

Is Australian cricket racist?

What they said...

'There wasn't a match I wasn't racially abused in when I went out to bat'

John McGuire, an Indigenous player who is second in the all-time run-scoring list for the first-grade competition in Western Australia

'We have to be vigilant against any comments, against any actions, even though it's conducted by only a very small minority of people'

New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian warning cricket fans against making racially abusive comments

The issue at a glance

On January 9, 2021, on day three of the India vs Australia test match being played on the Sydney Cricket Ground, India captain Ajinkya Rahane and other senior players spoke to the umpires at the end of play. It was subsequently revealed that they were alleging racist abuse from some sections of the crowd.

On January 10, play was stopped for eight minutes following claims of more alleged abuse. At least six fans were removed from their seats for allegedly making racist comments after Mohammed Siraj ran in from the fine-leg boundary, alerting teammates before umpires passed on the message to security and police.

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/10/india-report-alleged-racist-abuse-from-scg-crowd-during-third-test>

A subsequent enquiry confirmed that racial abuse had occurred; however, the six spectators who had been escorted from the stadium were not the perpetrators.

<https://www.skysports.com/cricket/news/12123/12200065/cricket-australia-confirms-india-players-were-rationally-abused-in-sydney-six-fans-cleared>

The incident has provoked significant discussion regarding the extent of racism in Australian cricket.

Background

(The information and opinions below have primarily been drawn from the Wikipedia entry 'Racism in sport in Australia'. The full entry can be accessed at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism_in_sport_in_Australia#Cricket

Some material has also been taken from the comment published in Crikey titled 'Racism is woven into the very DNA of Australian cricket' and written by Charlie Lewis. The full analysis and comment can be accessed at <https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/01/11/scg-racism-india-australia-sport-cricket/>)

Racism in sport in Australia

Racism in sport in Australia has a long history as stated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). In 2006, the AHRC published the report 'What's the score? A survey of cultural diversity and racism in Australian sport', which stated that: 'Racism in sport is a complex problem. It can include racism, discrimination, harassment or vilification by players directed at other players; by spectators directed at players; or racist behaviour among rival spectator groups which spill over into disruptions and violence in the stands. It also includes the actions of sporting officials and coaches, as well as media commentators.'

Sports historian Colin Tatz traces racism in Australia sport back to the 1800s. Since the 1990s there have been numerous racial vilification cases reported in the Australian media. This is due to the increase in Indigenous athletes participating in Australian Football League (AFL)[3] and National Rugby League (NRL) and national sports organisations introducing rules to facilitate racial vilification cases.

In 1995, the Australian Football League introduced Rule 30: A Rule to Combat Racial and Religious Vilification on June 30, 1995, as a result of the shortcomings in the manner in which Michael Long's racial vilification case against Damian Monkhorst was resolved. The Rule stated that: 'no player ... shall act towards or speak to any other person in a manner, or engage in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person ... on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin'. The AFL's rule was the first racial vilification code in Australia sport. The AFL led the way with its code and subsequently most major national sports organisations, including Cricket Australia, introduced their own rules.

These voluntary sporting rules of conduct mirror Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the Racial Hatred Act 1995 Section 18 C.(1) that: "It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:

"(a) the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and

(b) the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or of some or all the people in the group. to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or group of people because of their race, colour, or ethnic or national origin".

Regarding diverse participation in Australian cricket, University of the Sunshine Coast researcher David Utting has examined how Cricket Australia until very recently aligned itself with notions of Anglo-Australia rather than embracing multiculturalism. Utting notes that between 1946 and 2015, there were only 10 Test players for the Australian men's team whose lineage was not ultimately British.

Even since then, players like Usman Khawaja, the first Australian of Pakistani origin to represent Australia, have criticised Cricket Australia's approach to multiculturalism and race. Victoria University Institute for Health and Sport research fellow Matthew Klugman has stated, 'The sense that cricket lags even behind other codes [on issues of race] is probably true. Historically it's been a much whiter sport than the various football codes. So that may be why it lacks the language to acknowledge the systemic nature of these problems. They've been doing some work, for example bringing in the Johnny Mullagh medal, but there's a long way to go.'

Internet information

On January 28, 2021, The Spectator Australia published a comment by James Macpherson titled 'Who are you calling racist?' which uses the exoneration of the six spectators removed from the Sydney Cricket Ground for alleged racism to argue that the incident was in large part a beat up to promote by an excess of political correctness.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.spectator.com.au/2021/01/who-are-you-calling-racist/>

On January 27, 2021, a Yahoo! Sport report by Chris Young titled 'Spectators cleared of racism in Aussie cricket controversy' detailed the findings of a Cricket Australia

investigation into the third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground which concluded Indian players did endure racial abuse from sections of the crowd, but cleared the six men escorted from the ground on day four of any involvement.

The full text can be accessed at <https://au.sports.yahoo.com/spectators-cleared-of-racism-in-australia-cricket-controversy-002741078.html>

On January 23, 2021, 7News published a report titled 'India fan details horrendous experience with racism during SCG Test' which detailed the allegedly racist treatment an Indian-Australian cricket fan had received during the India-Australia test played at the Sydney Cricket ground.

The full text can be accessed at <https://7news.com.au/sport/cricket/india-fan-details-horrendous-experience-with-racism-during-scg-test-c-2013636>

On January 17, 2021, The Tribune published a comment by Rohit Mahajan titled 'Up against issues of racism Down Under'

The report detailed the legislative efforts Australia has made to combat racism (including in sport) and the importance of cricketers' behaviour as role models of tolerance and diversity. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/up-against-issues-of-racism-down-under-199615>

On January 12, 2021, 7News published a report titled 'Crowd video emerges after Indian player allegedly cops racist sledge' which refers to a crowd video allegedly containing evidence of the racist taunt 'brown dog'. Police found the video 'inconclusive'.

The full text can be accessed at <https://7news.com.au/sport/cricket/crowd-video-emerges-of-moment-indian-player-allegedly-cops-racist-sledge-c-1932793>

On January 12, 2021, Gulf News published a report titled 'First-hand account of racist abuse at Australia v India third Test' which details the racism experienced by an Indian Australian spectator at the Australia vs India test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The full text can be accessed at <https://gulfnews.com/sport/cricket/first-hand-account-of-racist-abuse-at-australia-v-india-third-test-1.76436060>

On January 12, 2021, Northern Beaches Sports Tribune published a comment from sportswriter Matt Cleary titled 'Monkeygate II: Defending the Dingbat Six' which, while acknowledges the frequent boorishness of Australian cricket spectators, argues that the accusations made regarding the recent Sydney test are unlikely to be accurate.

