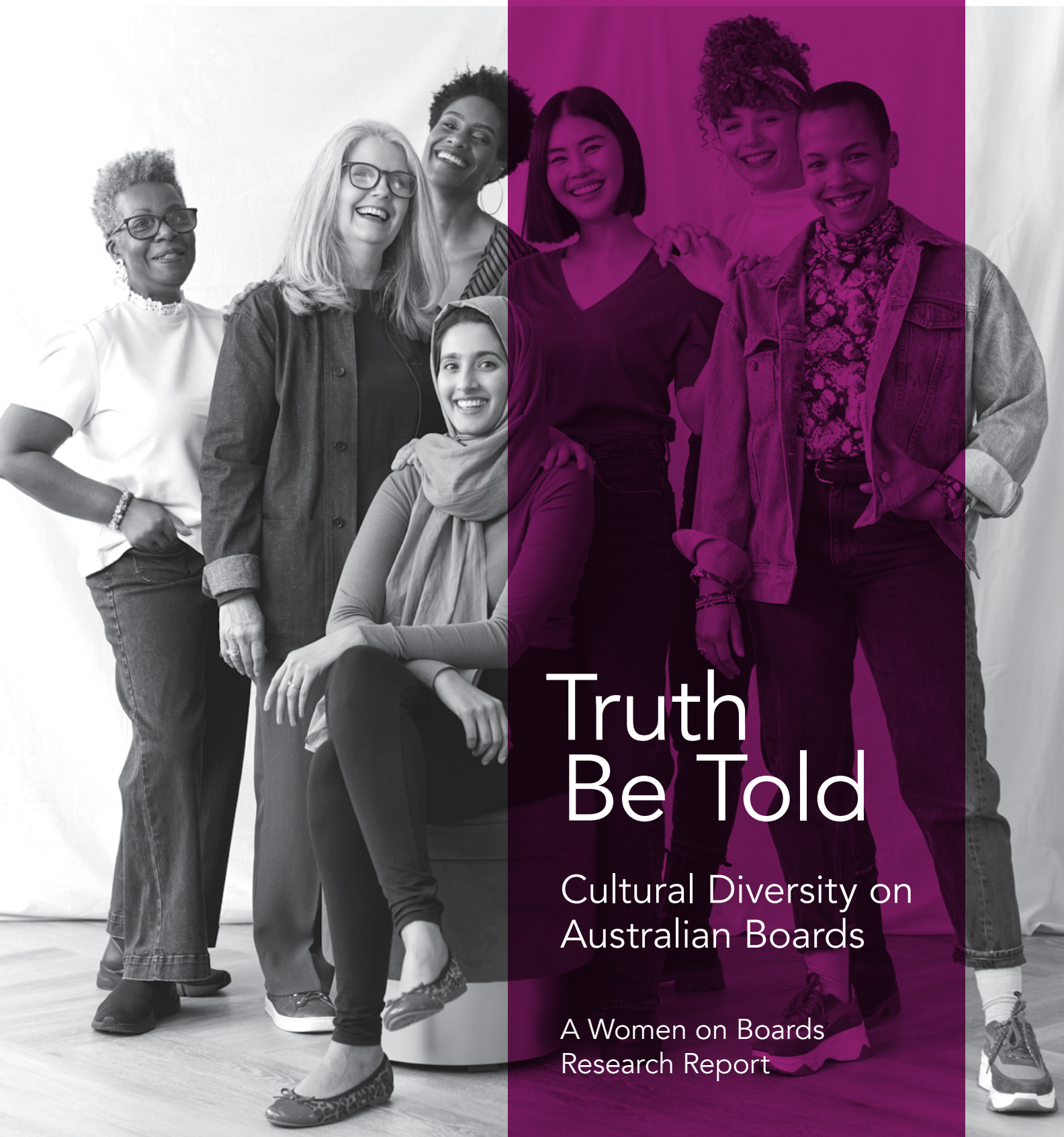


**WB** WOMEN  
ON BOARDS



# Truth Be Told

Cultural Diversity on  
Australian Boards

A Women on Boards  
Research Report

NOVEMBER 2022



This report represents WOB's effort to put a marker in the sand in relation to establishing a baseline from which we can start to address the paucity of cultural diversity on Australian boards.

**Claire Braund** - WOB Co-founder, Executive Director



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# Executive Summary

More than 50% (51.5%) of Australia's population were either born overseas or are first generation Australians, yet this vast multicultural society is virtually absent in any significant number from the governing bodies (boards) of many organisations.

Women on Boards' 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 within gender has largely been ignored. At its worst this is replacing the old white boys' club with the new white girls' club – which WOB acknowledges has been unintentional in many cases.

