporary social commentary. These are:

**1. irony**

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**2. harmful stereotypes**

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**3. fallacies: false or mistaken ideas**

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**4. intertextuality: the complex relationship between texts**

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**5. scaremongering: needless incitement of fear**

While this list is not exhaustive, we believe that understanding these techniques in context can help to build racial and anti-racism literacy. Many of these techniques are used in other contexts and are not exclusive to anti-Asian racism; they are also used across different mediums, such as in television/current affairs, in interpersonal communication, or in political and public rhetoric.

We hope this report will support readers to identify and critically analyse overt and covert racism, and support journalists and media workers to address the ongoing issue of racism in the media. We hope it will give further evidence to the need for media reform, including, but not limited to, the recommendations made in this report.

This report makes two key recommendations in support of a media landscape that respectfully represents cultural diversity and precludes ongoing racism:

**1. Increase the level of cultural competency and racial literacy within newsrooms and media organisations; and**

**2. Increase the level of cultural diversity in mainstream media organisations.**

This report also includes a comment from our partners at the Asian Australian Alliance, whose research has provided valuable insights into the nature and impact of racism towards Asian and Asian-Australian peoples and communities. We thank the Asian Australian Alliance for their leadership in this area and encourage readers to see page 22 for their contribution. Visit [asianaustalianalliance.net](http://asianaustalianalliance.net) for more information on their work.

## Why racialised discourse in the media matters

All Together Now defends the notion of a free press. We believe it is vital that journalists have the ability to inform citizens about public affairs without fear or favour. However, we also note that this freedom comes with the responsibility to present information fairly and accurately. All people should be equitably represented by the media, regardless of their racial identity. Our research indicates that opinion pieces published in certain mainstream newspapers are failing to do this.

## Why diversity in the media matters

Recent research from Media Diversity Australia found that 75% of presenters on free-to-air television were of Anglo-Celtic background, and that 100% of national news directors in Australia were of Anglo-Celtic background, and male.<sup>2</sup>

In previous research, All Together Now sought to investigate whether there was a correlation between racist opinion pieces and the cultural background of the author. Our team collaborated with the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) to ascertain the cultural background of all authors who wrote or produced racialised pieces over the 12 months from April 2018 to April 2019. We found that of 159 negatively racialised opinion articles, 96% were authored by someone with an Anglo-Celtic (72%) or European (24%) cultural background. Details of this study can be found in the report *Social commentary and racism in 2019*.<sup>3</sup> ■

1 Asian Australian Alliance & O Chiu, *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report*, Asian Australian Alliance, 2020, viewed 1 September 2020, <<https://asianaustalianalliance.net/covid-19-coronavirus-racism-incident-report/covid-19-racism-incident-report-preliminary-report/>>.

2 Media Diversity Australia, *Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories?*, Media Diversity Australia, 2020, viewed 1 September 2020, <[https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories\\_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf](https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf)>.

3 All Together Now, *Social commentary and racism in 2019*, All Together Now, 2019, viewed 18 August 2020, <<https://alltogethernow.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Social-Commentary-and-Racism-2019-1.pdf>>.

# Racialised opinion pieces in Australian mainstream media 2019-2020

This infographic reflects the results of our media monitoring from April 2019 to April 2020. Further information and qualitative analysis will be released in 2021. For now, more information can be found via the [ATN website](#).



## Newspapers and television programs we monitored:

The Sydney Morning Herald

THE AGE

Courier Mail

Herald Sun

THE AUSTRALIAN\*

Daily Telegraph



89%

of racist opinion pieces in mainstream Australian newspapers were authored by people from an Anglo-Celtic and/or European background



53%

involved negative depictions of race



79%

of racist opinion pieces used techniques of covert racism

## Portrayal by newspaper:

Many communities have spoken out about their ongoing negative representation in NewsCorp publications. Our data provides further evidence to support their claims:



Number of opinion pieces analysed:

315



## Communities targeted by the highest percentage of racist opinion pieces

Muslim peoples

75%  
NEGATIVE

Chinese and Chinese-Australian peoples

55%  
NEGATIVE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

47%  
NEGATIVE

A recent study from the Asian Australian Alliance and Osmond Chiu reported 377 incidents of racism towards Asian and Asian-Australian people between 2nd of April and 2nd of June 2020.

The report found that 60% of racist incidents involved physical or verbal harassment including slurs/name calling, physical intimidation, threats or being spat at.

More information can be found via the [ATN website](#)



# Introduction

*Social commentary, racism and COVID-19* is an inquiry into the racialisation of COVID-19 in mainstream Australian social commentary. It demonstrates how the language used in opinion pieces published in Australian mainstream newspapers can contribute to and perpetuate racism against Asian and Asian-Australian people.

This report asks the following questions:

1. In what way(s) is COVID-19 racialised in opinion pieces published in mainstream media?
2. What problematic discourses and narratives around COVID-19 exist within the texts and what is the relationship between these texts?
3. In what way(s) do these texts promote and/or perpetuate racist discourse and narratives in Australian society?
4. What is the social context in which racist discourses and narratives around COVID-19 become normalised?

This case study represents a unique approach to media monitoring, different from our standard practice. All Together Now typically collects racialised opinion pieces and current affairs programs on a weekly basis. These are then analysed using a framework designed in collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney to determine whether they contain a negative, neutral or inclusive depiction of race. The results of this monitoring are published in periodic reports, such as last year's *Social commentary and racism in 2019*.<sup>4</sup> We continue to conduct this work on a weekly basis and will continue to publish our results. An overview of our 2020 results can be found in the infographic on page 4.

However, the nature of social commentary surrounding COVID-19 was such that it demanded an alternative method of analysis. Opinion pieces covering this subject were multifaceted and the racial framing was not always singular, dominant or immediately obvious. For this reason, we took a sample of eight opinion pieces from across the major mastheads (details of the Australian media landscape can be found on page 9) to show how mainstream media can perpetuate racist discourse through covert language and techniques.