The full text can be accessed at

https://www.todaystale.com/northernbeachessportstribune/mattcleary-a__DBcg/monkeygateiidefendingthedingbatsix-s__fdbM

On January 11, 2021, The Sydney Morning Herald published a comment by Rosalind Dixon, a professor of law and director of the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales and a former West Australian state cricketer. piece expresses disappointment and disapproval at the extent of sledging in Australian cricket, on and off field.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/i-was-sledged-as-a-nine-year-old-cricketer-and-i-think-the-sledging-culture-should-change-20210110-p56t28.html>

On January 11, 2021, The Times of India published a report titled “‘Not acceptable’: Australia's long battle with racism in sport’ which treats the recent alleged incident at the Sydney Cricket Ground and also treats historic instances in other sports. The full text can be accessed at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/cricket/india-in-australia/not-acceptable-australias-long-battle-with-racism-in-sport/articleshow/80207088.cms>

On January 11, 2021, Junkee published a comment by Merrynan Salem titled ‘The Abuse Of Indian Cricketers Is Part Of An Ongoing Culture Of Racism In Australian Cricket’ which argues that the recent alleged abuse forms part of a larger pattern of racial vilification. The full text can be accessed at <https://junkee.com/cricket-racism-australia/284361>

On January 10, 2021, the ABC published a comment and analysis by Russell Jackson titled ‘Allegations of abuse towards Indian cricketers at SCG is Australia's embarrassment’. Jackson examines the recent allegations of racist abuse directed at Australian cricket fans and places it in the context of earlier such incidents. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-10/alleged-abuse-mohammed-siraj-australia-india-embarrassment/13046230>

On November 26, 2019, The Guardian published an analysis and comment titled ‘Abuse of Jofra Archer a reminder that racism remains ingrained in cricket’. The article uses the racial abuse suffered by Jofra Archer, a Barbadian-born English cricketer representing England, from Australian and New Zealand spectators during consecutive test series as a starting point for a discussion of the causes and consequences of racist abuse in cricket. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2019/nov/25/abuse-jofra-archer-racism-ingrained-in-cricket>

On December 8, 2018, Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack published a report titled ‘Indigenous Australian cricket: Scrubbing away the whitewash’ which examines the under-representation of the Indigenous population in Australian cricket. <https://wisden.com/almanack/indigenous-australian-cricket-scrubbing-away-whitewash>

On March 19, 2018, Daily Mail published an article titled “‘They called me black, Paki, currymuncher’’: Muslim cricketer Usman Khawaja says racist sledges from opposition parents made him stronger as the sport star's wife opens up about converting to Islam’ which details the racist abuse faced by Australia’s first Pakistan-born cricketer to play for Australia. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5516237/Usman-Khawaja-tells-racist-abuse-youngster.html>

On December 5, 2017, ABC News published a comment by Catherine McGregor titled ‘The Ashes: Sledging, banter or abuse? Australia's on-field talk is just part of the game’ which defends the use of sledging in Australian cricket. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-05/the-ashes-australias-sledging-and-banter-is-part-of-the-game/9226082>

On January 20, 2015, The Betoota Advocate published an interview with Australian bowler Darren Warner revealing his unapologetic attitude to numerous self-admitted instances of racial abuse on the cricket field.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.betootaadvocate.com/headlines/boof-used-to-do-this-shit-all-the-time-what-else-did-warner-say/>

In January 2015, The Cricket Monthly published a report titled 'Advance Australia diverse'. The report details the efforts currently being made by Cricket Australia to foster cultural and racial diversity within the game and the effect this is having upon South Asian immigrants. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/816371/advance-australia-diverse>

On March 26, 2015, SBS published a comment titled 'There's no place for casual racism disguised as "just sledging"' written by Saman Shad which gives instances of racism in several Australian sports, including cricket. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/comment-there-s-no-place-for-casual-racism-disguised-as-just-sledging>

On March 1, 2006, The Journal of Sociology published a report titled 'Representing Australia: Race, the media and cricket' which analyses the media treatment of two controversial instances of racial abuse in Australian cricket and argues 'that race is...a potent but contested symbol of both inclusion and exclusion within Australia.' The full text can be accessed at [https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/5250796f-0794-4457-b7ad-eaf0d0d6b3f8/1/PDF%20\(Accepted%20manuscript\).pdf](https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/5250796f-0794-4457-b7ad-eaf0d0d6b3f8/1/PDF%20(Accepted%20manuscript).pdf)

In 2006, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission produced a report titled 'What's the score? A survey of cultural diversity and racism in Australian sport'. The report examined the Australian cricket's previous history of racial exclusion and the efforts currently being made to address this problem. The full text of the report can be accessed at https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/whats_the_score_report.pdf

In 2005, News24 published a report titled 'Aus left looking two-faced' which made a detailed reference to the instance of racial abuse in cricket involving Australian test cricketer Darren Lehmann. The episode occurred in 2003, though the article mistakenly claims it was 2001. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.news24.com/news24/aus-left-looking-two-faced-20050317>

Arguments suggesting Australian cricket is racist

1. Australian cricketers use racist sledges and other forms of racial abuse

Those who claim that Australian cricket is racist point to the racist sledges and other types of racial abuse that have been used by prominent Australian cricketers and which are a feature of lower-level cricket competitions.

In an early instance of racial abuse on the cricket field that only came to light years later through an autobiography, Roshan Mahanama claimed that Australian pace bowler Glenn McGrath had called Sanath Jayasuriya, the star Sri Lankan batsman, a 'black monkey'. This claim was made about a match in 1996, in a book published in 2001.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/racism-cricket-field-racist-slurs-cricketers-6451611/>

In 2003, Australian test batsman Darren Lehmann, who went on to coach the Australian national team, became the first Australian cricketer to be suspended for racial vilification when he yelled the words 'black c**t' after being dismissed during a one-day international

played in Brisbane against Sri Lanka. <https://www.news24.com/news24/aus-left-looking-two-faced-20050317>

Siri Kannangara, the Sri Lankan team doctor, claimed that in his 25 years' experience of Australian tours, the language used by Lehmann was not unusual. Kannangara stated, 'It happens a lot. On the field. About skin colour.'