In this inaugural report, WOB is seeking to shine a light on the need for greater consideration of cultural diversity on boards as it did with regard to gender over the past two decades. To this end WOB conducted a desktop audit of the boards of 232 organisations across five sectors which showed that only 12.8% of board members were non-Anglo Celtic. Of this, approximately three percent were Indigenous.

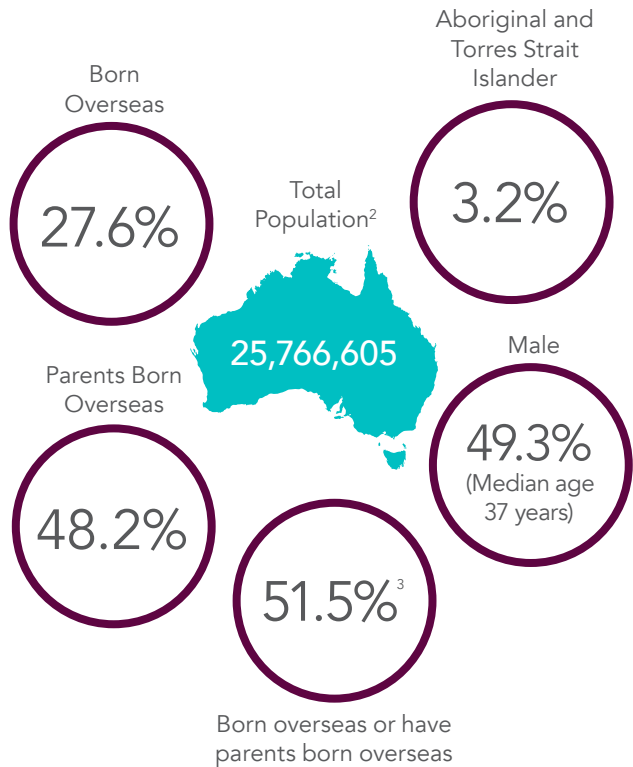
## The Sample

Boards in five sectors were assessed for their gender balance and cultural diversity:

Number of Entities - 232  
Directors - 2188

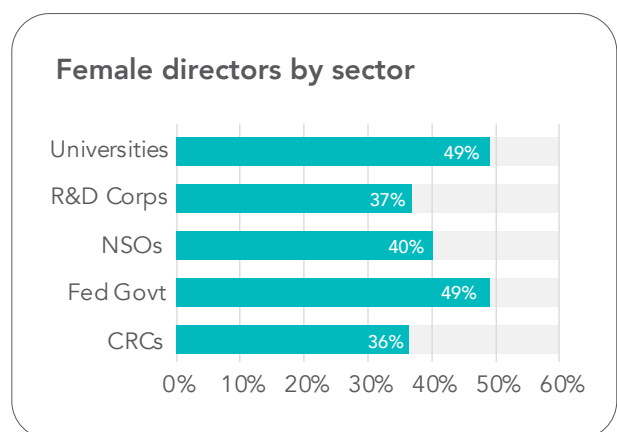
- Cooperative Research Centres (22)
- Federal Government Bodies (top 94 by remuneration of board members)
- National Sporting Organisations (60)
- Research & Development Corporations (15)
- Universities (41)

