

# Anti-Racism Contact Officers (ARCOs)

Support document for the Anti-Racism Policy

## Role of the ARCO

Principals are required to nominate a member of the teaching staff to be the school's Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO). The ARCO is the contact between students, staff, parents and community members who wish to make a complaint regarding racism and the appropriate procedure that will be used to resolve the complaint, including the person who will have responsibility for dealing with the complaint - the delegate. The ARCO's role can be described under four headings:

### **Mediator role**

On receiving a complaint the ARCO, in certain circumstances, may attempt to negotiate an informal resolution.

### **Procedural role**

If an informal resolution is not appropriate or satisfactory then the complainant has the option of lodging a formal complaint.

The ARCO may assist the complainant in writing the complaint, if appropriate.

The ARCO may be asked to assist in seeking a resolution through the appropriate formal procedure but it is not the ARCO's role to lead the process. It is the delegate's role to lead the process.

In most cases complaints regarding racism are dealt with using the [Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines](#).

### **Educational role**

The ARCO can assist the principal to:

- ensure the school community is aware that the school has an ARCO, who the ARCO is and what the ARCO role involves. Posters promoting awareness of the role and identity of the ARCO are available on the Department's intranet site.
- ensure that staff are aware of relevant policies including the [Anti-Racism Policy](#); the [Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy: Multicultural education in schools](#); the [Aboriginal Education and Training Policy](#); the [Complaints Handling Policy](#) and complaints procedures as they relate to complaints about racism, and the [Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009 – 2012](#).
- promote anti-racism education in the school.

## **Monitoring role**

The ARCO can assist the principal to:

- maintain records of complaints and allegations concerning racism
- decide what statistics regarding complaints about racism would be useful to collect
- alert the school's executive and welfare team to significant statistical trends.

If a complaint is resolved then further action is not required but the situation will need to be monitored. *It is important to note that the principal is responsible for ensuring that the Anti-Racism Policy is implemented in the school and that complaints regarding racism are dealt with in accordance with the [Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines](#).*

## **Nominating an ARCO**

The ARCO needs to be an experienced teacher:

- with good communication and mediation skills
- with the trust of parents, teachers and students
- preferably without an advocacy role in the school.

It is best, therefore, that the ARCO has been a member of staff for some years so that they are easily recognised and well respected.

The cultural background of an ARCO should not be a criterion for selection. There may be members of a school's staff whose cultural background makes them appropriate advocates for students, parents and community members who wish to complain about racism, but the ARCO's role requires impartiality rather than advocacy.

In larger schools, in order to ease the potential load, the principal may wish to nominate several staff to fulfil the role of the ARCO.

## **ARCO training**

Principals must ensure that newly nominated ARCOs undertake ARCO training. ARCO training is provided by regions. Details of training sessions are available from Regional Coordinators, Equity Programs and Distance Education.

Training is usually *conducted as a one-day* course but can be delivered in three separate sessions:

- Understanding racism
- Role of the ARCO and use of complaints procedures
- Skills development for ARCOs

Course materials, including presentation slides, for the use of regional training facilitators, are available through the Multicultural Education pages on the DET Intranet. ARCO training constitutes 5 hours of NSW Institute of Teachers registered professional development at professional competence.

Regional training facilitators may vary some of the content of the course to suit local needs by selecting alternative activities and presentations available at the Anti-Racism Professional Learning section on the DET Intranet.

Until a newly appointed ARCO receives training, the principal will need to provide support and advice regarding the ARCO's role and responsibilities. Information contained in the Anti-Racism section on the DET Intranet will be of assistance.

Principals should also ensure training for executive members of staff who act as delegates in dealing with complaints regarding racism. Principals can provide this training within the school or regions may provide training for delegates either as part of ARCO training or as a separate training course.

It is important that ARCOs receive on-going executive support in undertaking their role.

## Support for ARCOs

This website provides support for ARCOs. Further information, background reading, teaching ideas and school anti-racism education strategies are available through the following websites:

[Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW](#)  
[Australian Human Rights Commission](#)  
[Diversity and Social Cohesion Program](#)  
[Making Multicultural Australia](#)  
[Racism. No way!](#)

ARCOs should also make use of the Department's policy website to access:

[Aboriginal Education and Training Policy](#)  
[Anti-Racism Policy](#)  
[Complaints Handling Policy](#)  
[Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy, Multicultural education in schools](#)

ARCOs should also be familiar with the [Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009 – 2012](#). In addition to initial training, individual regions may maintain ARCO networks to support the on-going professional learning of ARCOs. For details, contact Regional Coordinators, Equity Programs and Distance Education.