<https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/racism-cricket-field-racist-slurs-cricketers-6451611/>

In 2015, during Australia's Tri-Series One Day International game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australian vice-captain David Warner demanded Indian batsman Rohit Sharma speak English instead of his native Hindi during a mid-pitch altercation between the two. Warner disputed the legality of a single the Indian player had run. Video replays showed the run was legitimate and Warner was fined 50 percent of his match fee over the incident.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/comment-there-s-no-place-for-casual-racism-disguised-as-just-sledging>

Later, commenting unofficially on what he had said, Lehmann remarked, 'I'll tell you one thing, I'd be in a whole heap more shit if the cameras saw the [other] shots I fired back. Essentially, I told him that maybe he should consider going back to India'. Indicating no regret for his comments, Warner said, 'Maybe it's not that politically correct – but I am a Western Suburbs boy 'till I die. I am not ashamed of that.' Warner further remarked, 'Boof used to do this shit all the time, referring to Australian coach, Darren Lehman's racial outburst against Sri Lanka in 2003. <https://www.betootaadvocate.com/headlines/boof-used-to-do-this-shit-all-the-time-what-else-did-warner-say/>

Critics of on-field racism argue it occurs at all levels of the sport and may be more prevalent at the lower grades than the higher as these levels of the competition are less closely regulated and do not attract the same degree of media attention. In a comment piece on on-field sledging in Australian cricket, published by the ABC in December 2017, Catherine McGregor noted, 'Firstly, the lower the grade the more vile the abuse that one can expect from the opposition.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-05/the-ashes-australias-sledging-and-banter-is-part-of-the-game/9226082>

John McGuire, an Indigenous player who played most of his cricket career for Mount Lawley District Cricket Club in Western Australian Grade Cricket and is second in the all-time run-scoring list for the first-grade competition, accumulating more than 10,000 runs, without ever being chosen for his state, has noted, 'There wasn't a match I wasn't racially abused in when I went out to bat.' McGuire referred particularly to white players calling him a coconut: black on the outside, white on the inside. McGuire explained, 'That's one of the worst things you can say to an Aboriginal, but I was called much worse. I was called a black cunt so many times.' <https://wisden.com/almanack/indigenous-australian-cricket-scrubbing-away-whitewash>

A 2015 Australian National University report on Indigenous exclusion from Australian cricket noted that on-field racial abuse was not discouraged and referred to 'poor practices and ignorance at many club and district levels when it comes to providing an open, welcoming and safe space for Indigenous engagement to occur'.

<https://wisden.com/almanack/indigenous-australian-cricket-scrubbing-away-whitewash>

2. Australian cricket fans are racially abusive

Those who claim that Australian cricket is racist point to the racially offensive behaviour often demonstrated by sections of the crowd attending cricket matches.

The issue has come to a head recently with the accusations of racial abuse being directed by members of the crowd at members of the Indian team competing in the second test match held at the Sydney Cricket ground in January 2021. An Indian cricket team official has

accused Australian spectators of calling Indian bowler Mohammed Siraj a 'brown dog' and a 'big monkey' during the third Test in Sydney. <https://7news.com.au/sport/cricket/crowd-video-emerges-of-moment-indian-player-allegedly-cops-racist-sledge-c-1932793>

It has been claimed that racist abuse that saw six fans ejected from the ground on the fourth day of the competition was not an isolated incident. Krishna Kumar, who was in the crowd supporting India during the Sydney game, has noted the racist abuse that he heard earlier in the test. He claims to have heard chants of 'curry munchers' directed at India's players and fans, while also being told to 'stop waving (his) f**king flag' and to 'shut the f**k up and sit down.' He noted, 'To me, it is hard to believe that the staff or security at the SCG were not able to hear this ... it's baffling, it's shocking that no one took action on day three (about) the crowd behavior.' <https://7news.com.au/sport/cricket/india-fan-details-horrendous-experience-with-racism-during-scg-test-c-2013636>

It has also been claimed that this racist conduct is not a recent development but an entrenched aspect of the behaviour of Australian cricket crowds. Veteran Indian player, Ravichandran Ashwin has claimed he has been the victim of abuse from Sydney crowds for almost a decade. Ashwin stated, 'This is my fourth tour of Australia and in Sydney, we have had a few experiences even in the past... The way the crowd have been speaking ... they have been quite nasty and hurling abuse as well. There is a time where they have gone one step ahead and used racial abuses.' <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/10/india-report-alleged-racist-abuse-from-scg-crowd-during-third-test>

Ashwin further noted, 'If I take myself back to my first tour in 2011-12, I had no clue about racial abuse and how you can be made to feel small in front of so many people... When I stood at the boundary line, you wanted to stand another 10 yards in to keep yourself away from these things.' <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/10/india-report-alleged-racist-abuse-from-scg-crowd-during-third-test>

The same point has been made by former Australian test batsman Ed Cowan, who has stated, 'Casual or otherwise, racism is a massive issue in Australian society... The big thing other people haven't spoken about is this happens every game. This is not an outlier.' <https://www.news24.com/sport/cricket/former-australia-batsman-ed-cowan-we-are-a-very-racist-nation-20210113>

There have been many earlier instances of racist crowd behaviour. In 2003 during a test played between India and Australia on the Adelaide Oval Indian spectators and journalists reported being called names such as 'coolie' and 'curry muncher'. One Indian immigrant, who sits on the board of a major corporation in Melbourne, said he had feared for his safety as he left the Adelaide Oval.

During the same competition, an officially organised 'spectator of the day' competition was held in which the finalists selected from the crowd included six local men who had darkened their skin and donned nappies and turbans to resemble the Indian spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi. <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/race-issue-catches-crowds-out-20031219-gdwyqc.html>

In 2005, South African black cricketer Makhaya Ntini complained that sections of the crowd in the Perth test called him and several other players 'kaffirs' (blacks) and 'kaffir boetie' (brother of blacks). <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/taunts-unbearable-says-test-tourist-20051222-ge1gw6.html>

In a 1986 Boxing Day test between England and Australia, played in Melbourne, fans racially abused West Indian-born Englishman Gladstone Small by throwing bananas at him. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-10/alleged-abuse-mohammed-siraj-australia-india-embarrassment/13046230>

Victoria University Institute for Health and Sport research fellow Matthew Klugman has stated, 'It's fair to say Australian cricket is still a place of systemic racism — as is Australia

at large, the fan culture just reflects this.’ <https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/01/11/scg-racism-india-australia-sport-cricket/>

3. Australian sports commentators regularly make racist comments

Those who argue that Australian cricket is racist claim that the problem extends to Australian sports commentators, who, they claim, like many players and supporters, also display racist attitudes.