## Australian Population<sup>1</sup>



## Key Findings

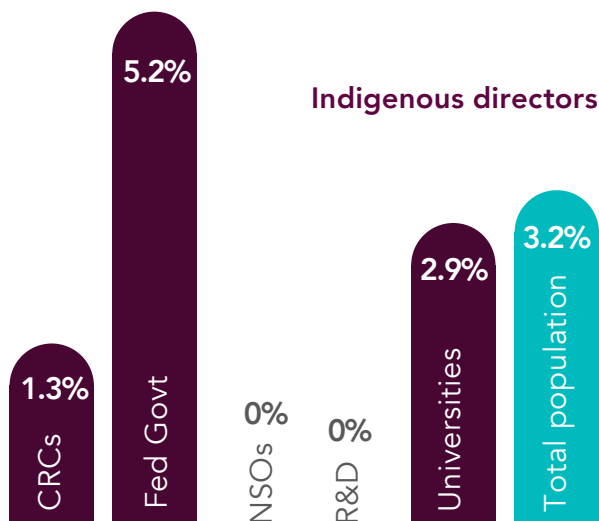
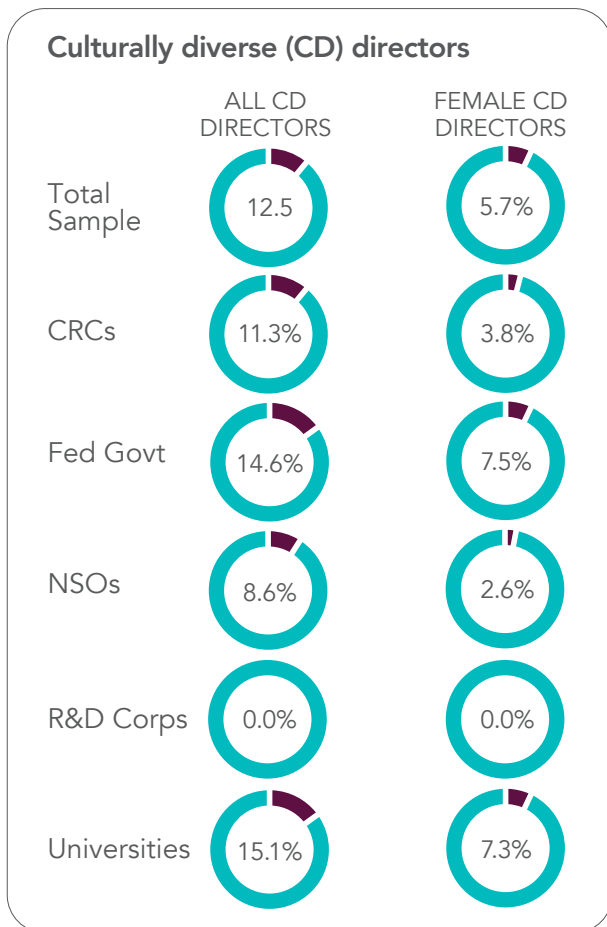
Gender balance was achieved across the five sectors, with 46% female and 54% male directors overall, although some sectors performed well above others.



<sup>1</sup> Source: 2021 Australian Census, <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>  
<sup>2</sup> ABS September 2022 (all other Australian Population Statistics are from 2021 Census)  
<sup>3</sup> ABS Snapshot of Australia 28/06/22

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.

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

Critical to improving the numbers of culturally diverse people on boards is the need to establish a baseline measurement from which future increments can be tracked.

Women on Boards participated in the 2022 review of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and supports it undertaking research as to how to best collect more diversity data. However, this will not improve the lack of cultural diversity on our boards in the short to medium term, so WOB recommends steps that organisations can adopt to start to address the barriers to culturally diverse people achieving board roles.

These include:

- Using ASIC and Australian Business Registry Service reporting requirements to collect ethnicity data.
- Social media platforms such as LinkedIn making it easier to self-identify cultural identity.
- Encouraging boards to identify ethnicity (Indigenous model is the current benchmark) in their board skills matrix to ensure gender and cultural diversity are considered as part of their recruitment process.
- Undertaking an annual Counting Culture Survey to enable organisations to understand and track their cultural diversity.<sup>4</sup> Refer [here](#) for WOB’s Counting Culture Survey results.

These and other recommendations are outlined in this report.

While we can wait for a formal / legislated regime, action from industry and organisations will drive positive change. This was evident in the action taken around increasing gender balance on boards to a point where it has nearly doubled in the past two decades across many sectors.

This report represents WOB’s effort to put a marker in the sand in relation to establishing a baseline from which we can start to address the paucity of cultural diversity on Australian boards.

<sup>4</sup> Ref Diversity Council Australia, Counting Culture Principles

# 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 Vision

40:40:20 gender balance and meaningful cultural diversity in board and leadership roles

## WOB Mission

To support women on their board and leadership journey

## Why 40:40:20?

In 2009 Women on Boards set a target of 40:40:20 for gender balance on Australian Boards – 40% male, 40% female and 20% either and/or other genders. At the time it was considered a very ambitious target. Estimates across a range of sectors had gender balance well below 30% female and there were no established mechanisms to monitor progress.

In 2010 WOB established its bi-annual [Boardroom Diversity Index](#) (BDI) to measure and track the number of women on boards across a wide range of economic sectors and adopted 40:40:20 as the foundation of its advocacy position. Evidence that ‘what gets managed gets done’ is apparent in the significant progress Australia has made towards achieving 40% women on boards.



**In 2009 Women on Boards set a target of 40:40:20 for gender balance on Australian Boards – 40% male, 40% female and 20% either and/or other genders.**

The WOB 2020 BDI revealed that the target of 40% female representation on boards was reached by more than 50% of the 1,335 organisations measured. Full suite of reports [here](#). Refer Appendix 1 for Summary Table.

Twelve years on and 40:40:20 has become the nationally adopted target by governments, advocacy groups and organisations.