We chose these opinion pieces because they were reflective of a broader national and international anti-Asian sentiment during the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is explained in the data analysis and discussion section of this report. We also found that these particular opinion pieces did not fit within the framework typically used for analysis, because they involved meta-conversations, or types of racism that were particularly nuanced or covert, such as blurring the lines between legitimate political criticism and racism. For this reason, we chose to analyse them via a special case study, to demonstrate the complex and evolving ways in which anti-Asian racism operates. Details of this are explained in

the methodology section on page 8. We hope our analysis will contribute to the existing academic and non-academic body of work in this field.

We present an in-depth analysis of eight opinion pieces published between April and May 2020. Six of the opinion pieces were published in News Corp publications: four in the *Daily Telegraph* (which are often published across multiple mastheads, such as the *Herald Sun* and the *Courier Mail*, thus increasing their circulation) and two in *The Australian*. Two opinion pieces were published in Nine's publication the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which shares its opinion section with Melbourne's masthead *The Age*. While there are of course many other publications that make up the Australian media landscape, the nature of media ownership in Australia is such that these publications hold a significant amount of power in shaping public attitudes and opinions. More details of this can be found on page 9.



To conduct our analysis, we deployed a three-part approach to critical discourse analysis, which is outlined in the methodology section on page 8. In short, this methodology analyses opinion pieces at the text level, while also looking deeper into the discourses at play. Finally, it seeks to locate texts within their social and cultural context, so as to understand the relationships between texts and meaning. It is this final layer of analysis that helps us understand how racist opinion pieces are a product of broader structures and systems, rather than simply the work of a few individuals. It also demonstrates how racist discourse within opinion pieces upholds and maintains racial injustice.

In our analysis, we found that on some occasions, even opinion pieces presenting surface-level inclusivity were ultimately perpetuating racist themes. This included the use of “good migrant” versus “bad migrant” binaries that assume the acceptance of Asian-Australian communities remains conditional, despite the fact that Asian-Australians have been a part of Australian society since the early days of European colonisation.

In other examples, we saw a far more blatant mocking of cultural and religious practices. This level of intolerance is of course entirely out of step with the supposedly “multicultural” society to which Australian politicians and policy-makers so frequently aspire. Therefore, our findings are in line with the findings of contemporary social and cultural analyses that identify an anti-Asian and Asian-Australian racism embedded deep within the white Australian collective consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

By locating these texts within their social, cultural and political context, we hope to demonstrate how racist discourse within mainstream media foregrounds racist practices and interactions between everyday people, and reinforces systems of power that undermine a just and equitable society. While there are of course sections of the media working to advance racial equity, it is also true that journalists and opinion writers produce content subject to their social and cultural blind spots. As a result, sections of the media industry that remain dominated by white cultural norms are likely to promote racist narratives and beliefs whether intentional or not. We hope this report will further demonstrate the need for media reform to address this pressing issue.

# Definitions

**Representation** is an essential part of the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged. It involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things.<sup>6</sup> We employ the constructionist approach that explains how representation of meaning through language works. The constructionist approach acknowledges the social character of language. It recognises the material dimension of the world as distinct from the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate. In other words, material things exist in the real world, however, their meaning isn't conveyed by those objects. It is conveyed by the social actors who use language to represent concepts and ideas. In our analysis we look at how columnists use language to represent Asian and Asian-Australian people, and Asian cultures, in ways that create or perpetuate racist beliefs.

**Discourses**, for the purposes of this report, are structures of language that locate a story within broader and recurrent ideologies or narratives. Discourse plays a fundamental role in how the brain interprets and understands racism, yet is not necessarily apparent from a quick reading of a text. Prejudices are not innate: they are acquired and learned, often through communication, that is, through text and talk.<sup>7</sup> Discourses tap into and often build on these prejudices by grounding texts in a deeper layer of meaning. Note that, throughout this report, we also use "discourse" in a more generic sense to refer to a type of speech, or a collection of ideas and conversations, for instance, "political discourse" or "public discourse".

**Narratives** "link discourses to other discourses and reflect deep assumptions about the structure of social relations over longer periods".<sup>8</sup>

**Intertextuality** generally refers to the complex interrelationship between a text and other texts that grounds the creation or interpretation of the text.<sup>9</sup> The concept of intertextuality will be used in this report when referring to Fairclough's manifest intertextuality<sup>10</sup>, meaning texts explicitly drawing on other texts by citing them.

**Dog whistling** is a technique designed to stoke racial fears in particular sections of the audience, without using explicit language.<sup>11</sup> The term takes its name from a dog whistle and implies a certain meaning that can only be heard by some sections of the audience.

## A brief note on terminology

While this report refers to Asian, Asian-Australian, Chinese and Chinese-Australian people, it does not intend to generalise the many diverse communities, languages and cultures that constitute these groups. Instead, we use these terms to reflect the ways in which these communities are generalised and targeted by racist discourse and practices. ■

4 *ibid.*

5 O Chiu, 'COVID-19 racism echoes historical anti-Chinese sentiment', *China Neican*, 3 April 2020, viewed 12 August 2020, <<https://neican.substack.com/p/covid-19-racism-echoes-historical>>; E Chew, 'Australia Is Re-entering A Period Of Yellow Peril And Extreme Sinophobia', *Medium*, 22 April 2018, viewed 16 July 2020, <<https://medium.com/@erinchew/australia-is-re-entering-a-period-of-yellow-peril-and-extreme-sinophobia-5ea492c31239>>.

6 S Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage in association with the Open University, London, 1997.

7 TA Van Dijk, *Discourse and Racism, The Blackwell Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2002, pp. 145–59.

8 A Thomas, A Jakubowicz & H Norman, *Does the media fail Aboriginal political aspirations? 45 years of news media reporting of key political moments*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2020.

9 As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

10 N Fairclough, *Discourse and social change*, Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992.

11 This is a functional definition that we adapted based on the dictionary definition of dog whistling and Ian Haney Lopez's concept of dog-whistle politics in H Lopez, Race and economic jeopardy for all: a framing paper for defeating dog whistle politics, AFL-CIO, Washington, 2016.

