

SUBMISSION TO THE  
VICTORIAN POLICE  
INQUIRY 2013

*African  
Communities  
Foundation  
Australia &  
Youth Support +  
Advocacy  
Service.*

## Our Partners

African Communities Foundation Australia and Youth Support + Advocacy Service together with other not for profit community organisations, welcome the opportunity share the experiences of positive or negative police treatment of Young People in the City of Greater Dandenong and surrounding suburbs. This has been a community lead process which has been made possible with the valuable support from other local community services including; Springvale Community Aid & Advice Bureau (SCAAB) – Youth Links; The Three Seas (Pacific Island Volunteer Agency); The United Pasifika Council of Victoria (UPCOV); and volunteers and leaders from within the Australian-South Sudanese and other African communities. We would also like to acknowledge the significant work of three social work students from Monash University who provided invaluable assistance with this report – Alana Blacket, Debbie Capon and Haluel Herjok.

## About African Communities Foundation Australia (ACFA)

ACFA is a Victoria wide organisation that aims to bring together African Australians and those who feel connected to Africa. ACFA provide settlement services funded through DIAC's Settlement grant program (SGP). ACFA aims to link members of African communities in with groups of their interest, for example; women's group or kids club at Noble Park. They have also run a successful youth drop in project in collaboration with YSAS in 2012, which they plan to run again in the near future. They provide complex case support services for their community and humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia over the last 5 years.

## About Youth Support + Advocacy Service (YSAS)

Youth Support + Advocacy Services (YSAS) is a leading youth health not-for profit agency that enables highly vulnerable and high risk young people, or those at risk of becoming so, with substance dependence and misuse, mental illness and social disconnection to take control of their health and wellbeing.

YSAS aims to engage, support and strengthen highly vulnerable and high risk young Victorians affected by, or at risk of, alcohol, drug and mental health issues and social disconnection. We do this by developing non-judgemental, caring and respectful relationships with young people, their families and communities with over 220 skilled staff providing a range of integrated services across 12 sites in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Through research, evaluation, valued partnerships and informed by young people, YSAS provides holistic, strength-based and evidence-informed therapeutic practice across a continuum of care and recovery. Across assertive outreach, residential withdrawal and rehabilitation supported housing, day programs and social enterprise, YSAS builds trust, provides treatment services and enables re-engagement with education and training, families and communities.

In proudly advocating with and on behalf of vulnerable young people, we ask all Australians to look beyond the stereotype of those struggling with drug, alcohol and mental health issues, and see youth in a different light – as individuals with rights, strengths and their own hopes for the future.

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## Aims of This Submission:

The aims of this submission are to advocate for more transparent and accountable community policing and anti-bias police training with zero tolerance for harassment or violence towards communities due to racial profiling. We aim to provide an idea of the community and worker experience of police interactions in the Greater Dandenong area. While some positive gains have been made overall in the last few years it is important that the problems with police/youth interactions are acknowledged and challenged in order to work towards reciprocal respectful relationships.

## Terms of Reference:

In response to the Victoria Police consultation in regard to field contact policy ACFA/YSAS seek to answer the following questions presented by Victoria Police

- 8) Have you had a positive experience with police and / or PSOs? What made it positive?
- 9) Have you had a negative experience with police and / or PSOs? What made it negative?
- 12) In what circumstances do you feel it is appropriate for police or PSOs to ask for a community member's name and address other than for a Field Contact Report?
- 5) How confident do you feel that personal details recorded for a field contact are deleted from the police database if they are found to be unsubstantiated? How can Victoria Police increase your confidence?
- 17) What are the key messages police and PSOs should take away from cross cultural training?

## Summary of our Recommendations

- Police accountable to an independent body for reports of police misconduct
- Recruitment process should include a 'screening program' to ensure respectful attitudes towards people from CALD communities and asylum seekers
- De-escalation training and Anti-bias training for seasoned police officers and new recruits
- Advocate for different internal management strategies such as management screening for member attitudes / personality traits and then allocate roles according to this.
- Youth Task Force & Protocols
- Receipting for stop and search and field contact interactions with community similar to those structures in place within the UK and in line with recommendations of Kensington Flemington Community Legal Centre
- Continue engagement and education for young people regarding laws/clarification of laws such as the "Rights and Responsibilities" program in this area.