Consistent with WOB's focus on exploring disadvantage within gender, the 2022 BDI recast the data collection to explore the participation of culturally diverse and Indigenous women on 232 boards across five sectors.

- Cooperative Research Centres
- Federal Government Bodies (top 94 by remuneration of board members)
- National Sporting Organisations
- Research & Development Corporations
- Universities

## Championing Cultural Diversity

In line with our vision of 40:40:20 gender balance and meaningful cultural diversity in board and leadership roles, the Women on Boards Cultural Diversity Committee (CDC) was established in 2020 to address barriers to opportunity and access to leadership and board and committee roles for culturally diverse and Indigenous women in Australia.

Its long-term ambition is to see a greater representation of Australia's culturally diverse population and Indigenous people serving on the boards of Australian organisations.



*Our original focus was on increasing the participation of women on boards as a harbinger of greater diversity. However, it is now clear that we need to look at the intersection of gender and cultural diversity in our work with women. So we have focussed our attention on exploring disadvantage within gender, recasting our data collection to explore the participation of culturally diverse and First Nations women on boards.*

**Claire Braund, WOB Executive Director and Co-founder**



*I welcome the latest report on the cultural diversity on Australian boards. As always WOB aims to push the debate beyond the obvious, relying on its extensive data collection which has been sourced since 2010.*

**Ruth Medd, WOB Executive Chair and Co-founder**



*This report is an important first step in raising awareness of the need for organisations to be more conscious of cultural diversity in board and leadership roles.*

**Nicole Donegan, COO / Director, Women on Boards; Vice Chair, Cultural Diversity Committee**

# The WOB Cultural Diversity Committee

Women on Boards (WOB) established its Cultural Diversity Committee (CDC) in 2020 with the aim of addressing barriers faced by culturally diverse women in leadership and board and committee roles.

Based on 2021 census statistics, Australian boards and leadership are underrepresented in terms of their cultural diversity.

Our CDC is working to address the barriers to opportunity and access to board and leadership roles for culturally diverse women.

Key areas of focus:

1. Collating data and diversity facts, telling stories and collaborating with bodies in Australia who act and promote cultural diversity, to enlarge the influence of our collective action and accelerate progress.
2. Influencing and raising awareness to increase understanding and promote a bias to action; including creating opportunities for culturally diverse women to connect, network and interact with decision makers.
3. Providing information, resources and support in the area of Cultural Diversity in board and leadership roles.



*It is essential for boards to have a cultural lens on their board and executive recruitment process and to remove unconscious bias so that women from diverse backgrounds can break the glass and bamboo ceiling. WOB's Cultural Diversity Committee seeks to raise awareness so that more organisations have a cultural lens in their recruitment and selection process.*

**Mahjabeen Zaman, Chair WOB Cultural Diversity Committee**





# WOB Cultural Diversity Committee



**NICOLE DONEGAN GAICD (VICE CHAIR)**

COO / Director,  
Women on Boards



**HELEN TRAN**

HR Business Partner Lead,  
Paramount Australia  
and NZ



**SARA PANTALEO**

Founder, Affari SP;  
Director, Moira  
Kelly Creating Hope  
Foundation; Chair  
Audit and Risk, Global  
Gardens of Peace;  
NED, Link Community  
& Transport & Family  
Business Australia



**MAHJABEEN ZAMAN (CHAIR)**

Head of FX Research,  
ANZ Bank



**MIRIAM GEORGE**

Early Careers  
Manager, PwC



**GLORIA YUEN**

Head of Regulatory  
Enablement and  
Delivery, NAB



**MALINI RAJ**

Head of Community  
Engagement,  
Commonwealth Bank



**BELINDA HOWELL GAICD**

Deputy Chair Dunmore  
Lang College, Macquarie  
University; Board member,  
Plan International Australia



**CLAIRE BEATTIE**

Executive Director  
Asset Activations,  
School Infrastructure  
NSW, Department  
of Education NSW;  
Board member  
PCYC NSW &  
WAGEC



**BERNADETTE MASBAYI**

Policy Officer, WA  
Department of Health

# Method

## Audit

A desktop audit was undertaken for the 232 boards within the five sectors sampled between December 2021 and March 2022. The first step was to develop a list of organisations and identify all members of the governing bodies.

## Analysis

Each board member was then analysed via desktop audit using a combination of factors:

- Publicly available biographical information (e.g., LinkedIn profile, director profiles and other profile information).
- Other relevant public information that may include information about the individual's cultural background such as profile information on websites.
- Full name and its origins.
- Place of birth, where this could be found from readily available profile information.
- Photographic review where possible, though this was used more as a verification mechanism as culture is not always evident from photographs.