# Methodology: how we collected and analysed the data

All Together Now monitors mainstream media by reading articles from Australian newspapers and watching episodes from television programs. Each week, we collect and analyse race-related opinion pieces from the most-read Australian newspapers<sup>12</sup> and segments from current affairs programs with the highest viewership.<sup>13</sup> To collect our data, we use sampling, which involves a consistently taken sample of an appropriate size that will yield results that can be applied to the population as a whole.<sup>14</sup> We then use a coding system to classify the data into the inclusive, negative and neutral categories, using a framework created together with the University of Technology, Sydney.<sup>15</sup>

We will continue to collect the opinion pieces on COVID-19 that are racially framed according to our framework. However, in this case study, we focused on eight opinion pieces published in April and May 2020. Six of the opinion pieces were published in News Corp publications: four in the *Daily Telegraph* (which are often published across multiple mastheads, such as the *Herald Sun* and the *Courier Mail*, thus increasing their circulation) and two in *The Australian*. Two opinion pieces were published in Nine's publication the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which shares its opinion section with Melbourne's masthead *The Age*.

The opinion pieces chosen for this analysis were reflective of a broader national and international anti-Chinese sentiment during the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these particular opinion pieces did not fit within the framework typically used for analysis, for one or both of the following reasons:

- They involved “meta-conversations”, namely the author would comment on a discussion between two or more other parties, where the author's opinion was not definitively negative, inclusive or neutral; or
- They could not be easily categorised because they blurred the lines between legitimate political criticism and racist sentiments.

To understand and explain the racism embedded in these opinion pieces, we used Van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),<sup>16</sup> along with Fairclough's layered application of CDA, as discussed by Jørgensen and Phillips.<sup>17</sup> This involves a three-part analysis, including:

- 1. Text level (the linguistic features of the text):** We outline patterns identified through language used, such as specific words, word plays or sentences. We demonstrate how these patterns have the effect of representing Asian and Asian-Australian people as the “other”, in opposition to the “us”, the latter being the mental representation of a “good” Australian. We combine Stuart Hall's concept of representation<sup>18</sup> with Van Dijk's concept of discourse<sup>19</sup> to show how language in newspaper opinion pieces can perpetuate racist structures and ideas.
- 2. Discursive practice:** This refers to the processes of producing (creating) and consuming (receiving and interpreting) a text.<sup>20</sup> It is the point at which the work of an author and

its reception by an audience intersect. Discursive practice describes how linguistic and stylistic features of a text interact with the world around it, generating meaning, and drawing on the contexts (such as social and political systems) in which both authors and audiences operate.

3. **Social practice and cultural context (the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs):** We establish this social practice in the final section of analysis, informed by perspectives from critical race, whiteness, nationalism and settler-colonial studies. The purpose here is to place the texts and the discursive practices in the broader Australian social context in order to demonstrate how racist beliefs are products of racist societies and systems, rather than of a single racist individual or organisation.

The three layers of analysis are intertwined in reality, as all opinion pieces are produced in a social context and use language to convey messages through discourses and narratives. Using this method of analysis, we identified five key techniques used to maintain and perpetuate racist ideas. For clarity, we present all of these techniques (irony, harmful stereotypes, fallacies, intertextuality and scaremongering) in the data analysis and discussion section of this report, although they occur at both a text and discursive practice level, and often at the intersection of both. The last layer, social practice and cultural context, is presented separately to demonstrate how racist discourse within mainstream media reinforces systems of power that undermine a just and equitable society. ■

## A note on Australian media ownership

Media ownership in Australia is highly concentrated. Newspapers with the highest weekly readership – measured across both online and print – are owned by two corporations: News Corp and Nine.<sup>21</sup> In 2011, when *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* were owned by Fairfax, “News Corporation titles accounted for 65% of circulation. Fairfax Media, the next biggest publisher, controlled just 25%.”<sup>22</sup>

Although these percentages may have changed due to the increased digitalisation of news and the existence of other online news organisations such as The Guardian, Pedestrian, Crikey etc., Roy Morgan statistics show that the most-read mastheads in Australia are owned by the two companies.<sup>23</sup>

In recent months, a high number of smaller media organisations such

as BuzzFeed, 10 Daily or ABC Life have either disappeared or significantly reduced in size, likely linked to COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn. This is concerning because these organisations often presented alternative views, with a stronger tendency to platform people from diverse backgrounds. This brings even greater urgency to the need for more diverse representation among the major publications.

12 Roy Morgan Research, 'Australian Newspaper Readership 12 Months to March 2020', Roy Morgan Research 2020, viewed 16 July 2020, <<http://www.roymorgan.com/industries/media/readership/newspaper-readership>>.

13 TV Tonight, 'TV Tonight Ratings', *TV Tonight*, viewed 16 July 2020, <<https://tvtonight.com.au/category/ratings/>>.

14 H Collins, *Creative research: the theory and practice of research for the creative industries*, Fairchild Books, London, 2015.

15 All Together Now, *Social commentary and racism in 2019*.

16 TA Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 5, issue 4, 1 October 1994, pp. 435–436.

17 M Jorgensen & L Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, Sage Publications, London, 2002.

18 S Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

19 TA Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 5, issue 4, 1 October 1994, pp. 435–436.

20 *ibid.*

21 Roy Morgan, 'Over 15.7 million Australians read newspapers in print or online', Roy Morgan Research 2019, viewed 17 June 2020, <<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/7971-australian-newspaper-print-readership-and-cross-platform-audiences-march-2019-201905100051>>.

22 T Flew & B Goldsmith, 'FactCheck: does Murdoch own 70% of newspapers in Australia?', *The Conversation*, 8 August 2013, viewed 17 June 2020, <<https://theconversation.com/factcheck-does-murdoch-own-70-of-newspapers-in-australia-16812>>.

23 Roy Morgan, 'Over 15.7 million Australians read newspapers in print or online', Roy Morgan Research.



# **Data analysis & discussion**

# Data analysis and discussion

## Irony

### Mocking Chinese culture

In the sample we analysed, irony is a device frequently used to mock China, as well as Chinese people and culture. It (inadvertently) becomes a punching down technique, contributing to narratives that affect minorities and victims of racism. While humour can be a useful form of social and political critique, we found multiple examples where it is simply used to perpetuate racism, rather than critique or question it.