## Background Information:

This inquiry has been commissioned in response to the federal court's settlement between six young men and Victoria Police in the Haile-Michael federal race discrimination action. The case began in 2008 with 18 young men who were complaining to the Human Rights Commission about being subjected to discriminatory police behaviour in Flemington and North Melbourne. The outcome came five years later with an out of court settlement between six young men and Victoria Police. As part of this outcome the police were ordered to conduct an inquiry into two areas of police tactics; cross-cultural training and racial profiling.

## Media Representation

Many past media articles have associated violence with Sudanese people by spattering media headlines and articles with brawl, gang, death and kill, with Sudan and Sudanese. Sudanese and other newly arrived community members, especially those associated with negative media coverage, struggle considerably to positively define their lives when experiencing such marginalisation within the press and flowing on from this, within our community. It is important that the media acknowledge the destructive and marginalising discourse they have instigated within communities towards our fellow African Australians and other marginalised newly arrived communities. It is important to work towards a fair and responsible representation of all newly arrived communities.

## Literature Review:

### Gaps in the Literature:

Before beginning it must be noted that a search for research on “racial profiling” returns a lack of research within an Australian context. A number of studies have taken place over the last 15 years internationally in the United States and United Kingdom which explore the ideas of racial profiling, what it is and how it is actualised within police forces. While these studies have taken place in different government contexts, they are relevant to this inquiry as they highlight the nature of this problem as not just something Australia is facing, but a problem that is global. It is also important to note that public concern regarding this issue and government policy has changed dramatically since 1990 both in Australia and internationally, along similar lines, making lessons learned in these studies relevant to the Australian context of today.

### Current Research

In recent years the public both nationally and internationally has become enamoured with the concept of “racial profiling”. Racial profiling refers in our context to situations where race is used as a criterion in police decision making during discretionary traffic stops and field contact stops (Engel & Calnon 2002, 250; Novac & Chamlin 2012). Questions have largely centred on police officer’s improper use of race as a discriminator during these contacts (Alpert, Dunham & Smith 2007, p. 26). Literature in this area draws attention to the fact that before the 1990s the term ‘racial profiling’ had little meaning to the general public (Alpert, Dunham & Smith 2007, p. 27). After this time the public became concerned with the idea of racially biased policing as

many 'wars on drugs' promoted the idea of profiling for routine activities (Alpert, Dunham & Smith 2007, p. 27)

Reitzel & Piqero (2006) suggest a definition for racial profiling. At the core of this definition is the supposition that police target minorities, particularly 'blacks', during their normal patrol duties with the belief that these minorities are more likely to be guilty of committing a crime than 'whites'. They argue that 'blackness has become an acceptable risk factor for criminal behaviour' in our current society (Reitzel & Piqero 2006, p. 162).

Engel & Calnon (2002) draw attention to the fact that research into racial profiling has been limited by the lack of theoretical frameworks surrounding this 'social problem'. However Novac & Chamlin (2012) draw attention to the idea that racial profiling as a social issue is guided by conflict theories of social control and theories of suspicion and social control. Under these theories social control is seen as an instrument which is used by the majority to control the minority who threaten their interests. This is a critical element in the arguments that many have made for racial profiling within an Australian context. Officers are trained to recognise and identify suspicious behaviours and characteristics to do with law breaking and as such targeting minorities are seen as a function of the differential criminal involvement of the people within these groups (Novac & Chamlin 2012, 280). What this implies is that at its core 'racial profiling' involves officers' differentially targeting people of colour as race can be seen the primary factor that directs officers decision making rather than behaviour.

In line with Engel & Calnon's (2002) concerns, Novac & Camlin (2012) suggest that research on how to collect data, what information should be collected, how to analyse this data and what conclusions to draw rather than why disparities occur in

studies focused on determining the extent of racial profiling. There is little focus in the research on the social environment and how this affects the formal governmental powers of crime control.

