

Community Reporting Tool

Frequently asked questions

1. What is the Community Reporting Tool and what is it for?

One of the ways the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission supports Victorians in understanding and standing up for their rights is through our complaints and dispute resolution process. We understand that a formal process of making and conciliating a complaint can be unsettling and intimidating for some, so we have created a Community Reporting Tool (CRT) - a simple form that makes it easier for people to make short, direct, and confidential reports about racism, discrimination, hate-speech and religious vilification, or to raise concerns about breaches of their human rights.

The CRT is a widget (think of it as an app for your phone) that you host on your website, and is an alternative to lodging a formal complaint. Making a report does not replace making a complaint but allows a community member to log the incident and have the option of taking it further.

2. Who is the CRT for?

The CRT can be used by anyone in the community to make reports of racism, sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind to the Commission. However, the CRT was developed as part of the Reducing Racism project, which was originally focused on people from African and/or Muslim communities, helping them become aware of their rights under the law and how to apply them.

3. How does the CRT work? What happens after someone makes a report?

Making a report requires only a simple description of an incident, which is then sent directly to the Commission via email. Reports are confidential, and community members can choose not to be contacted further.

If a community member requests follow up, then the Commission will consider the issue raised to determine how best to respond. For example, if there was an issue about graffiti on the side of a cafe, we would notify the council if possible. If a person reports an incident involving racism, sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind, and indicates they would like to be contacted, an Information and Engagement Officer will contact them to discuss the report, perhaps get more detail, clarify some points or even expectations. Then depending on whether the issue is covered by our legislation, the Commission will advise the person of their rights to make a complaint to access our dispute resolution service or be referred to an agency that is better suited to help with their issue. To make a complaint, the Commission can offer assistance in completing a complaint form.

We also explain to community members how reports can be used to inform our advocacy to Government about ways to address racism and religious discrimination in our communities, including strengthening our Racial and Religious Tolerance Act.

4. How is report data collected and used?

The CRT itself does not retain a database or any record of reports that are filed. All reports are sent directly to the Commission in the form of an email. Personal details of a community member are treated in strictest confidence in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic), and the Australian Privacy Principles.

We can provide your organisations with an anonymised report including the number of reports received and topic areas (e.g. racism, disability, parental/carer, sex harassment) for your reference. The level of detail we can provide is contingent on the number of reports received and the data provided by individuals.

Information from reports will help inform our advocacy work and how we promote our information and dispute resolution services so that communities know where they can get help.

5. How can organisations access the CRT?

We will send you instructions on how to embed the tool on your website. As the CRT is open source it is very easy to embed on your website, customisable with your council colours, logo or crests.

There is no fee required to participate and it is entirely voluntary.

To access the CRT, email communityreporting@veohrc.vic.gov.au.

6. Why should your organisation get involved?

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in racist incidents and increased usage of the CRT. During this time, it is important that we provide people an avenue to report incidents and for us to collect information about them.

Your organisational website is likely a key touch point for members of your community. Making the CRT available online on your website improves community access to information and justice, specifically for those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

7. Are there any risks to an organisation if a community member is dissatisfied with the outcome of a report or complaint?

In working with customers and clients, the Commission abides by its service standards which underscores our commitment to help people find answers or clarity, and with regards to complaints, a resolution.

8. We've embedded the tool on our website. What's next?

For the CRT to be 'effective', your community need to know about it and how to access it.

Firstly, the tool should be placed in a prominent or easy to find location on both the website or mobile phone or tablet. Secondly, it needs to be promoted widely and consistently to the community. We have developed a stakeholder kit to assist.

We recommend using all social media channels – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram – available for promotion as they will each reach different audiences. Including an article in newsletters, sharing the information via advisory groups, multicultural networks, social and interest groups either through email or social networking sites, will ensure broad coverage.

When promoting the CRT, please tag the Commission so we can support you by sharing your work with our followers.

If you would like support with community information sessions to raise awareness of the CRT within CALD communities, please contact communityreporting@veohrc.vic.gov.au.

9. What's in the Stakeholder Kit and how can we use it?

The Stakeholder Kit is a resource we've developed to help you promote the community reporting tool to your community. It contains key messages, suggested text as well as images that you can use in your social media posts.

Share this kit with your Communications team and work with them on creating a schedule for posts. In developing a schedule, consider the 'frequency' of posts so that your audience has a higher likelihood of finding out about the CRT.

Remember to tag the Commission in your posts so we can throw our support behind you.

10. How does COVID-19 affect the way the community can make reports?

It doesn't. The CRT is an additional mechanism for people to report. It is currently available on the websites of 17 local councils as well as the Commission's website. Anyone wanting to make a report just goes online and uses the form.

11. Does COVID-19 have an impact on how the Commission manages these reports and delivers its services?

At the Commission, we're closely monitoring advice from health authorities. Ensuring the health and safety of our staff and those who use our services remains our top priority.

To best manage the risk, we've made a few adjustments to our operations and services. Our physical office is now closed – but we're still here to help, via our live chat service or email.

Enquiry service

Our enquiry service will continue to operate during this period. If you have a question about discrimination, sexual harassment or vilification, or would like more information about your rights and responsibilities under

Victoria's anti-discrimination laws, please use our live chat service or email enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au. Please note that our enquiry phone line is temporarily closed until further notice, but our Enquiry staff can call individuals directly to discuss their enquiry or complaint, when individuals request this and provide their phone number.

Dispute resolution

Our dispute resolution service will continue to operate during this period, although we are not conducting face-to-face conciliations. We continue to offer conciliations either by telephone or video conferencing. For more information about making a complaint about discrimination, sexual harassment or vilification, please email enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au.