The common themes in racism related to COVID-19 are not new. Parallel narratives about disease and competition for resources were prominent in 19th century anti-Chinese campaigns. For example, comments about the eating and hygiene habits of Chinese people mirror 19th century anti-Chinese rhetoric focused on the 'strange ways'<sup>24</sup> identified with the Chinese, citing them as the source of various diseases, and representing them as unclean, sick, contagious 'aliens'<sup>25</sup> **OSMOND CHIU**<sup>26</sup>

A blog post published in the opinion section of the *Daily Telegraph*, titled "Bull Market for Bats", opens with: "Pining for a piece of pangolin pie? Hanging out for a batwich? You're in luck, gastronomes – because Wuhan's world famous wet markets have now reopened."<sup>27</sup> Here, the advertisement style is used to capture the readers' attention quickly. It contains supposedly humorous puns and rhetorical devices (persuasive speaking or writing)<sup>28</sup> such as the word "batwich", made up by combining "bat" and "sandwich", and alliteration (repeated use of the letter "p" in the first sentence, where the dominant word is "pangolin", associated with Chinese wet markets). Although the text does not mention COVID-19, the reference to Wuhan is a dog whistle for the pandemic. Other international tabloids have also placed undue attention and invited revulsion towards eating bats and other animals in response to the pandemic, implying that Chinese people are to blame for the outbreak.<sup>29</sup> The fact that bats are consumed in many parts of the world, from Africa to Oceania, is usually left out in this type of discourse,<sup>30</sup> which contributes to the negative representation of Chinese and Asian people more broadly.

In another example, subtle irony is used to disparage Asian cuisines. Here, we also come across what is known as apparent concession,<sup>31</sup> defined by Van Dijk as a technique where the positive elements of the in-group (us) are intentionally contrasted to the perceived negative elements of the out-group (them): "They were terrific people [...] But it's the eating part where things start to fall down [...]".<sup>32</sup> The author then uses violent language and satire when referring to certain eating practices, and the people practising them, as barbaric: "It was like Heston Blumenthal had *gone on a killing spree at his local pet store* and then enlisted Dr Seuss to write the menu" (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup> Through this choice of Anglo-centric references (Heston Blumenthal, Dr Seuss), we can deduce that the author isn't trying to engage those whose cuisines he criticises, but rather appeal to readers of Anglo-Celtic background and ridicule the perceived otherness of these foods.

### Word plays and puns: association of COVID-19 with China and Wuhan

Purposefully and constantly associating China with disease is a practice with a long racist tradition in the Anglosphere: “As in 1900, to insist on a geographic definition of disease today is to locate responsibility somewhere other than here.”<sup>34</sup> In a blog post suggestively titled, “China has bats, Australia has balls”,<sup>35</sup> the author refers to COVID-19 as “this damn Chinese virus.”<sup>36</sup> The title establishes the “us” versus “them” binary by contrasting China, framed as the source of the disease (bats here equated with COVID-19) with Australia, framed as the superior entity (equated here with perceived qualities of decisiveness and strength: *having balls*).

In another instance, “Well, the bad times are now upon us, courtesy of the made-in-China pandemic”,<sup>37</sup> the syntagm “made-in-China” is used to associate China with the pandemic.

Another example of word play that blurs the lines between objective political criticism and racist dog whistling is a satirical reference to the Chinese Zodiac Calendar:



What most did not anticipate was Cheng’s threats this week of a mass Chinese consumer boycott if Australia continued to press this, a response that can only be described as goon diplomacy. Should we be surprised? Not really. *After all, according to the Chinese zodiac it is the Year of the Rat* [emphasis added].<sup>38</sup>

This word play is built through replacing the meaning of the rat in the Chinese Zodiac with an allusion to its typical symbolic interpretation in the Anglosphere: “one who betrays or deserts friends or associates”.<sup>39</sup> Once again, this word play is based on the cultural connotations of rats in the Anglosphere, as opposed to the traits attributed to it in its original Chinese context. The racist undertones in this example stem from the unnecessary word play, here deployed to convey political criticism, yet grounded in the othering of Chinese cultural practices and the framing of Western culture as superior.

### Stereotyping: good migrant vs. bad migrant



It’s equally sad that some Chinese people here and no doubt around the world are getting sideways looks or being insulted. For Australia, Chinese migrants have been star performers. From the gold rush days up to and including now they have been hard working, contributing, decent citizens. That they or their kids get a hard time because of the Chinese government is just un-Australian. Chinese people should not be confused with the Chinese government.<sup>40</sup>

This excerpt from a *Sydney Morning Herald* article titled “China should play ball on COVID-19 enquiry” presents as being inclusive or positive towards Chinese migrants. However, it incorrectly links the cause of “sideways looks” and insults to the actions of the Chinese Government, rather than to racism embedded within Australian society. At the same time, it patronisingly praises Chinese migrants in a way that frames their belonging in Australian society as conditional on their performance. There are at least two problematic aspects to this type of framing. Firstly, it involves an inbuilt racism that implies there are two types of migrants: the “star performers” who are “contributing citizens” and implicitly, those who perform poorly. These binaries are also commonly deployed against Asian-Americans, as described by Rose Wong:



In some instances, we are wielded as a “model minority” against other groups, particularly other people of color; in others, we are cast as “perpetual foreigners” who pose a threat to stability and order. These dually harmful, racist and pervasive stereotypes – of Asian Americans as both the “model minority” and the “yellow peril” – shape the narrative of how we can place these hostilities that consistently emerge during moments like the current outbreak in context.<sup>41</sup>

This feeds into the second problematic aspect of this text: the othering of Australians of Chinese heritage and the continued framing of them as being “outside” of the Australian national identity, despite the fact that many of these communities have lived in Australia for centuries. As health policy researcher Matthew Lee explains, “Since the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus was recorded in Australia on January 25, many people from Asian backgrounds in Australia say they have experienced both subtle and not-so-subtle racism.”<sup>42</sup> By not acknowledging that systemic racism is the source of these microaggressions, and continuing to other communities who have lived in Australia for generations, the *Sydney Morning Herald* article perpetuates a representation of Asian Australians as the Other, as existing outside of the Australian national identity.