In terms of research, Engel & Calnon (2002) and Novac & Camlin (2012) both conducted studies in the United States related to how police officers and the public perceive racial profiling, whether it is happening or whether it is not. Both studies draw attention to the difficulty of measuring such data. Novac & Camlin (2012) found that their research supports the idea for the 'race out of place perspective' which implies that the more "black people in an area" the more "white people stick out" and vice versa. Reitzel & Piquero (2006) agree with Novac & Camlin by suggesting that drivers who were "black" within a "white" area were stopped disproportionately. Similarly Alpert, Dunham & Smith (2007) found from an analysis of stop data that officers were more likely to complete F. I cards for black suspects when compared with non-black suspects (Authors note: F.I cards and the US equivalent of Australian Field Stops). It is also interesting to note that within these studies that officer race had inconsistent outcomes in terms of patterns of racial profiling suggesting that a police officer's own race has little to do with his or her decisions to stop suspects.

Similarly Fellner (2009, p.257) found that relative to their numbers in the general population and among drug offenders, black Americans are disproportionately arrested, convicted, and incarcerated on drug charges, reflecting 'implicit racial bias'. Fellner (2009, p.257) suggests intense policing in minority neighbourhoods is an unjustified and disproportionate response inconsistent with the values of International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations 2013).

Dowd (2011, p. 53) found the cumulative effect of discriminatory measures in refugee law can amount to persecution, even where each incident alone would not suffice. This submission uncovers multiple experiences of African and Pacific Islander youths being targeted by police, impacting these individual's ability to live a dignified life with the meaningful and effective enjoyment of their rights.

Glasser (2006, p.396) employed mathematical simulation to compare multiple profiling and non- profiling scenarios' impact on the targeted communities and law enforcement efficiency. He found that when the possibility of a deterrent effect is modelled, profiling appears to yield fewer criminal captures and have little or no crime reduction effect, and may even increase overall crime rates (2006, p.396).

Thompson & Bobo (2011) found that communities that understand crime as rooted in irresponsible behaviour tend to support aggressive social and policing responses to crime. Communities that understand criminal behaviour as rooted in social disadvantage such as poverty and unemployment tend to reject punishment centred responses to crime (Thompson & Bobo 2011). Perhaps the basis of this issue is increased understanding of the social disadvantages of newly arrived and refugee Australians.

## Methodology:

Our approach to this inquiry was three fold. We chose to gather qualitative data to best present the experiences of those who work for local services and those within our community in relation to the terms of reference above. In addition, this submission has drawn on literature related to racial profiling and police contact policies from Australia and Internationally.

- 1- Survey of 8 young people engaged with ACFA's and YSAS's services to gauge their experiences with police and what they believed were the motivations of police for stopping them on the street. For this survey we drew inspiration from Kensington-Flemington Legal Service template documents.
- 2- Practitioner Consultation Forum at YSAS on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, to understand how police are viewed by their clients and talk about their experiences. 8 professionals attended this facilitated event.
- 3- Consultations with 2 young people at YSAS' REVAL Day Program to gauge their thoughts and experiences.

\*Names in this submission have been de-identified to protect contributors' right to privacy

## Findings & Discussion:

### **8) Have you had a positive experience with police and / or PSOs? What made it positive?**

ACFA and YSAS would first like to acknowledge the positive influence of the work of Victoria Police especially those professionals within the Dandenong Multicultural Police Liaison Unit, who work proactively with youth young people from CALD communities in Greater Dandenong. Over the past year professionals from multiple community services agencies have noted an apparent decrease in the number of complaints to them by their clientele related to excessive infringement notices and allegations of police brutality.

Throughout much of 2011/12 ACFA and YSAS noted high numbers of young people complaining about receiving multiple infringement notices for what young people perceive to be a series of 'low-level' offending such as; being intoxicated in a public place; possess alcohol in a public place; use of profane language in a public place; public spitting. Staff were aware of several instances where individual young people received two or even three infringement notices in a single day. Young people regularly reported to staff that they were issued with infringement notices despite not having committed the offence but having being in the vicinity of peers who were (e.g. public consumption of alcohol).

