

DSAA Anti-Racist and Equity Statement

The Development Studies Association of Australia (DSAA) is outraged by the injustice and human rights violations, highlighted by #BlackLivesMatter, of Aboriginal deaths in custody and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration. We offer this statement of solidarity with those calling for justice, transformational change of broken systems, and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. But we know solidarity is not enough. The current moment has prompted us to reflect on DSAA's responsibility to fight against racism, and we outline our statement of intent to do so, and to guide the development of a plan of action.

The need for change

We stand in solidarity and sadness for the tragic death of George Floyd who was killed by police in the USA on the 25 of May 2020, and those calling for justice and transformational change of systemic discrimination. We extend our empathy and respect to the families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who have also died in Australia's legal and prison system. We share the outrage of systemic discrimination. We acknowledge the re-traumatisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities of those who lives have been taken and broken by lack of access to justice and systemic discrimination.

There are similarities between how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia, and African American, Black American and Native American Peoples in the United States of America, are treated by the justice system and law enforcement. In Australia, incidents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples deaths by the hand of the State continue. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are 16.5 times more likely to be die in incarceration than other Australians. Indeed, 432 have died in police custody since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The Commission gave over 300 recommendations, yet very few have been effectively implemented. Since the Commission, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People deaths in custody have continued to rise. In the thirty years since the Commission, there have been zero convictions as a result of these deaths. The major causes of the rising rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples deaths in prison are reported as government failures to follow their own procedures and provide appropriate medical care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in custody.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and human rights advocates have long called for justice and changes to address systemic racism, police brutality, and a failed justice system in Australia. For many Australians the #BlackLivesMatter uprising in

the United States and worldwide, has called for reflection, truth acknowledgements and deeper thinking about the processes of reconciliation, as the truth of Australia's own injustice and racism is exposed. These stories of our own nation must be told, acknowledged and reconciled. All Australians have a role to play in fighting injustice. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples must work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to make governments accountable for their actions, and upholding human rights, including racial discrimination.

What we will do

As an association of Development Studies in Australia, we acknowledge and accept that we all bear responsibility for the conditions that sustain white privilege and that diminish the life chances, and lives, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and other racially marginalised people. We are not separate from racism, even as we may be critical of it. Many of us are beneficiaries of racism, and/or sustain racism through inattentiveness, careless action and inaction. We therefore offer not only a statement of solidarity, but a statement of intent, which recognises our co-ownership and co-responsibility to dismantle racism in Australia, and beyond. Development Studies offers us tools for thought and action, and we take responsibility for promoting these tools and using them to change our own practices, and those of others.

- **Recognising and dismantling white privilege:** Privilege is often invisible to those who enjoy it, and takes sustained effort to recognise, acknowledge, and dismantle. We commit to listening to people who do not hold that privilege, but accept that the responsibility to identify white privilege lies with the holders of that privilege. Reflexive practice—the bedrock of development—is crucial. Dismantling white privilege entails *disempowerment* of people with racialized forms of power, and we pledge to work towards this aim. We acknowledge intersecting forms of privilege—gendered, class, sexuality, (dis)ability—and the need to address these together.
- **Addressing paternalism and flattening the hierarchies of knowledge production:** Development as a field of expertise is prone to paternalism, of thinking we know better than others. Critiquing paternalistic development practice in our scholarship does not make us immune to paternalism in research, nor from benefiting from the hierarchies of knowledge production that map onto racial inequities. We commit to sustained effort in dismantling these knowledge hierarchies, to promoting less prominent voices and ideas, to mutual learning and equal research partnerships, and to affirmative citational practices.

- **Being allies in tackling institutional racism and structural conditions:** We have a role in supporting the efforts of our fellow Australians in addressing racism and transforming the structural conditions that create racial inequalities. We will be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led initiatives and organisations as to how we can support their efforts, offering our labour, participation, and thinking. We recognise our role as academics and professionals in contributing to public education and debate as to the origins and mechanisms that sustain racism, but also acknowledge that many of us have limited lived experience of its negative effects. We defer to those who have. We are allies, not leaders, in this fight.
- **Educating (the next generation of) development practitioners:** We do not shy away from acknowledging racism within the development sector, and our complicity in its persistence. We commit to sustained action to address it, through: curriculum reform to include discussions around whiteness, racism, power and privilege in development; facilitating open discussions and mutual learning among colleagues; calling out statements and actions that perpetuate racism, including among senior colleagues. We recognise that challenges to the status quo can be emotionally and structurally difficult for colleagues who are disadvantaged within institutions, and therefore the responsibility of people from a position of privilege to fight these battles.
- **Reflect on and continually confront racism within the DSAA:** We recognise that good intentions and a critical perspective do not provide a failsafe in ensuring that racism does not exist, or is not perpetuated in DSAA. We commit to regular practices of reflection and introspection that reveal the practices, norms, institutional structures and so on that sustain racism in all its forms within our association. We take responsibility for educating ourselves about racism, the mechanisms of its perpetuation and the possibilities for its dismantlement, and to apply that learning to the DSAA and all its activities.

This statement of intent is a working document. It is not a list of things to be ticked off, but rather an ongoing commitment and struggle to dismantling racism in Australia, in the Development Sector, in our institutions, and within the Association itself. It provides the basis for the development of an action plan against racism to be formulated and worked upon as part of DSAA's five year plan. We invite comments and partners in this struggle.

As part of our ongoing commitment, DSAA will soon be releasing a Statement on Respectful Relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Lands, and we will develop a Reconciliation Action Plan as an outcome of that Statement and to ensure our statements lead to concrete actions.