## Fallacies: equating anti-racism with pro-communism

A common fallacy employed in conservative columns when denying allegations of racism is that one cannot be racist towards certain groups because they do not belong to a “race”. However, this argument is often employed in bad faith, and errors of logic are used to mislead the reader:



Just like a certain other belief system, communism is now understood to be a racial characteristic. So criticism of communism is racist.<sup>43</sup>

“A certain other belief system” is an example of a dog whistling euphemism and is most likely used here to refer to Islam. Implicitly referring to ongoing debates that refute Islamophobia as a form of racism,<sup>44</sup> the author then attempts to refute the proposition that a critique of China can be racist by falsely claiming that someone, somewhere, now sees communism as a racial characteristic, or identity. In doing so, the author equates the practice of calling out racism, where it may be present, with an indication of support for communism. As Jakubowicz notes:



We can engage in political critiques of regimes, as many do of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). If such critiques *could* be made of other states but *are not*, and are only made of the Chinese state, then that is racist.<sup>45</sup>

When this idea – that calling out racism is equal to supporting the Chinese Communist Party – enters the mainstream discourse, it can create further problems by dissuading people, including Chinese Australians, from speaking up against racism.<sup>46</sup>



## Intertextuality

The *Daily Telegraph* opinion pieces in our sample are a combination of articles and blog posts found in the opinion section of the online newspaper. They are often short, with click-bait titles, and do not cover topics in depth. Structurally, they are not dissimilar from social media posts, and contain bite-sized information and snarky humour. Intertextuality is the most notable tool used to keep a topic alive across multiple texts. It works by promoting other opinion pieces by the same author and reinforcing an idea already heavily discussed by other columnists. These media pieces start resembling ideological advertisements, rather than columns. When racist ideas are repeated through intertextuality on a mainstream media platform, they perpetuate racist discourses and reinforce racist narratives.

In one example, titled “Bull Market for Bats”,<sup>47</sup> intertextuality is used when quoting an article from the same publication, and a tweet, both of which were written by other prominent columnists who promote a similar discourse. The author uses quotes and excerpts to reinforce a narrative that portrays China as the source of COVID-19:



And they're [the wet markets] fully WHO-endorsed, as James Morrow reports:

You may be locked up at home on the advice of public health authorities, but in Wuhan, China, ground zero of the coronavirus crisis, people are once again allowed to go back to the wet markets.<sup>48</sup>

Another example<sup>49</sup> uses intertextuality as a tool for self-promotion. It quotes tweets, such as this, that praise an earlier opinion piece by the same author:



Absolutely hilarious piece by @dailytelegraph of Australia. A point by point rebuttal of China's complaint on their Coronavirus coverage that will have you rolling with laughter. Read now. And read again on the weekend. Absolutely top class stuff.<sup>50</sup>

This has the double function of creating the illusion of trustworthiness by proving popularity on social media, while also reinforcing an ideological position through the mockery of Chinese officials.

A blog post from the opinion section of the *Daily Telegraph*<sup>51</sup> criticises a tweet that calls the author racist, because of an article they wrote about China. One argument used by the author to refute the racism accusation is that his original article is more popular than the tweet that calls him out:



Interestingly, the positive post highlighted by Mr Towers has been retweeted nearly 2000 times. His own item isn't quite so popular.<sup>52</sup>

And he continues:

You know, maybe racism explains why my work is now being translated into Hindi and Vietnamese.<sup>53</sup>

Invoking the popularity of a racist view in order to justify it exploits the appeal of populist ideas. The popularity of an idea, regardless in which language it is written, has no correlation with whether or not it is racist.

## Scaremongering used as racist political rhetoric

Scaremongering is a technique used to raise or excite alarms, especially unnecessarily. This technique is evident in texts that use the “us” versus “them” binary to frame China as a political enemy. When scaremongering is employed, legitimate political criticisms are delivered through emotionally charged language seeking to elicit a fear response.

In an article published on News Corp’s *Rendezview* opinion platform, suggestively named “Wake up, Australia. We need to China-proof our economy”,<sup>55</sup> the author discusses Australia’s trade relationships with China in the context of COVID-19. The opening line, referring to current diplomatic tensions, paints Australians (“we”) at a disadvantage (“made a mistake”), but also financially exceptional (“economic fortunes”) and in danger of being exploited by China, Australia’s trading partner:



If we weren’t already aware of the mistake we made hitching our economic fortunes to a communist dictatorship, the threats this week from the Chinese ambassador should dispel any complacency.<sup>56</sup>

The author does not define what constitutes a good or bad trading partnership from an economic point of view. The criticism seems to stop at an ideological level, and the scaremongering discourse replaces a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter. Emotionally charged language is used to invoke negative feelings against China: “It is sickening to realise that the Australian taxpayer has been funding dangerous research...”<sup>57</sup> This rhetorical tool is part of the “market populism”<sup>58</sup> formula used by the Murdoch tabloids, that combines a seemingly anti-elitist discourse with one in favour of free markets and social conservatism. It implies that China, an important trading partner and major player in the free market, isn’t welcome to participate in this market. Furthermore, it plays into the notion of China as an exceptionally dangerous place, casting fear towards the country at large:



For too long we have averted our eyes from the dangers of the lucrative economic partnership, and pretended China is a country like any other.<sup>59</sup>

In a similar vein, a *Sydney Morning Herald* article titled “China’s man in Canberra has unmasked the regime’s true face”, portrays Australia as morally superior to China:



Is it China? The country whose reckless indifference to public health again inflicted a zoonotic plague on the world, so far infecting 3 million people and killing more than 200,000 in 210 countries? Or is it Australia, for suggesting an inquiry?<sup>60</sup>

Contrasting Australia with China from a moral standpoint is a rhetorical tool that taps into the simplistic distinction between capitalism and communism. Similar to the American Cold War communist scare, it consists of a multi-pronged critique of China, arguing that it uses totalitarian mechanisms to infiltrate Australia and is a threat to Australian democracy. These are important discussions and deserve a level of nuance that is omitted from the example above. Reductionist, black-and-white representations that paint China as the bad character and Australia as the good character fuel the questionable narrative that Australia is morally superior to China. This type of discourse shifts from a clear discussion that contrasts political views to one that is open to racist interpretations based on the assumed association of racial identities and nation-states.