The police zero-tolerance strategy of issuing of infringement notices has resulted in a crippling level of financial debt, as most of the young people connected to services are unemployed. Workers observed a rising sentiment of frustration and anger throughout CALD cohorts (including young people from New Zealand Maori and

Pacific Island communities) in relation to overt racism (verbal) and the practice of relocating young people from the Greater Dandenong environs to other far-flung parts of Melbourne (acknowledged by Victoria Police as the practice of “tag and relocate”). The collaborative initiatives between ACFA, YSAS and the Victoria Police Multicultural Liaison Unit, which were multifaceted and innovative, have, in the opinion of staff and management from these agencies, contributed significantly to the improved relationship between young people and police and the subsequent reduction in complaints throughout 2013.

### **Examples of Positive Police Experiences;**

#### **“Rights and Responsibilities” Support Group**

Throughout 2012 YSAS hosted a series of after-hours support group at its Dandenong site for young people from multicultural cohorts. The nominal purpose of the group was to educate young people about their “rights and responsibilities” with regards to their use of public places as they socialised and went about their activities within the City of Greater Dandenong environs. This program took place between young people, police multicultural liaison officers and ACFA and YSAS staff. The group was developed as a result of rising tensions between young people and key members of the Victoria Police Safe Suburbs Task Force. These sessions brought young people into the same room as police and gave them a chance to share experiences and vent their frustrations.

During the Practitioner Consultation Forum workers reported that young people had a largely positive experience with police during this program.

The key issues raised by young people in this group were frustrations about being excessively stopped by police and fined, leading to enormous debts for the young people. Young people also reported that verbal racial vilification, profoundly abhorrent in nature, was commonplace and considered by the young people to be at the mild end of negative interactions with police. Young people also reported apparent indiscriminate issuing of infringement notices which were notable due to a belief that on many occasions no infringement had been committed. A common experience was when young people were congregated in public places where some (but not all) young people were consuming alcohol or were intoxicated, yet all those present were issued with fines. One young person who suffers from a severe stammer reported being issued with an infringement notice for public intoxication when he was clearly mistaken for being affected by alcohol. The “tag and relocate” issue was also consistently raised at these group meetings as a humiliating and fearful experience. Furthermore, young people also expressed frustration at having smart phones and cameras confiscated by police if police members believed that potentially incriminating footage had been recorded.

Workers reported that this meeting validated the concerns of the participants’ experiences – an important step towards assisting the young people to trust someone representing police. The police members present allowed the young people to tell their stories without judgement or interpretation. Furthermore, the police members were able to gain a greater appreciation for the depth of frustration of the young people and an insight into the types of interactions they were having with police members of the Safe Suburbs team. In the opinion of staff, this led to a greater sense of empowerment for the young people and a feeling of understanding

between the two groups. Certainly, it was felt by staff that young people began to understand that not all police members behaved beyond their legal or ethical responsibilities. Furthermore, it was through interactions with local police management that a number of young people made formal complaints through the OPI and Ethical Standards Unit. This engagement led to young people in the cohort being more aware of policing practices in administering their duties. The complaints process triggered recognition from local police management that there were practice issues within the Safe Suburbs unit that warranted immediate response. Subsequently, the entire unit was rotated out and replaced with new members and leadership.

This has resulted in a greater communication between youth services and police and a very obvious change in policing strategies – i.e. the zero tolerance approach to issuing infringement notices has ceased and (by all reports from young people) the practice of “tag and relocate” has also ceased. However, it should be noted that many young people are still dealing with severe financial hardship as a result of the period where infringement notices were issued in high numbers. Also, it should be noted that to date no police member has been reprimanded or called to account for actions in relation to allegations of misconduct that the supporting agencies are aware.

### **Police & Youth Leaders Engagement Team (PYLET Program)**

PYLET is a newly developed proactive team of police and local volunteer community youth leaders, who focus on engaging and assisting youth on the street in high risk

community locations and public spaces. The program is based on good practice community policing models in existence both locally and internationally.

