

Impacts of bystander behaviour

Read the quotes below from former Collingwood Football Club player Leon Davis, who shares his experiences and insights on bystander behaviour.

How does bystander behaviour impact minority groups?

Bystander behaviours can have either a positive or negative effect and impact depending on what that response is. Remaining silent and there being no action can reinforce harm and alienate minority groups even more, and can trigger or retrigger generational trauma or past negative experiences.

It can also normalise discrimination and send a message that this behaviour is acceptable. Positive responses, being an active bystander and an ally, means you call it out and address the behaviour in the moment, hold the perpetrator accountable, and seek out the appropriate authority.

This shows strong support for the minority group and ensures they feel they are not alone. It also ensures this behaviour is not normalised and disrupts that cycle. Consistently being an active bystander and an ally ensures a safe environment for all.

How has bystander behaviour impacted you personally? Are there any examples (positive or negative) you would like to share?

Bystander behaviour has been both a positive and negative experience throughout my life. Experiences of bystanders remaining silent or joining in with people discriminating against me have been tough and hard to deal with.

Being the only person fighting against it and having no bystander support made me feel alone, hurt and emotionally drained. You never forget times when it felt like it was you against everyone.

Although at times it was one person racially abusing me, the people who remained silent felt more like they were in support of them by not calling it out and standing up against them. I feel there has been a shift with more active bystanders and supporters of minority groups when they are being discriminated against.

For First Nations peoples and minority groups, we carry this burden 24/7, so when there is support and we don't have to carry the entire load of fighting against discrimination, it creates great allyship and ensures we aren't alone in this fight.

Thank you to Leon Davis for sharing his insights and experiences.