In 2006, Australian Test cricketer and subsequent commentator Dean Jones referred to South African cricketer Hashim Amla as a ‘terrorist’ when the South African player took a catch to dismiss Kumar Sangakkara. ‘The terrorist gets another wicket,’ Jones was heard saying when the broadcast switched to a commercial break. Jones was sacked as a commentator following this remark and his comment was condemned as inflammatory and bigoted as a reference to someone of the Muslim faith. <https://www.theweek.in/news/sports/2020/09/24/when-dean-jones-called-hashim-amla-a-terrorist.html>

During the 2015 Cricket World Cup, Channel Nine’s Today show host Karl Stefanovic asked a group of Indian cricket fans who would be staffing 7-Eleven shops during the World Cup clash. The remark has been condemned as racist stereotyping.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/comment-there-s-no-place-for-casual-racism-disguised-as-just-sledging>

In 2018, during the India vs Australia Test being played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, former Australian test cricketer Kerry O’Keefe, working as a commentator for Fox Sports, stated that Indian opening batsman Mayank Agarwal’s highest First-Class score of 304 not out came against ‘the Railways Canteen staff’. <https://scroll.in/field/907506/why-would-you-name-your-kid-cheteshwar-asks-commentator-okeeffe-on-air-slammed-on-twitter>. O’Keefe went on to ask, ‘Who opened the bowling for them that day? The chef. First change? The kitchen hand. And they’ve got the spinner as well, the casual uni student.’

<https://wisden.com/series-stories/australia-india/okeeffes-non-apology-demonstrates-hes-unfit-duty> This was understood as disparaging the Indian team against which Agarwal had made his triple century, drawing on racial stereotypes of Indians as railway workers, cooks, and food servers. During the same broadcast, former Australian Test cricketer, Mark Waugh, commented that Agarwal’s first-class average of upwards of 50 was like 40 in Australia.

<https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/india-vs-australia-fans-slam-okeefe-for-racist-remarks-on-mayank-agarwals-debut-1983905.html>

During the same test match, O’Keefe reputedly made a further disparaging remark about the names of Indian players during commentary on the fourth day of the Indian vs Australia test being played in Melbourne. After being asked about his difficulty pronouncing the names of the Indian players, O’Keefe remarked, ‘Why would you name your kid Cheteshwar, Jadeja?’ His fellow commentators were heard laughing in response. <https://scroll.in/field/907506/why-would-you-name-your-kid-cheteshwar-asks-commentator-okeeffe-on-air-slammed-on-twitter>

In December 2020, former Australian Test cricketer Shayne Warne was criticised for a racist reference that also centred on Cheteshwar Pujara’s name. During his commentary for Fox Sport on Day 1 of the Adelaide Test between India and Australia, Warne referred to Pujara as ‘Steve’. The remark was considered offensive not just because it suggested a refusal to use the Indian player’s actual name but because of its association with an ongoing instance of racist abuse dating from Pujara’s time playing for English county club, Yorkshire.

<https://www.wionews.com/sports/thats-racist-fans-blast-shane-warne-for-calling-cheteshwar-pujara-as-steve-350428>

In December 2020, Yorkshire launched an investigation into alleged racism after cricketer Azeem Rafiq lodged a case against the club claiming racism. A Yorkshire employee named Taj Butt further alleged that the name ‘Steve’ was used as a reference to ‘every player of

colour'. Butt also stated, 'There were continuous references to taxi drivers and restaurant workers when referring to the Asian community.' <https://www.wionews.com/sports/thats-racist-fans-blast-shane-warne-for-calling-cheteshwar-pujara-as-steve-350428> Critics objected to Warne's apparent in-joke at Pujara's expense drawing on this accusation of racism. <https://www.wionews.com/sports/thats-racist-fans-blast-shane-warne-for-calling-cheteshwar-pujara-as-steve-350428>

4. Historically, Indigenous Australians and others of non-Anglo-Saxon origins have been excluded from cricket

Those who claim that Australian cricket is racist point to the extent to which the game is monopolized by players with an Anglo-Celtic background and claim that since its inception Australian cricket has excluded those of different ethnic backgrounds.

University of the Sunshine Coast researcher David Utting has examined how Cricket Australia has traditionally aligned itself with notions of Anglo-Australia rather than embracing multiculturalism. Utting notes that between 1946 and 2015, there were only 10 Test players for the Australian men's team whose lineage was not British.

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/01/11/scg-racism-india-australia-sport-cricket/>

Critics of the racial bias of the game claim that when different ethnicities fail to see their race represented in the higher echelons of the game, such as Test cricket, then they cease to aspire to play at a local level. Political and social commentator Waleed Aly has contrasted the stance of Cricket Australia with that of the producers of the children's television program, Sesame Street. Sesame Street contained a vast range of characters because its producers believed that if a child did not find a reflection of him or herself - through gender, race, ability - on the show, it was like looking into a mirror and seeing nothing. Aly accused the Australian Cricket Board of having a 'narrow' approach in its selection processes which potentially alienated a large part of its potential support and player base.

<https://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/816371/advance-australia-diverse>

As an indication of the limited infiltration of non-Anglo players into cricket competition at lower levels, sports historian Richard Cashman has noted in a 1995 study of Under-19 cricketers in six states and two territories that all but one of 80 were born in Australia with only two stating that English was not the only language spoken at home.

<https://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/816371/advance-australia-diverse>

The situation regarding the inclusion of Indigenous players in cricket has been noted as particularly parlous. John McGuire, an Indigenous player who played most of his cricket career for Mount Lawley District Cricket Club in Western Australian Grade Cricket and is second in the all-time run-scoring list for the first-grade competition, accumulating more than 10,000 runs, was never once chosen for his state. McGuire has stated, 'For the past 40 years of my life, I've been trying through the West Australian Cricket Association (WACA) to encourage and create a pathway for Aboriginal cricketers and unfortunately, nothing has been done. It's fallen short simply by exclusion. There's plenty of talent out there, it's just never been tapped. It's appalling.' <https://www.espncricinfo.com/story/the-indigenous-hole-at-australian-cricket-s-heart-1226038>

McGuire has concluded, 'Let's be honest about it, cricket hasn't been a game for all Australians. Aboriginals think cricket is a white fella's sport, because we don't see black players in the team. That is why West Indies were my team. I could identify with them.' <https://www.espncricinfo.com/story/the-indigenous-hole-at-australian-cricket-s-heart-1226038>

Cricketers of diverse nationalities have noted how difficult and destructive the racism they have encountered from other players was and how difficult it made it for them to continue playing the game. In a report on Indigenous exclusion in cricket published in 2015, one

Indigenous player noted, 'One guy said to me on the field, "what are you playing cricket for boong boy? Go play rugby league with ya coon mates."' Another example came from an Indigenous player who decided to keep his race secret. He stated, 'I'm the only Aboriginal player in the team [although my teammates didn't know that]. I...was too scared to let anyone know...I remember them [my team] bagging out a black guy from another team, really badly, and I was just ashamed.' <https://www.espnricinfo.com/story/the-indigenous-hole-at-australian-cricket-s-heart-1226038>

Similar examples of exclusion on the field and in club rooms have been cited at different levels of Australian cricket. Usman Khawaja, Australia's first Muslim Test cricketer has told of the racial abuse he suffered as a youngster with other players' parents calling him a 'Paki' and opponents branding him a 'f***ing curry-muncher'. He has explained the psychological effect such treatment has on those of different racial origins either playing the game or considering doing so. Khawaja has stated, 'It is for this reason why so many of my friends, most of whom were born outside Australia, didn't support Australia in sporting contests...especially in cricket.' <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5516237/Usman-Khawaja-tells-racist-abuse-youngster.html>

Khawaja has further stated, 'My point is this: it's no surprise it has taken Australia cricket so long for coloured players to come through the system. There is no doubt racism and politics played a large role in selections in the past.