In a practical sense, 2 police officers working side-by-side with 2 volunteer community youth leaders conduct targeted patrols, actively seeking and engaging with youth in a variety of situations and locations. The focal point being engagement with youth who have a strong demonstrated need; are involved in at-risk behaviours and/or require immediate assistance and referral to other services for assistance. Early intervention is the fundamental objective of the initiative. The PYLET team are **not** first-responders to critical incidents. However, they may attend such incidents as part of a supportive role to police and other community members.

The volunteers are local multicultural community youth leaders that have been positively identified and recognised by their community as 'leaders'. They have undergone stringent history checks, as well as the comprehensive PYLET induction training. They are strictly bound by a contractually binding agreement to privacy. The volunteers are easily identified by a fluorescent yellow safety vest bearing the words 'PYLET Volunteer' clearly on the front and rear and a name tag stating their full name.

The team will primarily operate within the City of Greater Dandenong and Casey areas in a marked police vehicle on Friday and Saturday evenings. The patrols may also operate on other evenings across various Southern Metro Region locations as needed. The initiative is ongoing and planning for the expansion of the program is underway.

The Practitioner Consultation Forum revealed that the PYLET program had been largely well received by the young people. The PYLET team would connect with the ACFA and YSAS Friday night activities at the Noble Park Community Centre Drop In program. Despite initial misgivings by attendees, the presence of police and community leaders began to be welcomed and recognised as employing a safety, welfare and harm reduction approach. This program has reinforced the goodwill developed throughout the Rights and Responsibilities group. It should be noted that key personnel from the Multicultural Liaison Unit also deliver the PYLET program.

## **9) Have you had a negative experience with police and / or PSOs?**

### **What made it negative?**

At the Practitioner Consultation Forum a local youth worker reported witnessing regular police harassment of young people attending the service in Noble Park where she works. On one occasion a disturbance was heard out the front of this service. Members of the Safe Suburbs Taskforce were speaking to a group of African young people in disrespectful language and, it was felt by several welfare workers in attendance, inciting these young people to become angry. Multiple vehicles were called as reinforcements and there were multiple police in attendance. At least two young people were forcefully taken away. A nearby young person recorded this altercation showing Victoria police using unreasonable force and inappropriate language. The camera and phone were later taken away from the bystander by the police. With support from YSAS, a number of young people made formal complaint was made to the OPI regarding police conduct during this incident.

There has been no outcome or response from this complaint more than 12 months later.

Staff at the Practitioner Consultation Forum felt that this incident was indicative of many other interactions between police and young people. Workers described the approach by police to groups of young African Australians in public spaces as often “antagonistic”, “disrespectful”, and “unnecessarily aggressive”. It was noted often young people were either moved on or arrested as a result of police interaction where they would have otherwise have presented no threat to the peace of the community.

Some comments from staff included:

*“What was the aim Victoria Police? What are you hoping to achieve by being intimidating and aggressive?”* - Jed, Worker

*“If you keep pushing it’s just going to blow up”* – Frank, Youth Social Worker

*“Mild to moderate police misconduct is normal to this client group”* – Jamie, Youth Worker

Workers and young CALD community members report a number of negative experiences through contact with police and / or PSOs. Through our consultations with the community it has become clear that the Victoria Police field contact policy has exacerbated youth frustration, anger and mistrust toward Victoria Police. As a consequence poor relations continue between the two groups.

*“They expect me to behave like this...”* - young Pacific Islander- Australian woman,  
Noble Park

Workers and young people reported in this consultation process that the strategy for focused stopping and searching appears to have had absolutely the reverse effect among young people, creating a dynamic of hatred between Victoria Police and young people. The professionals reported that many African Australian’s report being called “*Black cunts*” and being subjected to other alienating and racist language and terminology such as “*monkeys*”, “*this is how we do things in this country*”, “*niggers*” etc .

*“The Police talk to youth in a language that doesn’t make you feel comfortable as a person and makes you feel rage towards police”* - young African Australian, Noble Park

*“Police always use offensive language”* – Anthony, Young Sudanese-Australian

Young people who attend services at YSAS Dandenong, particularly those who have African or Pasifika heritage, report regularly being stopped by police and asked to identify themselves whilst travelling in the Greater Dandenong region and more widely throughout Melbourne and the CBD. This often occurs several times within a given day or week and certainly occurs consistently over time. It is common for young people to accept that at times police may have reasonable justification for these actions. However, many report to eventually becoming so frustrated as to

begin to demonstrate indignation and defiance. This, of course, tends to compound negative outcomes for young people and serves to make them “known” to police.

