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Rivkah Nissim is the Manager of Discrimination and Research at the Australian Human Rights Commission where she manages the National Anti-Racism Strategy and 'Racism. It Stops with Me' campaign. Rivkah was previously Principal Adviser to the Race Discrimination Commissioner and prior to this held a senior policy advisory role at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. In 2014 Rivkah was awarded a Social Justice Fellowship at the University of Sydney where her research focus was racism and resilience. She is currently undertaking a Graduate Certificate in Social Impact at the University of New South Wales Business School.

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Local Government Building Social Cohesion - What Good Practice Looks Like

When compared to other societies, Australia is a multicultural success story. Yet maintaining social cohesion can be a challenge. Broader social tensions can play out locally and, as Australia becomes more culturally diverse, there can be disharmony between newly arrived groups and established communities.

The challenge is to provide opportunities for positive intercultural interaction which evidence suggests can reduce the negative mental health effects of exclusion and discrimination and promote social and economic participation.

Local government has a crucial role in building strong, cohesive communities. However, there is little guidance on how to build social cohesion at the local level, with social cohesion efforts in Australia identified by the Australian Multicultural Council as program rich but policy and coordination poor.

Research undertaken by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government for the Australian Human Rights Commission suggests six essential elements for a successful strengths based approach to building social cohesion.

In particular, their research indicates that collaboration between government, businesses, NGOs and communities makes for realisable, effective and sustainable pathways to social cohesion.

If implemented by local governments, this approach will result in clear benefits across all the 'domains' of social cohesion identified in the Scanlon Foundation 'Mapping Social Cohesion' research.