"I could have played for Australia, but I didn't get selected because I was black/Indian/Pakistani, so I stopped playing." I've heard that story all my life, whether it was from a family friend or just a random bloke...' <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5516237/Usman-Khawaja-tells-racist-abuse-youngster.html>

5. Cricket Australia has not done enough to ensure racial diversity and tolerance in cricket
Cricket Australia, the governing body of the game, has been criticised for not having done sufficient to ensue ethnic and cultural diversity in cricket.

Victoria University Institute for Health and Sport research fellow Matthew Klugman has stated, 'The sense that cricket lags even behind other codes [on issues of racial diversity] is probably true. Historically it's been a much whiter sport than the various football codes.' <https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/01/11/scg-racism-india-australia-sport-cricket/>

It has been claimed that Cricket Australia has not done sufficient to ensure that Australian cricket reflects the diversity of Australia's population. A survey of Australian cricket clubs conducted in 2003-4 found that only 1.35 percent of players were of indigenous origin, while only 11.25 percent were of a non-English speaking background.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/whats_the_score_report.pdf

This primarily white, Anglo-Saxon representation has been criticised. Writing on ESPNcricinfo in 2013 about an Australian team of 20 years ago, the journalist Adam Cooper said that their first names read like 'Home and Away regulars: Mark, David, Justin, Mark, Steve, Allan, Ian, Paul, Shane, Merv and Craig.' This is well after Australia's migration demographic had changed from post-war Eurocentric arrivals to immigrants from far-east and south-east Asia. <https://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/816371/sharda-ugra--advance-australia-diverse>

As of 2015, one in four Australians was born overseas, with a further 20 percent belonging to homes with at least one parent born in another country. In the four-year period from 2007 to census 2011, nine out of ten 'recent arrivals' to Australia came from Asian nations with immigrants from India making up 13 percent.

<https://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/816371/advance-australia-diverse> While as of

2016, 3.3 percent of Australia's population identify as Aboriginal. <https://tinyurl.com/yy5jm4mr>
Australian cricket does not reflect this diversity.

The failure of Cricket Australia to adequately address the issue of a lack of ethnic and cultural diversity within the sport is claimed to be apparent when Australia is compared with other nations in which cricket has historically been a 'white' game. In a study of racism in Australian cricket published in the Journal of Sociology in 2006 it was noted that among the test playing nations in which cricket has been dominated by white players and administrators, the Australian cricket team has been one of the slowest to desegregate, remaining almost entirely white. Notably, the English team, which has recently had a captain of Asian descent, is more racially integrated than the Australian team, and has been for at least two decades. It was also noted that in post-apartheid South Africa, part of the shift towards building a non-racial rainbow nation has been to develop quota systems, in which teams have been required at particular times to have a certain number of black players in the squad.

[https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/5250796f-0794-4457-b7ad-eaf0d0d6b3f8/1/PDF%20\(Accepted%20manuscript\).pdf](https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/5250796f-0794-4457-b7ad-eaf0d0d6b3f8/1/PDF%20(Accepted%20manuscript).pdf)

Critics have claimed that Cricket Australia has lagged behind the administrative bodies of other key cricketing nations in ensuring that they present multicultural teams that better reflect the racial diversity of their countries. Ian Chappell, former Australian test cricket captain and now a cricket commentator, is among those critical of Cricket Australia's efforts up to this point. Chappell has stated, 'It's only in very recent times that much has been done to try to attract Aboriginals to the game...It's a very diverse country and there's no doubt that cricket doesn't reflect that diversity yet.' <https://www.espnricinfo.com/story/australia-vs-india-2020-pat-cummins-australia-haven-t-done-enough-to-address-racism-1239337>

It has also been claimed that despite the anti-racial vilification regulations governing the game, Cricket Australia has not done enough to shift the culture within the team. Mark Anthony Taylor, a former Australian cricketer and currently a Cricket Australia director and Nine Network commentator, has said in relation to racist attitudes among Australian players, 'There's been enough smoke to know that there's some fire there. There's probably been warning signs for a while and we've probably been too slow to react to those warning signs.' <https://www.cricketcountry.com/news/mark-taylor-criticises-cricket-australia-s-slow-response-to-moeen-ali-s-racism-allegations-746339>

Arguments suggesting Australian cricket is not racist

1. Australian cricket has outlawed racist language and behaviour

Defenders of Australian cricket against the charge that it is racist note that racist sledging on the field and that racist abuse from among spectators are clearly prohibited.

The International Cricket Council (ICC - the global governing body for cricket) prohibits any form of sledging that could be judged offensive. There are specific regulations put in place to prohibit racist abuse. 'Any use of language or gestures that are likely to offend another person on the basis of their race, religion, gender, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin... is prohibited under the ICC's Anti-Racism Code and must be dealt with according to the procedures set out therein.' <https://www.lawinsport.com/topics/item/where-do-different-sports-draw-the-line-on-sledging-and-taunting-part-1-cricket-and-tennis>

The Code makes it an offence to engage 'in any conduct (whether through the use of language, gestures or otherwise) which is likely to offend, insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, disparage or vilify any reasonable person in the position of a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee, Umpire Support Personnel or any other person (including a spectator) on the basis of their race, religion, culture, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status and/or maternity status.' <file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/ICC-Anti-Discrimination-Code-for-Participants-FV-Effective->

1-Aug-2019.pdf

Under the code players can be banned from playing for a specified time and mandatorily 'undergo a programme of education/counselling designed to promote the understanding and awareness of issues directly relevant to the offence that the Participant has been determined to have committed.' file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/ICC-Anti-Discrimination-Code-for-Participants-FV-Effective-1-Aug-2019.pdf

Penalties also apply to spectators who make racially offensive comments or gestures. ICC Members [are able] to impose punishments on spectators found guilty of discrimination, which may include ejection from the venue or a ban of a specified period from attending venues within the Member's jurisdiction to watch cricket, and to deliver preventative measures at International Matches.' <https://www.icc-cricket.com/about/integrity/anti-discrimination>

