



# Equal Opportunity Tasmania

## **Podcast Title:**

Racism and COVID-19

## **Podcast Script:**

Hi, I'm Gemma Misrachi from EOT and with me today is Michelle Parker, Investigation and Conciliation Officer. We want to explore further how COVID-19 is impacting people's lives, and leading to discrimination in ways we didn't predict or want.

- 1. Racism has been an ongoing topic in the news since COVID-19 came to Australia. What sort of racist conduct does the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination law cover?**

The Tasmanian anti-discrimination law covers several types of racist conduct:

Discrimination on the basis of race happens when a person is treated less favourably because of their race, for example if a person was asked to leave a shop because they are Asian.

Another type is conduct that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, insulting or ridiculing on the basis of race. This could include offensive or insulting comments, statements, gestures or actions.

Incitement on the basis of race is also against the law. This happens when a person does a public act that is capable of inciting other people to hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule of a person on the basis of race. This includes statements made anywhere members of the public could see or hear, as well as in newspapers or online in social media.

- 2. In what circumstances can people complain about racism, for example, is it against the law if you are discriminated against when you are travelling on a bus?**

The Tasmanian anti-discrimination law makes it unlawful to be discriminated against in a number of areas of public life, including if you are travelling on a bus. Discrimination is unlawful during the course of your employment, in accommodation – this could be rental accommodation or holiday accommodation, when at school, university or Tafe, in relation to membership and activities of a club, and when facilities, goods or services are being provided to you, including transport, retail, and hospitality.

### **3. Is it okay to make a racist joke, if you didn't mean to cause offence?**

It is not okay to make a racist joke even if you didn't mean to upset anyone. The Tasmanian anti-discrimination law says that you don't have to have any particular motive or intend to discriminate against someone for it to be unlawful.

### **4. Michelle, has EOT received any reports or complaints about racism, and if so can you share some details about those?**

We have received a lot of reports and several complaints about racism during the Covid-19 pandemic. These have included reports and complaints about:

- Racist comments and abuse about Asian people on Facebook, particularly in relation to Chinese people.
- Racist abuse to people in the street and shops. This has been mostly verbal abuse but there have also been some reports of physical abuse.
- People of Asian appearance being coughed on and told 'you have coronavirus'; and
- People blaming China for deliberately manufacturing the virus.

### **5. What if someone's race is only one or part of a reason for unfavourable treatment against a person?**

The Tasmanian anti-discrimination law says that race can be only one or part of a reason, it does not have to be the only ground.

### **6. What action is EOT taking upon learning of the increase in race discrimination?**

Because of the number of reports Equal Opportunity Tasmania has received, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner has taken the following steps:

- We have a fact sheet on Covid-19 and discrimination law, which is available from our website.
- The Commissioner has released several media statements about racism being against the law to educate the public.

- The Commissioner has also written to members of parliament and councils to remind them that racism is against the Tasmanian anti-discrimination law and so that they can let anybody who comes to them having experienced racism know about their rights under the law.

## **7. What can people do if they see or experience racism?**

If anybody experiences or sees racism, please report it to us. People can make a report by filling out a Report It! form or sending us an online enquiry, both available on our website at [www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au](http://www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au). People who want to make a formal complaint can also find a complaint form on our website.

People can also report to us by calling 1300 305 062 for the cost of a local call within Tasmania, or (03) 6165 7515 or by emailing [office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au](mailto:office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au).