## Social practice/cultural context

To understand the discourses and narratives discussed in this research, it is important to place them within social, cultural, historical, political and academic context. From the British invasion of Gadigal land at Sydney cove in 1788, race relations in Australia have been underscored by what Wiradjuri academic Jack Gibson describes as the “supremeness of whiteness”.<sup>61</sup> Distinct from (although connected to) the extremist white supremacy that we often think of as operating at the fringes of society, the supremeness of whiteness embodies a more mainstream and pervasive white dominance. It is entrenched in Australian systems and institutions where white experiences, culture and ways of being are prioritised over others. Many of these institutions were cultivated during the 20th century, a time in which the fantasy of a “white nation” was actively pursued by Australian policy-makers via the White Australia Policy.<sup>62</sup> This was, of course, in spite of the fact that hundreds of Aboriginal nations made up the Australian continent well before colonisation, and that migration from China and other parts of the world had been a mainstay in Australia for many years.<sup>63</sup>

Since the 1970s, Australian policy-makers have taken a different approach. Multiculturalism has been widely celebrated in public and political discourse, and reframed as a central part of Australian national identity. But how authentic is this celebration of diversity, and how much does it actively disrupt the supremeness of whiteness?

In her analysis, academic Christina Ho charts the trajectory of Australian multiculturalism policy since the end of the White Australia Policy, where the focus on the rights and equity of diverse peoples has been gradually replaced by discourses of social cohesion.<sup>64</sup> Under this framework, respect for cultural difference is deprioritised in favour of formal equality, and the historical and structural disadvantages engendered through decades of discrimination are systematically denied. While Australian politicians continue to frame Australia as a successful multicultural nation, First Nations people and people of colour remain frequently obstructed from entering positions of power. A recent report by the Asia Taskforce notes that while Asian-Australians make up 12% of the total population, they remain “virtually absent in the top leadership of our business and government institutions”.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, a 2018 report from PwC found that 97% of chief executives were from Anglo-Celtic or European backgrounds.<sup>66</sup> As others have noted, multiculturalism is undermined when it does not represent a genuine sharing of power and prosperity, and when white Australia retains the power to decide who is included, and who is not.<sup>67</sup>

This power manifests itself in discussions of Australian national identity, migration and belonging. Assumed Australian values of egalitarianism and tolerance are framed as being under threat by supposedly opposing value systems, such as those of Chinese communities, who are Orientalised and stereotyped as profiteering and servile.<sup>68</sup> And yet, there is a deep irony in the assumption that egalitarian values sit at the core of Australian identity, when the issue of colonial Australia’s violent inception remains unresolved.<sup>69</sup>

Today, anti-Chinese and Chinese-Australian discourses are reminiscent of the “yellow peril” anxieties of the 19th century, and reflect a re-emergence of historical anti-Chinese sentiments.<sup>70</sup> In the 19th century, anti-Chinese campaigns portrayed various Chinese cultural practices as being a source of illness or disease, while also presenting them as an unnecessary strain on national resources.<sup>71</sup> This narrative mirrors contemporary portrayals that connect Chinese eating and hygiene practices to COVID-19, or the tendency to blame “outsiders” for the emptying of grocery-store shelves.<sup>72</sup>



This is further complicated by discussions of foreign intervention and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Notably, there has been frequent discussion of the origins of COVID-19 and the CCP's involvement in allegedly causing its spread. As the National Convenor of the Asian Australian Alliance, Erin Chew, points out, taking issue with a political entity is not racist in itself, but it crosses into dangerous territory when political critiques are broadened to essentialise Chinese or Chinese-Australian people and society.<sup>73</sup>

Several studies link the resurgence of anti-Asian sentiments in Australia to broader trends worldwide. A study from the Georgia Institute of Technology, "Racism is a Virus: Anti-Asian Hate and Counterhate in Social Media during the COVID-19 Crisis", shows how individuals engaging in anti-Asian, COVID-19-related rhetoric online often voice Sinophobic views prior to their engagement with COVID-19-related debate.<sup>74</sup> This suggests that pre-existing anti-Asian/Chinese sentiments are present among the commentators, and that COVID-19 is a catalyst for voicing these, rather than their root cause. A second study, "#Coronavirus or #Chinesevirus?!", by Xin Pei and Deval Mehta from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, charts the development of racist discourse on international social media platform Twitter, and highlights how Sinophobic and anti-Asian sentiment have developed and transformed across the course of the pandemic.<sup>75</sup>

These factors coincide to produce the othering of Asian, Asian-Australian, Chinese and Chinese-Australian communities in Australia. Academics Carole Tan and Jen Tsen Kwok reflect on the lived experiences of Chinese Australians. Tan suggests that while individuals may self-identify as Australian, their physical attributes present them as an "other", "not real Australians" and separate and incompatible with the Australian mythos.<sup>76</sup> Kwok builds

on these ideas, highlighting how Australians of Asian heritage are pushed to act out their identity in ways that conform to their conceptualisation as the other.<sup>77</sup> Within the white Australian imaginary, there appears to be a tension between Asian-Australian ethnic identity and the parameters of national citizenship.

