



## Curbing racial bias in Victoria Police

Issued June 2026

“Holy Spirit, we give thanks for the ways in which today you convict us of racial discrimination, injustice and hatred, and make us ministers of reconciliation, building bridges and healing wounds.”

Rev Dr Paul Goh, President-elect, Uniting Church in Australia, from the prayer service to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2023.

The police have a difficult role to perform in our society, often in highly challenging circumstances. For them to be effective in the role they play to prevent people from experiencing criminal harm, they need to be unbiased in performing their role.

Victoria Police has acknowledged there have been problems with racism in the force, both conscious and subconscious. In 2015, Victoria Police became the first Australian law enforcement agency to define and prohibit racial profiling by its officers officially. The Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police has committed to ending systemic racism in the police force. The Victoria Police have stated they have zero tolerance towards racial profiling.

The Victoria People Manual defines racial profiling as “making policing decisions that are not based on objective or reasonable justification, but on stereotypical assumptions about race, colour, language, ethnicity, ancestry or religion.”

In late 2025, the Centre Against Racial Profiling released research (<https://www.racialprofilingresearch.org/>) that found higher rates of police actions targeted at people of perceived minority groups between 2018 and 2024. The following table outlines the rates of use of policing measures against selected minority groups compared to the general Victorian population between 2018 and 2024.

Police action	Rate of police action compared to the general Victorian population based on perceived background			
	First Peoples	African	Middle Eastern	Pacific Islander
Searches	16	9	6	5
Use of force or threatened use of force	10	7.2	2.3	5.3
Taser use	13	6.1	1.8	5.9
Pursuit initiation	3.4	23.7	3.5	

First People Victorians and people perceived to be of African background who were subjected to police searches were less likely to be in possession of drugs or weapons compared to members of the general Victorian population subjected to police searches.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern on 29 April 2026 about reported racial profiling in law enforcement operations and the over-policing that leads to higher incarceration rates among First Peoples’ children. It called on Australian Governments to:

*Review its legislative framework on law enforcement to explicitly prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement officials and to avoid over policing and ensure that law enforcement operations are conducted in a non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory manner, on the basis of reasonable suspicion, and with rigorous monitoring and review mechanisms.*



### **Psychological Impact of Unjustified Police Suspicion**

Research based on a survey of 981 Victorians who were stopped by police in 2018 and 2019 found that unjustified searches by police can be experienced as discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Unjustified police searches have been found to send a strong signal to people about their lack of worth and status in society. Such searches create shame, stigma and embarrassment. The stopping and searching of newly arrived immigrants has been found to reduce people's attachment to and sense of belonging to their new country. Police contact can increase law-breaking behaviour and negative attitudes in young people and can influence a person's life trajectory towards violent crime. There is a relationship in highly disadvantaged communities between over-policing and increases in violent crime.

### **Benefits of Anti-Bias Training for Police**

Research by Washington State University in the US, published in 2023, found a "small but significant" effect of training to counter implicit bias among police officers.<sup>2</sup> The researchers found that police officers who had undergone interactive training had fewer complaints of discrimination from community members than those who had not. Police bodycam footage also revealed improvements in trained officers' behaviour, especially their interactions with people experiencing homelessness. Police who had undergone the training were better at de-escalating situations and at applying procedural justice.

### **What You Can Do**

Write polite and respectful letters or emails to:

#### **The Hon Anthony Carbines**

Minister for Police  
GPO Box 4356  
Melbourne VIC 3000

Salutation: Dear Minister

E-mail: [minister.carbines@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:minister.carbines@justice.vic.gov.au)

#### **The Hon Jacinta Allen**

Premier  
1 Treasury Place,  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Salutation: Dear Premier

E-mail: [jacinta.allan@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:jacinta.allan@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Points to make in your letters or e-mails:

- Welcome the Victoria Police commitments to zero tolerance of racial profiling by police and an end to systemic racism in the Force.
- However, express concern that statistics of police searches, use of force, threatened use of force, use of Tasers and initiation of police pursuits suggest that the problem persists.
- Ask that the Government require Victoria Police to investigate police training courses in other parts of the world, such as Washington State in the US, to address implicit bias and implement modifications of existing Victoria Police training to achieve a greater reduction in racial bias by police.
- Increase Victoria Police's formal and informal engagement with stakeholders from impacted communities to work towards curbing the over-policing of these communities.
- Increase investment in community-led and culturally appropriate services that will reduce the need for police to be involved.

Please send any replies to your letters to [jim@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:jim@victas.uca.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup> Tamar Hopkins (2025) The Psychological Impact of Unjustified Police Suspicion. Constitutional Law - Emerging Trends and Perennial Debates [Working Title]. IntechOpen. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1011974>.

<sup>2</sup> James L, James S, Mitchell RJ (2023), "Results from an effectiveness evaluation of anti-bias training on police behavior and public perceptions of discrimination". *Policing: An International Journal*, Vol. 46 No. 5-6 pp. 831–845, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-01-2023-0014>