

**Date** 22 November 2022

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**Subject** **Truth Be Told - (No) Cultural Diversity on Australian Boards**

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**Issued by** Women on Boards Australia. [www.womenonboards.net](http://www.womenonboards.net)

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**Report Link** [https://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/Truth-be-Told-2022-Final\\_WOB.pdf](https://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/Truth-be-Told-2022-Final_WOB.pdf)

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## **Truth Be Told - (No) Cultural Diversity on Australian Boards**

Women on Boards' (WOB) research shows that while a gender balance of 40% female has largely been achieved on the boards of organisations across many sectors, the inclusion of culturally diverse and Indigenous Australians has largely been ignored. **Download the Full**

The **Truth Be Told: Cultural Diversity on Australian Boards** report contains a desktop audit of the boards of 232 organisations across five sectors:

1. Cooperative Research Centres (22)
2. Federal Government Bodies (top 94 by remuneration of board members)
3. National Sporting Organisations (60)
4. Research & Development Corporations (15)
5. Universities (41)

It shows that only 12.8% of board members are non-Anglo Celtic. Of this approximately three percent are Indigenous.

Executive Director of Women on Boards, Claire Braund, said that "when you consider that more than 50% of Australia's population was either born overseas or are first generation Australians, there is quite a gap to close in order to better capture the experience and skills brought by our rich multicultural society on boards."

Ms Braund commented that a 20-year focus on gender diversity had inadvertently resulted in "replacing the old white boys' club with the new white girls' club."

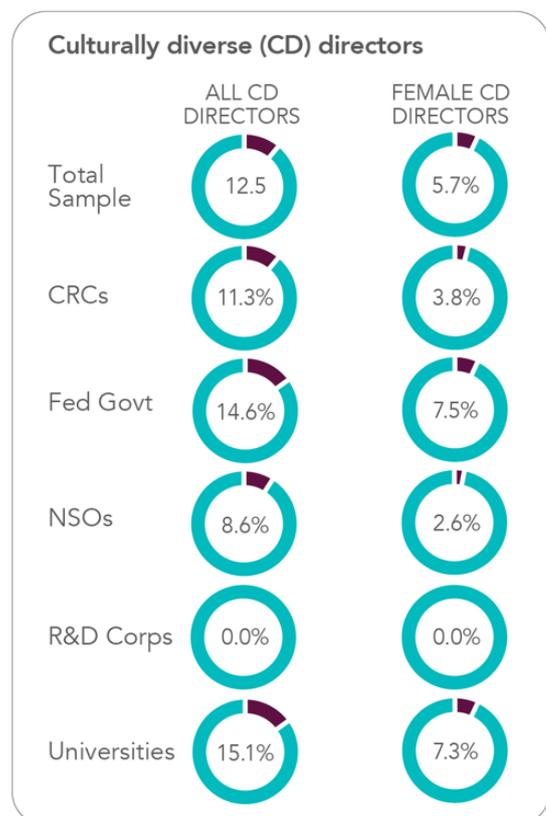
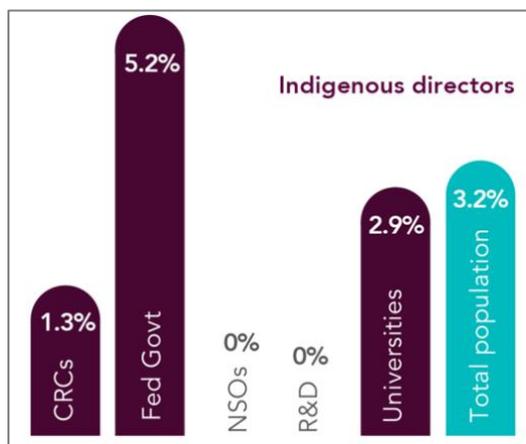
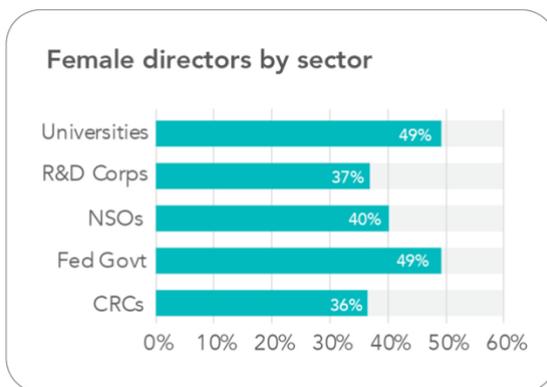
"Which is not to say this has been a poor outcome, but we clearly need to use the lessons we have learnt in bringing women into the boardroom to springboard to being more culturally inclusive on our boards", she said.

