

6.3 BLACK LIVES MATTER

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Recognises the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement in addressing significant issues of injustice and disadvantage;*
- 2. Stands in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from the African diaspora against racism and injustice;*
- 3. Reaffirms its support for the 'Racism – It Stops With Me' campaign;*
- 4. Write to the Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Federal Attorney-General, the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Victorian Attorney-General, and all local State and Federal Members of Parliament calling for a complete audit of the recommendations from the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and a clear plan for their implementation.*

BACKGROUND

George Floyd, a black man, died on May 25th 2020 in Minnesota at the hands of a police officer who used his knee to pin Floyd's throat to the ground, choking him for over eight minutes despite Floyd's cooperation and desperate pleas to live. Floyd was being arrested for allegedly using a counterfeit bill to pay for groceries. Police video shows that he did not resist arrest.

This latest death at the hands of police has reignited international calls for political and systemic change within countries including Australia.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL DEATHS IN CUSTODY

The Black Lives Matter movement is not simply an American concern. In 1991, 14.3% of the male prison population in Australia was Indigenous and by March 2020 that figure had risen to 28.6%¹. According to ABS data release in June 2020, 4.7% of all Indigenous men are in jail compared with 0.3% of all non-Indigenous men in Australia. Indigenous Australians are now more likely to be jailed than African-Americans².

There have been at least 437 deaths in custody of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are known to have happened since the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody delivered its report in 1991³. At the time of writing the most recent occurred on the 8th June 2020. Most of these had not been found guilty of any offence as they were on remand, died while fleeing police or during arrest, or were in protective custody⁴.

¹ [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

² [SBS](#)

³ ["Deaths Inside" database](#)

⁴ Wahlquist, Calla; Evershed, Nick; Allam, Lorena (29 August 2018). ["More than half of 147 Indigenous people who died in custody had not been found guilty"](#). *The Guardian*. Retrieved 11 June 2020

The Royal Commission's key finding was that the deaths were due to the combination of police and prisons failing their duty of care, and the high numbers of Indigenous people being arrested and incarcerated. About 40% of the report's 339 recommendations relate to social factors that now form the basis for the Close the Gap reports, including youth policy, education, alcohol, health, employment, housing, land rights, self-determination and reconciliation⁵.

However, the majority of the 339 recommendations have not been implemented and many of the recommendations have only been implemented on a piecemeal and ad-hoc basis⁶.

RACISM – IT STOPS WITH ME

Monash Council supports the 'Racism - It Stops With Me' campaign.

Run by the Australian Human Rights Commission, the campaign invites all Australians to reflect on what they can do to counter racism wherever it happens.

Monash was one of the first Victorian councils to support the campaign. This is fitting given our community is the third most culturally diverse local government area in Victoria, after Greater Dandenong and Brimbank. Nearly half (49%) of Monash's population was born overseas, with 44.3% of Monash residents born in non-English speaking countries.

The campaign aims to:

- Ensure more Australians recognise that racism is unacceptable in our community
- Give more Australians the tools and resources to take practical action against racism
- Empower individuals and organisations to prevent and respond effectively to racism.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No financial impact.

⁵ [Edmund Rice Centre](#)

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