The ICC allows member countries to determine the exact way they will implement the Anti-Racism Code. In 2016, Cricket Australia introduced its own Anti-Racism Code for Players and Player Support Personnel. The Cricket Australia Code states it is intended 'as part of CA's continuing efforts to maintain the public image, popularity and integrity of cricket by providing: (a) an effective means to deter any participant from conducting themselves in a manner that may be construed as racially and/or religiously offensive; and (b) a robust disciplinary procedure pursuant to which all matters of improper conduct of this nature can be dealt with fairly, with certainty and in an expeditious manner.'

file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/Section%2020%20-%20Anti-Racism%20Code.pdf

The Cricket Australia Anti-Racism Code for Players and Player Support Personnel largely replicates the ICC's Code. Regarding penalties, 'In addition to any [international] ban imposed.... a Player [may be banned] from participation in any club/grade cricket match or matches in Australia for a specified period of time.' The same mandatory education programmes also apply file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/Section%2020%20-%20Anti-Racism%20Code.pdf

Regarding racist abuse originating from spectators, Cricket Australia has also acted. Following the racist sledging of South African players during the Perth Test in 2005, Cricket Australia ordered security staff to eject any perpetrators from the ground and heavy fines for racist behaviour were put in place.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

In September 2006, the International Cricket Council Chief Executives Committee (CEC) agreed to adopt and implement an amended Anti-Racism Code signaling a new attack on racist behaviour. The amendments are designed to allow ICC members to impose a range of punishments on spectators found guilty of racist abuse, ranging from ejection from the venue to life bans.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

2. Many accusations of racism among fans are unfounded and only a small minority of fans are racially abusive

Many of those who defend Australian cricket against accusations of racism note that many claims made about racist fans are inaccurate and that only a small percentage of spectators make racist remarks.

It has been claimed that crowd behaviour condemned as racist has often been misconstrued and that good-humoured banter is often mistaken for racism. This defence was offered after the incident in the January 2021 India vs Australia test played at the Sydney Cricket Ground which saw six spectators ejected from the ground. A nearby spectator has since claimed that

the group were not being racist, but merely exhibiting ‘Aussie humour... It was all a bit of banter and one-liners, [there] was nothing racist at all said to this guy [Indian bowler Mohammed Siraj]. Indian fans came up to me and they were loving it; they were even throwing some one-liners at the Australian team when they came out to field.’

<https://www.2gb.com/a-bit-of-banter-cricket-fans-cast-doubt-on-indian-players-racism-claims/>

Some of those present at the game have claimed that the sledging from the crowd has led to an overreaction. Indian-Australian spectator Rishi Aryan, who was seated in the same bay, told the Herald and The Age, ‘All these boys were doing is a bit of sledging of the player on the outfield. First it was Bumrah, then they had a sledge against Siraj. They kept calling him Shiraz and all that crap. Next thing you know they said: “Welcome to Sydney, Siraj” and then he got the shits. That was literally it. Then he walked off.’

<https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/police-eject-six-fans-from-scg-for-alleged-abuse-of-indian-cricketer-20210110-p56t0q.html>

Aryan added, ‘I don’t know why [the police kicked the men out]. Next thing you know you see police everywhere. It didn’t make sense. It was confusing.’

<https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/police-eject-six-fans-from-scg-for-alleged-abuse-of-indian-cricketer-20210110-p56t0q.html>

Another spectator with his family believed there was nothing racist said. He also corroborated Mr Aryan’s statement that the phrase ‘Welcome to Sydney, Siraj’ was used.

<https://www.theage.com.au/sport/cricket/police-eject-six-fans-from-scg-for-alleged-abuse-of-indian-cricketer-20210110-p56t0q.html>

Ben Grogan, a senior executive in the New South Wales public sector, was sitting just behind the men police removed from the ground, watching the game with his nine-year-old son. Mr Grogan said there was a separate group of young spectators to his right who had been asked to] leave earlier in the afternoon by SCG staff. Drinking heavily, they had been the most vocal and it was they who had referred to Siraj as ‘Shiraz’. He explained, ‘They were just a real poor man's Barmy Army sort of thing. They were singing songs like, “We love you Jasprit, we do”; “Jasprit, give us a wave”, weaving his name into songs, stuff like that. There was no derogatory stuff, but it was just constant. It wasn't a great workplace but there was nothing racist.’ <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/siraj-tells-ca-probe-of-racial-slurs-as-new-witness-reports-no-derogatory-stuff-20210112-p56thh.html>

It has also been claimed that some of the accusations of racist abuse from the crowd may not only have been mistaken; they may also have been false and possibly motivated by player pique and frustration. Another Indian-Australian spectator, Prateik Kelkar, who was sitting just in front of the fans later ejected from the Sydney Cricket Ground, has said, ‘We got kicked out as well for sticking up for them, for saying that they didn’t say anything...

[Siraj] was pissed off because he got hit for two sixes the previous over. He came to field on the boundary. He was copping it a bit and then they said: ‘Welcome to Sydney, Siraj’. Next thing we knew they were getting kicked out.’

https://www.advanceaustralia.org.au/cancel_culture_sees_racism_where_there_is_none_at_the_scg_test

Those who defend Australian cricket against accusations of racism also observe that, to the extent that there is racism among spectators, it is confined to a small minority. Matt Cleary, a freelance sports journalist, has stated, ‘Like anywhere there’s a tiny percentage of card-carrying cross-burners, maybe five percent [cross burners is a reference to racists like the Ku Klux Klan]’ https://www.todaystale.com/northernbeachessportstribune/mattcleary-a__DBcg/monkeygateidefendingthedingbatsix-s__fdbM

New South Wales premier, Gladys Berejiklian, has also called for the need to act against spectator racism, while stressing that it occurs among only a small minority of fans.

Berejiklian stated, 'We have to be vigilant against any comments, against any actions, even though it's conducted by only a very small minority of people.'

<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/breaking-news/indigenous-cricket-star-dan-christian-calls-for-sporting-role-model-to-act-on-casual-racism/news-story/1f40cd923ba9b51c68c3d60c73e228a2>

3. Racial abuse is not tolerated among cricket commentators

Those who argue that Australian cricket is not racist note that cricket commentators who make racist remarks are normally reprimanded and sometimes fired. They further note that this is in part because listening and viewing audiences will not accept such conduct.

In 2006, Dean Jones, a former Australia Test batsman, later a cricket commentator for Ten Sports, was heard calling South African batsman Hashim Amla a 'terrorist' on live television during play between Sri Lanka and South Africa at Colombo.