Where an officer approaches someone and requests details because the circumstances appear suspicious, what does this mean? Section 13 of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights deals with a person’s right to privacy. This right to privacy is breached when the police have no reasonable grounds for stopping or searching young people. A clarification of terms used to justify searching needs to take place in order to rectify these concerns. Without this clarification targeting of minority groups on the basis of race as a predictor for crime is likely to continue.

To highlight the negative community and worker experience with police the following are some case studies from young people who reside in the City of Greater Dandenong and the City of Casey regarding this topic. These are not uncommon experiences within this group.

- A young African Australian man reported that he was walking along the main street in Noble Park, on the way home from getting his shopping. He was stopped by two policemen, who asked what he was drinking. At their request, he showed them that it was a clear bottle of Fanta. The police then asked him for the bottle, he gave the bottle to the police who then sniffed the contents. At this point the young man reports feeling extremely angry at being subjected to this humiliating act in public. When the police gave him back the bottle of Fanta, he threw it on the ground. The police then charged him with an offence (young person unable to confirm the charge)

- A young Sudanese-Australian man was stopped by police. As he had a hearing impairment he was unable to communicate with police. A Sudanese-Australian passer-by knew this young man, and offered to help police communicate with him stating, “What are you asking him for? Can I help?” This passer-by was then put in a divvy van. To this day he cannot understand Victoria Police’s reasoning for their actions when he was offering to help.
- A worker from the Practitioner Consultation Forum reported that at a local event police wanted to do a bag search of a young Sudanese-Australian for no specified reason when questioned. The worker reported that police of higher rank were training a young constable on how to “deal with Sudanese young men”. The worker was close by and observed the proceedings. He reported that police moved toward this young man in an unreasonably threatening manner. The Sergeant saw the worker and immediately modified his approach. The young man reported to the worker that if he had not been there his belongings would have been emptied all over the floor and that the tone of this interaction would have been very different.
- A young Sudanese-Australian man reported that he was walking across a local pedestrian crossing in Dandenong with a large crowd of people at the red man. It was early afternoon on a weekday. Police called him over and asked him, “Why he walked when it was red?” The youth did not understand why no one other person from the crowd was questioned. Why was it him? Why not someone else?

**12) In what circumstances do you feel it is appropriate for police or PSOs to ask for a community member's name and address other than for a Field Contact Report?**

At the Practitioner Consultation Forum workers queried the appropriateness of the frequency of field contacts often leading to fines. They note that it this is a great concern for the community and young people.

*"It is not an issue of stops but the reason for the stops that the community is worried about"* – Frank, Youth Social Worker.

Young people consulted believe that stops are acceptable as follows;

*"It has to be respectful and reasonable"*, Mercy, Young African-Australian

*"When there is an offence"*, James, Young Sudanese-Australian

*"When walking at wrong hours of the night or poor driving on the road. When there is a clear evidence that it is an offence"*, Young African-Australian

*"If there has been an offence and the suspect has escaped so they can see if I know anything also they should explain the situation to me"* – Anthony, young Sudanese-Australian

*"When I'm making an offence"* – Jacob, young African-Australian

These requests seem reasonable. We have found that the young people feel that police contact is not carried out as outlined in standard police procedures.