Ms Braund said that the Truth Be Told report was an effort to establish a baseline of culturally diverse people on boards from which future increments can be tracked; and to shine a light on the need for greater consideration of cultural diversity on boards – something WOB has successfully done with regard to women on boards over the past two decades.

"It is clear that while we can wait for a formal or legislated agenda, focussed attention from industry and organisations will drive the positive change we need in this area – just as it did gender balance on boards. "

## Key Findings

- Gender balance was achieved across the five sectors, with 46% female and 54% male directors overall, although some sectors performed well above others.
- Overall cultural diversity was 12.5%, with Universities performing best overall at 15.1% and R&D Corps the poorest, with zero cultural diversity evident from the desktop survey.
- Federal Government Bodies had the highest Indigenous representation at 5.2%, with NSOs and R&D Corps having none. Further analysis showed that Federal Government Bodies were skewed with this representation occurring mostly on Indigenous focused boards. 76% of Federal Government Bodies had zero Indigenous representation



## Next Steps

The collation and publication of data of cultural diversity on boards is central to being able to measure improvement. A barrier to the collation of data are concerns around privacy and disclosure of cultural identity and ethnicity and the lack of a consistent reporting lexicon.

The following recommendations are made as a way for organisations to commence addressing the issues impacting lack of cultural diversity on boards:

### Review and establish a consistent definition of what is considered to be culturally diverse

- WOB supports Recommendation 6 of the 2022 WGEA Review<sup>13</sup> to undertake qualitative research with relevant stakeholders, led by WGEA, on the best way to collect more diversity data in addition to gender data, to enable voluntary reporting,

including on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, cultural and linguistic diversity, and disability

### **Counting Culture**

- WOB supports Diversity Council Australia's (DCA) recommendation that to address cultural gaps, as a starting point organisations should regularly undertake an annual Counting Culture Survey and this should be extended to Boards.

### **Reporting Changes**

- Registry Service to add ethnicity as an option category for all persons requiring a Director ID.
- ASIC to report on the cultural diversity of directors (this is a field when registering a new director) as an aggregate, removing individual identifiers.
- LinkedIn to add a field for an ethnicity/culture option to encourage professionals to self-identify their cultural identity. At present to uncover this information one needs to read the LinkedIn profile to try and deduce this information.

### **Encourage Positive behaviours**

- Encourage directors to self-identify their ethnicity (Indigenous model is the current benchmark), e.g., on LinkedIn profile.
- Encourage boards to include ethnicity in their board skills / experience matrix to ensure gender and cultural diversity are considered as part of their recruitment process.
- Call for boards to include ethnicity in published director profile inform.

### **About Women on Boards**

Women on Boards (WOB) has been supporting women into board and leadership roles since 2006. With offices in Australia and the United Kingdom, WOB is a global network of 55,000 women, spanning all career stages and working across sectors and disciplines.

In Australia WOB is a recognised leader in the ecosystem of organisations and networks breaking down the barriers that women face to achieving leadership and board roles. WOB has a track-record of success and is known for its strategic and practical programs and open and transparent approach.

As a strong advocate for women, WOB works across organisations and sectors and with Government on a meaningful and strategic policy and cultural change agenda that supports women.

WOB's vision is gender balance and meaningful cultural diversity in board and leadership roles.

Our Mission is to support women on their board and leadership journey.

**[www.womenonboards.net](http://www.womenonboards.net)**

**ENDS**