The Australian media is a space in which race relations and national identity are debated and discussed. In our 2019 report, *Social commentary and racism in 2019*, All Together Now found that 57% of race-related opinion pieces and current affairs programs were racist towards First Nations people and/or people of colour.<sup>78</sup> Other research suggests these trends are replicated in news reporting, where racialised communities are routinely “othered” and stereotyped.<sup>79</sup> These realities are not new, but as former Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane notes, they do appear to be on the rise, as leading media organisations “seem to be using racism as part of their business model”.<sup>80</sup>

The Australian media has long advocated for freedom of speech and resisted government regulation. There are good reasons for this. However, free speech is a right that, in reality, is selectively applied in favour of some at the expense of others. Professor Megan Davis questions the authenticity of the “free speech” paradigm when racist commentators are given far-reaching platforms while meaningful and important conversations about racial inequality in Australia’s past and present are routinely shut down.<sup>81</sup> Free speech is an important right, notes Davis, but it is one of many rights that must exist in a balance. As it stands, many communities are denied their rights to live free from discrimination and violence. Reports such as *Islamophobia in Australia II* and the *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report* attest to this.<sup>82</sup>

In our 2019 research conducted in partnership with the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), All Together Now found that 96% of racist social commentary was authored by people of Anglo-Celtic and/or European backgrounds.<sup>83</sup> Recent research from Media Diversity Australia found that 75% of presenters on free-to-air television were of Anglo-Celtic background, and that 100% of national news directors in Australia were of Anglo-Celtic background, and male.<sup>84</sup> Many First Nations people and people of colour have repeatedly said that Australian media has been too white for too long.<sup>85</sup>

As Soutphommasane observes, a misguided belief in post-racialism, or “colourblindness”, leads many to believe that the best approach is not to consider people’s racial identity when considering them for a role.<sup>86</sup> However, 230+ years of structural disadvantage means that we are not operating on a level playing field: First Nations people and people of colour face a myriad of structural barriers, and we need to address these. Creating an equitable industry isn’t about ignoring these structural barriers and systemic inequalities. It is about recognising that power imbalances exist and making a concerted effort to address them. We need a media landscape that amplifies the voices of First Nations people and people of colour and challenges those who vilify diverse communities and promote narratives of hate. We need a media industry that recognises and challenges racist systems, policies and institutions. ■

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# Racism and media diversity – a comment from the Asian Australian Alliance

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With former Australian prime ministers Malcom Turnbull (Liberal) and Kevin Rudd (Labor) sharing similar views on Australian media ownership and its implication on Australian media diversity, we as a community need to pause and reflect on the information we receive from the media.

Malcolm Turnbull noted “News Corp operates like a political party, working closely with rightwing politicians to influence policy and elections and to destroy politicians who won’t agree to a partnership with the Murdochs”,<sup>87</sup> while Kevin Rudd described Rupert Murdoch as the “greatest cancer on the Australian democracy” and has been calling for a Royal Commission into media ownership for the last two years.<sup>88</sup>

COVID-19 has no doubt amplified what has long been toxic in Australian society – racism and racial discrimination. Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan and his team have been put on the spot as the result of the increasing number of racism incidents across the nation since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Advocacy and lobby groups for people of colour, including the Asian Australian Alliance, have conducted meetings, including roundtable meetings, with the AHRC on this issue.

From these meetings we have found that the AHRC comprises a relatively small team with limited resources when it comes to tackling major issues such as racism. This leads us to ask, how can we expect the AHRC to address issues within its scope of responsibility when it lacks the resources to do so? If this is the case, we need to do more to address this problem.

We agree with the Race Discrimination Commissioner’s comments at a Malaysian Independence Day address: that education and awareness are needed to tackle the issue of racism. However, it is important to recognise the media’s influential role in educating and informing Australian society.

To understand the relationship between COVID-19 and racism targeting Asian Australians – including temporary visa holders such as international students – the Asian Australian Alliance conducted a survey into incidents of racism since the start of the pandemic.

Preliminary results can be found in the *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report*.<sup>89</sup> From 2 April to 2 June, the survey received 377 reports of racism; 65% of respondents were female and almost 60% of incidents involved physical or verbal harassment, such as racial slurs/ name calling, physical intimidation, verbal threats and getting spat at. Of course, there are still many unreported incidents.

## National anti-racism strategy, including media strategy

Over the past few months, sections of the Australian media have been complicit in spreading anti-Chinese sentiments with sensationalist headlines, racially charged imagery and one-sided reporting around issues concerning the pandemic and the growing influence of China.

In addition, the relative invisibility of Asians in mainstream TV, film, radio and print media, despite making up 12% of the population, prevents their normalisation into the Australian psyche and increases the likelihood of racist attacks against those who are perceived as not belonging in Australia.

It's time for the Australian Government to develop a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral national strategy to address racism in Australia. This must be a coordinated effort, with organisations involved in supporting this cause coming together as one rather than working in silos. This includes federal and state government departments, and agencies such as the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and their equivalents across all states and territories.

Within this proposed national anti-racism strategy, a robust media strategy is needed to address the

issue of biased and ill-informed media and opinion pieces from conservative and extremist media personalities. The AHRC can work with organisations such as the Australian Press Council to develop advisory guidelines for removing unconscious bias in reporting on Asian and Asian-Australian communities. This will help newsrooms and media professionals to understand how such bias can inadvertently flame anti-Asian sentiments and the reasons why it is important to address this.

Above all, the fundamental values of Australian multiculturalism and diversity need to be understood and embedded into organisations across government, businesses, education and training institutions, community groups and more importantly, the media. Unfortunately, this is often not the case even within organisations supposedly championing diversity, such as the Anti-Discrimination Board across all states and territories (government) and the SBS (media).<sup>90</sup> ■



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89 Asian Australian Alliance & O Chiu, *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report*, Asian Australian Alliance, 2020, viewed 8 September 2020, <<https://asianaustralianalliance.net/covid-19-coronavirus-racism-incident-report/covid-19-racism-incident-report-preliminary-report/>>.

90 B Rigby, 'SBS responds to former staffers' accounts of "toxic" racism: "We still have a way to go"', *Mumbrella*, 1 July 2020, viewed 8 September 2020, <<https://mumbrella.com.au/we-still-have-a-way-to-go-sbs-responds-to-former-staffers-accounts-of-toxic-racism-632968>>.



# Recommendations & Next steps

# Recommendations

Based on our findings, we present two core recommendations. The first focuses on building the level of cultural competency and racial literacy within newsrooms and media organisations. The second focuses on increasing the cultural diversity of journalists, producers, presenters and media workers in mainstream media organisations.