When Amla, a devout Muslim, took the catch to dismiss Kumar Sangakkara, Jones was heard to say 'the terrorist has got another wicket'. Such commentary provoked an immediately hostile reaction from viewing audiences who saw it as racist and inflammatory. Gerald Majola, Cricket South Africa's chief executive, said, 'The switchboards of both Cricket South Africa and SuperSport, that takes a feed of the broadcast to South African audiences, have been jammed with calls from some very angry people.'

<https://www.espnricinfo.com/story/dean-jones-sacked-after-terrorist-remark-255892>

Majola added that 'this kind of insulting racial stereotyping has no place in cricket and must be stamped on swiftly. The ICC has strongly condemned racism and we will be discussing the matter with them.' <https://www.espnricinfo.com/story/dean-jones-sacked-after-terrorist-remark-255892>

Ray Reed, the director of communications for Taj TV, whose channel Ten Sports is beamed into 50 million households, subsequently stated, 'We've terminated Dean Jones's freelance contract with immediate effect... As a company we have a zero-tolerance policy regarding such comments.' <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/me-and-my-big-mouth-deano-sacked-for-calling-cricketer-a-terrorist-20060809-gdo4yk.html>

Majola also remarked, 'We take the strongest exception to this comment, and we will lodge an official complaint with the host broadcaster, Ten Sports, that employs him. We will be asking for his immediate suspension and a full apology.'

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news>

Dean subsequently apologised for his comment and returned to Australia after his sacking. When, in December 2018, former Australian test cricketer and current commentator Kerry O'Keefe referred to an Indian domestic team as 'the Railways canteen staff' and subsequently queried why any parent would call their child by a traditional Indian name, his remarks lead to widespread criticism from listeners. Criticism included, 'It's pretty uncool to ridicule the FC comp of another country while using dubious stereotypes for a cheap laugh', 'O'Keefe is a buffoon. That diatribe on the #RanjiTrophy competition was classic casual racism and disgracefully inaccurate', and 'Pretty sure this will be the last commentary stint for O'Keefe. Racism will not go unnoticed by officials.'

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/cricket-veteran-australian-commentator-kerry-okeeffe-forced-to-apologise-over-racist-on-air-gaffe/235OEU5RAZRQXDSISWZFY62WPM/>

In the event, O'Keefe was not fired; however, he did issue an apology for his comments. O'Keefe's 'open letter to Indian players and fans' was published on Fox Sport, for whom he commentates. O'Keefe wrote, 'I have been devastated by the reaction to my on-air comments on Fox Cricket during the recently completed Third Test between Australia and India... I was certainly not disrespecting Indian cricket, where I toured as a schoolboy and for which I have the greatest admiration as a cricketing nation.'

<https://www.foxsports.com.au/cricket/australia/an-open-letter-to-indian-players-and-fans-from-kerry-okeeffe/news-story/c0f90d03036e3333dd99b4ec9316008b>

Such incidents have also occurred in the past and have seen a commentator suspended when the employing company judged the incident sufficiently serious. In 1997, former Australian test cricketer and then Channel 9 cricket commentator Greg Ritchie is alleged to have spat food while in Ansett's Perth Golden Wing Lounge and to have made a racial slur to an employee. Though the incident did not occur while Ritchie was commentating and though Ritchie subsequently apologised for his behaviour he was suspended for two months from Channel 9's cricket commentary team as an indication of his employer's disapproval of what he had done and desire to separate the channel from his racist conduct.

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/sport/ritchie-in-strife-with-fbi/news-story/8070d106c0b390a865b139478bba0687>

4. Cricket Australia actively supports Indigenous reconciliation

Defenders of Australian cricket against accusations of racism point to the steps Cricket Australia is taking to acknowledge Indigenous players and encourage more Indigenous sportspeople to take up the game.

In 2014 Australian Cricket's Reconciliation Action Plan for 2014 to 2018 was announced.

The plan outlined the establishment of a National Indigenous Cricket including programs to promote Indigenous participation in cricket and increase Australian Cricket's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It undertook to complete an ANU Research Project and Report into Indigenous cricket in Australia and to set up local Indigenous advisory committees in each State and Territory as well as a National Indigenous Cricket Advisory Committee (NICAC).

<file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/AUSTRALIAN%20CRICKETS%20RECONCILIATION%20ACTION%20FINAL.pdf>

The central vision of the plan was stated as 'We are deeply committed to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as participants, fans, staff, administrators and officials. Our game plays a significant role in uniting and inspiring Australians. There is no more important endeavour to bring our nation together in reconciliation.'

<file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/AUSTRALIAN%20CRICKETS%20RECONCILIATION%20ACTION%20FINAL.pdf>

The plan announced that Cricket Australia would implement formal Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies as part of Cricket Australia's events, all men's and women's international fixtures, KFC T20 Big Bash League (BBL) matches and formal meetings. They also undertook that all Cricket Australia Board members and senior management would receive training in cultural awareness to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history.

The plan also includes a commitment to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Australian Cricket's Boards, to increase the number of scholarships provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players and to develop a national mentoring program for talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cricket players to assist with retention.

<file:///C:/Users/Pc/Downloads/AUSTRALIAN%20CRICKETS%20RECONCILIATION%20ACTION%20FINAL.pdf>

In 2019, Cricket Australia released its second Reconciliation Action Plan, which covers the period to the end of 2021. As part of this plan, Cricket Australia began in 2020 presenting the player judged best afield in the Boxing Day Test with the Mullagh Medal. This is a replica of the belt buckle worn by the famous 1868 Aboriginal players - the first Australian cricket squad to tour England. The buckle has been converted into a medal named in honour of the

star all-rounder of the team, Johnny Mullagh, In 2020 Cricket Australia also begun an annual reconciliation round for community and premier clubs. There will also be an annual international match with either the national men's or women's teams, commemorating the achievements of the 1868 team. <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/real-and-lasting-change-cricket-unveils-new-reconciliation-plan-20191205-p53h20.html>

It has been claimed that Cricket Australia's Reconciliation Plan has already begun to have an effect. Reconciliation Australia chief executive Karen Mundine has noted there had been an eight-fold increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the game since 2013, from 8500 to 69,092 by July 2019. There are nine Aboriginal cricketers contracted in state and/or Big Bash teams, including Australian stars Ashleigh Gardiner and D'Arcy Short. As part of the plan, Cricket Australia also wants to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff it employs to two per cent by April 2022.