*“We came here to improve our lives not to be seen as criminals”*

What these negative experiences cause is a feeling of fear, shame and worry within the community. Below are some examples of how young people felt after their negative field contacts and stops with police;

*“I have no hope for my rights/responsibilities because police have right over me” –*

Clara, Young Sudanese-Australian

*“Fear and shame” – Mercy, young African- Australian*

*“I hate the police and I have lost the respect for them as officers. They are not doing a job they are meant to do” – Boo, Young African-Australian*

*“Increase anger toward police. I feel like swearing at them for being targeted when I was not committing an offence but I keep it in my head” – Jacob, Young Africa-Australian*

*“Makes me think all white people are racist” – Anthony, Young Sudanese- Australian*

**17) What are the key messages police and PSOs should take away from cross-cultural training?**

Sensitivity is required when dealing with refugees or young people who have escaped trauma in their countries of origin. An aggressive stopping and searching response exacerbates anxiety and mistrust toward police and decreases hope for their future in this country. Within the below examples young people identify these issues;

*“They look-out for black colour people only then other groups and specifically the young age black colour people” - Clara, Young Sudanese- Australian*

*“They think they would treat us like Aboriginal and send more of us to jail but this not fair. They think its better to take us out of the country” – James, Young Sudanese- Australian*

*“I have no hope in any way with the colour of the skin I have” – Mercy, Young African-Australian*

**11) How confident are you in the process for reporting unfair treatment by police or PSOs? How can Victoria Police help you be more confident in the process?**

YSAS report three separate incidences from both individuals and groups where complaints were formally lodged through the Office of Police Integrity and more than 12 months later there has been no follow up or correspondence from any governing body regarding these complaints. This is a serious issue whereby legal complaint processes have failed these young people and which continues to significantly erode their confidence in police accountability. Pointedly, it was a combination of trust and relationship building between youth workers and Victoria Police members from the Multicultural Liaison Unit, that lead to a number of young people standing up to enforce their rights through proper and established formal mechanisms.

*“...Police are bound by government and community to have a lasting impact”*

In the Practitioner Consultation Forum professionals expressed exasperation at how police “can operate outside of what is considered ethical?” Questions came up within the forum were, “Where does the motivation for policing in this area come from, public opinion or best practice?”

Below are examples of how the community believes serious complaints should be followed up within the Police force;

*“Police incriminated in racial discrimination need to be expelled from the police... they should not be given a warning as this breeds repetitions. They must be expelled on the spot”, Mercy, Young African-Australian*

*“Justice should be served where a police officer is caught acting in a discriminative manner, they should be brought to justice so other police members learn their lesson from their” , James, Young Sudanese- Australian*

*“Dandenong police must face justice. They are working for their interest not the interest of the law or public “ , Boo, Young African-Australian*

*“The police always stop me whenever they see an African around and follow me until they get my details”, Anthony, Young Sudanese- Australian*

*“Black Africans need protection against the heartless police members. Why do Australia pretend there is human rights when there is none”, Boo, Young African – Australian*

Conclusion:

Ultimately, in the future, we hope that this submission leads to increased positive interactions between Victoria Police and young people (especially those from CALD communities) of Greater Dandenong. Young people consulted offered some simple changes can be made to improve the interactions between these groups.

*“Start communicating”*

*“More African police”*

*“Police have to be more accountable for their actions such as using offensive language”*

*“Think before you talk. Don’t assume anything.”*

## **Recommendations:**

On behalf of the young people and community members who were involved in the consultation and submission process, ACFA & YSAS respectfully make the following recommendations:

1. Accountability for police conduct:
  - Cease taking community or individual complaints through police colleagues, and instead held police accountable through an independent body. This independent body could act to ensure police are held accountable, within pre-determined guidelines.
  - Timely response to complaints including a request follow up or investigation for all formal complaints made through IBAC.
2. Recruitment process should include a 'screening program' for respectful attitudes towards people from CALD communities and asylum seekers.
3. De-escalation training and Anti-bias training for seasoned police officers and new recruits
  - to destabilise stereotypes
  - testing to see where bias lies
4. Advocate for different internal police management strategies such as screening for attitude / personality traits of members and then allocate youth policing roles according to this.
5. Youth Task Force
  - Including proper consultation with workers, young people and communities

- Engage the community with the plan - workers believe this is central to making progress in these areas
  - Empowerment of the youth and the community through consultations will help improve youth/police interactions
6. Receipting for stop and searches and field contacts to discourage racial profiling and misuse of police powers in line with recommendations from the Kensington Flemington Community Legal Service

*“In the spirit of transparency, all submissions made to Victoria  
Police should be provided to the broader community and  
community services”*

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