We also recognise the significance of Australia's media regulatory frameworks and the need to strengthen these in order to promote a more inclusive and respectful media landscape. We acknowledge the work of the Asian Australian Alliance and Osmond Chiu, in partnership with Democracy in Colour and Diversity Arts Australia, who have recommended that the Australian Human Rights Commission work with regulatory bodies such as the Australian Press Council to develop advisory guidelines for addressing unconscious bias.<sup>91</sup>

## Increase the level of cultural competency and racial literacy within media organisations

Many journalists and journalism educators have cited the need for cultural change within media organisations to challenge the negative racialisation of First Nations people and people of colour.<sup>92</sup>

Media organisations should take proactive steps to drive systemic change, promoting cultural change internally, increasing diversity in management and creating anti-racist policies and procedures. This should include anti-racism training in newsrooms to deepen understanding of systemic, structural, covert and overt racism. Importantly, newsrooms and media organisations must become safer spaces for First Nations people and people of colour, as this remains a significant barrier to genuine media diversity.<sup>93</sup>

While we acknowledge that, for some sections of the media industry, racism is exploited to make money and maintain traditional power structures,<sup>94</sup> it is also true that some media workers desire to better understand and report on race-related issues, and practice cultural sensitivity.<sup>95</sup>

From 2014 to 2018, the Reporting Islam project trained close to 1,000 journalists and journalism educators on best practice for reporting on Muslim communities and issues. Designed in close consultation with community, religious and media organisations, the project involved extensive research and evaluation, and found a statistically significant increase in the level of participant knowledge after the training.<sup>96</sup>

Editorial policies, internal guidelines on social commentary, and ongoing professional development for journalists should each provide guidance on actions that journalists can take to challenge racism at an interpersonal, institutional and systemic level in their writing. Media workers of all levels of experience are likely to experience blind spots, stemming from their own cultural background. Training and development is one way to address this issue.

## Increase the level of cultural diversity within mainstream media organisations

There has long been a call to increase diversity in newsrooms and media organisations.<sup>97</sup> We know that people's lived experiences shape how they engage in social commentary and the reporting of particular issues.

Mainstream media organisations need to increase the cultural diversity across all parts of their organisations so that it is representative of the wider Australian population. This includes journalists, presenters and producers, as well as management and executives. In our 2019 report, *Social commentary and racism in 2019*, published in partnership with CIRCA, we found that 96% of racist social commentary was authored by people of Anglo-Celtic and/or European backgrounds.<sup>98</sup>

One of the ways this can be done is by expanding the pipelines through which First Nations people and people of colour can enter the media industry. In 2020, All Together Now partnered with the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy to facilitate the Muslim



Women's Leadership Program, where young Muslim women receive one-on-one mentoring from more senior Muslim women with experience in media engagement and community advocacy. The program also involves a series of workshops and experiential projects to provide immersive industry experience. Such programs are an important step in challenging the structural barriers and racist policies that limit diversity in the media.

We continue to support and acknowledge the important work of Media Diversity Australia in its work in this area. ■

91 Asian Australian Alliance & O Chiu, *COVID-19 Racism Incident Report*.

92 J Ewart, M Pearson & G Healy, 'Journalists' and educators' perspectives on news media reporting of Islam and Muslim communities in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Media and Religion*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2016, pp. 136-145.

93 M Hayman-Reber, 'Remaking our newsrooms' *The Saturday Paper*; H Moore, 'Lawyer to investigate racism at SBS', *The Australian*, 14 August 2020, viewed 1 September 2020, <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/lawyer-to-investigate-racism-at-sbs/news-story/3951829f2be1263f6b06001ccb8ea83>>; L Murphy-Oates, 'While on-screen diversity is important, what happens offscreen is paramount', *The Guardian*, 27 August 2020, viewed 1 September 2020, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/27/while-on-screen-diversity-is-important-what-happens-offscreen-is-paramount>>.

94 M Grattan, 'Soutphommasane says sections of media exploit racism to make money', *The Conversation*.

95 J Ewart, M Pearson & G Healy, 'Journalists' and educators' perspectives on news media reporting of Islam and Muslim communities in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Media and Religion*.

96 J Ewart, K O'Donnell & A Chrzanowski, 'What a difference training can make: Impacts of targeted training on journalists, journalism educators and journalism students' knowledge of Islam and Muslims', *Journalism*, vol. 9, no. 6, 2018, pp. 762-781.

97 M Hayman-Reber, 'Remaking our newsrooms', *The Saturday Paper*; J Rogers, 'Australia's media has been too white for too long. This is how to bring more diversity to newsrooms', *The Conversation*.

98 All Together Now, *Social commentary and racism in 2019*.

# Next steps

## Further reading

For more information on the issue of racism in Australian social commentary, we recommend reading a 2019 report from All Together Now:

### **Social commentary and racism in 2019:**

<https://alltogethernow.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Social-Commentary-and-Racism-2019-1.pdf>

For more information on the nature and impact of Sinophobic and anti-Asian racism in Australia, we recommend reading a recent report by the Asian Australian Alliance and Osmond Chiu, in partnership with Democracy in Colour, and Diversity Arts Australia:

### **COVID-19 Racism Incident Report: Preliminary Report:**

<https://asianaustalianalliance.net/covid-19-coronavirus-racism-incident-report/covid-19-racism-incident-report-preliminary-report/>

For more information on the need for greater diversity in Australian newsrooms, we recommend reading a recent report by Media Diversity Australia:

### **Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?:**

[https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories\\_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf](https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf)

## Join the movement

Several organisations are working to combat racism in the media, and in particular racism towards Asian, Asian-Australian, Chinese and Chinese-Australian communities.

For starters, we recommend following:

### **Asian Australian Alliance**

Visit their website:

<https://asianaustalianalliance.net/>

**Check out the campaigns mentioned in a joint statement by the Asian Australian Alliance, Diversity Arts Australia and Democracy in Colour:**

#IStandWithAsianAustralians

#IAmNotAVirus

#WashTheHate

#UnityOverFear

### **Democracy in Colour**

Sign the “Hate is not news” pledge:

<https://democracyincolour.org/actions/hate-is-not-news/>

Join the campaign

#TVIsBetterInColour

### **Colour Code**

**#UnityOverFear: Standing in solidarity with Asian and Asian-Australian communities:**

[colourcode.org.au/unityoverfear](https://colourcode.org.au/unityoverfear)



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