<https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/real-and-lasting-change-cricket-unveils-new-reconciliation-plan-20191205-p53h20.html>

As an indication of commitment to reconciliation, Cricket Australia dropped the term 'Australia Day' from promotions in a bid to normalise conversations over the date's history, while three Big Bash clubs decided to wear Indigenous jerseys. A barefoot circle, Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony also took place before some games, with Cricket Australia leading the initiative backed by the clubs. <https://www.cricket.com.au/news/january-26-long-weekend-public-holiday-bbl-indigenous-jerseys-reconciliation-action-plan/2021-01-21>

5. Cricket Australia has a set of codes that encourage inclusivity and prohibit and penalise racially and culturally discriminatory behaviour

Those who defend Cricket Australia against accusations that it is culturally and racially exclusive point to its long-standing and continuing efforts to promote inclusivity within cricket and to prohibit and penalise racially and culturally discriminatory behaviour.

In its discussion of racial discrimination within Australian sport, 'What's the score? A survey of cultural diversity and racism in Australian sport', the Australian Human Rights Commission acknowledges the range of measures that Cricket Australia has either endorsed or put in place to increase racial and cultural diversity within the game. It notes that Cricket Australia's junior cricket policy outlines a code of behaviour which identifies the key principles on which coaches, teachers, umpires, officials, parents, and players should base their cricket involvement.

The policy covers areas such as: equity and access; player development and game formats; safety and injury prevention; growing and managing junior clubs; spirit and etiquette of the game; and codes of behaviour. The codes all state to: 'respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion' and for umpires to 'give all young people a 'fair go' regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion'.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

The Codes of Behaviour were developed by the Australian Sports Commission's 'Active Australia' initiative and have been adapted to reflect the principles and spirit of cricket in Australia. Cricket Australia recommends the adoption of these codes by clubs and schools, with distribution of the Codes of Behaviour to all appropriate groups at the start of the current cricket season. They should apply in addition to, rather than as a substitute for, any other codes that a school, club or association may have in place.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

Cricket Australia also has a racial and religious vilification code which has been adopted for all national competitions under their direct auspices. The code stipulates that ‘a player will not engage in any conduct, act towards or speak to any other player in a manner, which offends, insults, humiliates, intimidates, threatens, disparages or vilifies the other player on the basis of that player’s race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin’. Cricket Australia also recommends that all cricket associations, clubs and schools adopt this code and be pro-active in educating junior participants’ interpretation of it.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

Cricket Australia advises, where adults are involved with a breach of the code, that they be dealt with seriously and remedial action should be a mandatory requirement by clubs and associations. In more serious cases, a conciliation procedure should be considered and conducted by a representative of the equal opportunity commission in the state where the breach has purportedly occurred. The conciliation should involve the complainant, umpire/officials who initiate the complaint, the respondent, and any supporting documentation.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

In 2003, Cricket Australia’s contracted players wrote a code that represents the spirit in which they seek to play the game. It states: ‘we do not condone or engage in sledging or any other conduct that constitutes personal abuse’ and ‘we acknowledge and respect that our opponents may hold different cultural values and beliefs from our own, and value the diversity and richness this adds to the game. By treating our opponents with dignity and forging bonds of mutual respect, we will overcome any cultural barriers’.

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/racial_discrimination/whats_the_score/pdf/cricket.pdf

Australian and state players are also bound by the Code of Behaviour, which includes anti-harassment, and racial and religious vilification policies. Players are briefed and educated on the code when they become contracted players.

Further implications

It has been argued that the racist taunts from cricket crowds affect not only players but all others of non-Anglo-Saxon backgrounds living in Australia. In an opinion piece published in In The Sydney Morning Herald on January 11, 2021, Rosalind Dixon, a professor of law and director of the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales, noted the extent of racist abuse in Australian cricket and sport more generally and referred directly to the broader consequences of the abuse from the crowd during the second test between Australia and India played in Sydney.

Professor Dixon stated, ‘There are also many Indian Australians studying and working in Australia for whom these words will have cut even deeper – to the core of their sense of belonging, not just welcome.’ <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/i-was-sledged-as-a-nine-year-old-cricketer-and-i-think-the-sledging-culture-should-change>

The following is a comment <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/up-against-issues-of-racism-down-under-199615> published in The Tribune on January 17, 2021, written by Indian sportswriter Rohit Mahajan, giving an overview of Australia’s history of racial exclusion and denigration (which he argues is shared by all colonial nations) and calling on Australia’s cricketers to set an example of tolerance and inclusivity.

‘FROM January 1, Australia sings a slightly tweaked national anthem — in the second line, “young” has been removed, substituted with “one”, so now it goes:

“For we are one and free.”

With this change, Australians have officially recognised that their nation is not “young”; that it didn’t come into existence only when it was discovered or colonised — that the Australian nation predates the waves of immigration over the centuries.

The change, minor in semantics but deep in symbolism, was not welcomed by all. Yet, it is a sign of modern Australians coming to terms with the past, which was cruel and bloody, as colonisation projects always are; it was racist, too, as colonisation projects always are. The beaten people, always, are deemed inferior, and everything is bad about them — their clothing, food, language, their morality. Conquerors make efforts to turn the enslaved people into an image of themselves — speaking their language, worshipping their god, wearing their clothes.

Right until the 1970s, mixed-race children of aboriginal women were being ‘removed’ — stolen — through government policy. The White Australia policy was officially ended only in the 1970s. This was not so long back — thus, it’s a miracle that in such a short period of time, Australia has achieved a rich diversity of culture and people, and legal equality for all. This is enlightenment at work.

But mixing people isn’t without problems. Scientists explain that caution and suspicion are built into our DNA because extreme caution gave human beings a better chance of survival. Outgroup suspicion and prejudice are universal and after millions of years of their existence, only now, over the last few decades, have human beings decided it’s unjust to be suspicious of a group of people just because they’re different.

Australia is grappling with its racism problem and dealing with it through legislation, and by actions and words from role models.

For equality and respect...

[However, some] immigrants and visitors [to Australia] have told this writer over the years that in even cosmopolitan cities such as Sydney or Melbourne, you might be called a black something or the other by a white person across an isolated street, and it can be much worse in small towns. The perpetrators are mostly young and drunk — and constitute a small minority. From personal experience, one can say this is true. As Ravichandran Ashwin said the other day, Indian cricketers have suffered much abuse in Australia, sometimes racist. Australian cricketers, tough as nails, would sledge their own grandmother in a sporting contest — being tough in sport is central to the Australian identity. But abusive sledging is not in tune with the modern notion of equality and respect for all people.

Mohammed Siraj suffered abuse, a lot of it allegedly racist, in Sydney and Brisbane. The perpetrators were young and drunk. They need better models of behaviour — Australian cricketers, especially, must set better examples of non-abusive behaviour their fans could follow.’