**WOB recognises that people may choose not to self-identify as publicly disclosing ethnicity can lead to discrimination, bias and unfair treatment.**

## Categorisation

The identified gender of each board member was recorded into one of the following categories:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Nonbinary

The ethnicity<sup>5</sup> of each of each board member was allocated into one of the following eight categories:

1. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian)
2. Anglo-Celtic
3. Indigenous Australian
4. New Zealander and Pacific Islander
  - New Zealander (not Maori)
  - Māori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian
5. Other European
  - North-West European
  - South-East European
6. Asian
  - South-East Asian
  - North-East Asian
  - Southern and Central Asian
7. Americas
  - North American
  - South and Central American and Caribbean Islander
8. African or Middle Eastern
  - North African and Middle Eastern

<sup>5</sup> Ref: Diversity Council Australia categories (based on Australian Bureau of Statistics definition)

## Census Data

Relevant census data was analysed to determine baseline statistics for the Australian population for benchmarking.

## Review

The report was reviewed by Dr. Andrea North-Samardzic, Director, Women's Entrepreneurship Research Alliance and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management, Deakin University.

## Limitations

- In some cases, it was difficult to determine the ethnicity of an individual as there was limited publicly available information about their background and they did not declare as culturally diverse.
- Ethnicity is generally not identified on LinkedIn or other profiling information, making a definitive classification mostly impossible. A decision was made based on the available information.
- Individuals and boards have not been asked to confirm the veracity of the cultural classification, however WOB has a degree of confidence that its allocations are informed, robust and provide a representative view of the gender and ethnicity on the boards sampled.
- There are different definitions of what is considered culturally diverse and whether this includes Anglo Celtic. We have taken the view that Anglo Celtic is not culturally diverse, however this is not based on a definitive definition.



*This report by Women on Boards spotlights the critical issue of cultural diversity on boards and the importance of the intersectionality of gender, culture and ethnicity that is too often missing when boards talk about diversity. This report should be put on the agenda for all boards and tabled for robust discussion with a focus on action, responsibility, and accountability, to ensure that inclusion represents the full scope of diversity of women in board roles.*

**Dr. Andrea North-Samardzic,  
Director, Women's Entrepreneurship  
Department of Management,  
Deakin University**



# Definitions

## Culturally diverse

Culturally diverse refers to anyone with non-Anglo-Celtic cultural origins. This definition recognises Australia's British colonisation history, and so the broad term 'culturally diverse' includes people with Indigenous, European, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander cultural backgrounds.<sup>6</sup>

This definitional approach recognises a personal's cultural identity, which may not necessarily be linked to their country of birth and there are multidimensional factors including their ancestry, citizenship, faith etc.

## Categories used

The following categories have been drawn from Diversity Council Australia's 'ethnicity' categories (which are based on ABS categories<sup>6</sup>). This report has grouped the categories for analysis as follows:

### A. Australian / Anglo Celtic

1. Anglo-Celtic

2. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian)

### B. Culturally diverse

1. African or Middle Eastern

2. Americas

3. Asian

4. Indigenous Australian (First Nations)

5. New Zealander and Pacific Islander

6. Other European (excl. Anglo-Celtic)

The above 8 broad cultural/ethnic groups have been adapted from ASCCEG broad groups<sup>7</sup>:

#### 1. African or Middle Eastern

- North African and Middle Eastern
- Sub-Saharan African

#### 2. Americas

- North American
- South and Central American and Caribbean Islander

#### 3. Anglo-Celtic (sometimes known as Anglo-European)

#### 4. Asian

- South-East Asian
- North-East Asian
- Southern and Central Asian

#### 5. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian)

#### 6. Indigenous Australian.

#### 7. New Zealander and Pacific Islander

- New Zealander (not Maori)
- Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian.

#### 8. Other European (excl. Anglo-celtic)

- North-West European (excl. Anglo-Celtic)
- South-East European

## Boards

Throughout this report the term "Boards" is used to represent governance bodies and boards for ease of reading.

## Indigenous References

Throughout this report Indigenous Australians are not included in the Australian / Anglo Celtic totals to ensure that Indigenous data is clearly shown.

Australian First Nations people have been respectfully referred to as Indigenous to be consistent with census terminology.

## Abbreviations Used

Cooperative Research Centres - **CRCs**

Federal Government Bodies – **Fed Govt**

National Sporting Organisations – **NSOs**

Research & Development Corporations

– **R&D Corps**

University Government Bodies – **Universities**

<sup>6</sup> Ref: Diversity Council Australia categories (based on Australian Bureau of Statistics definition)

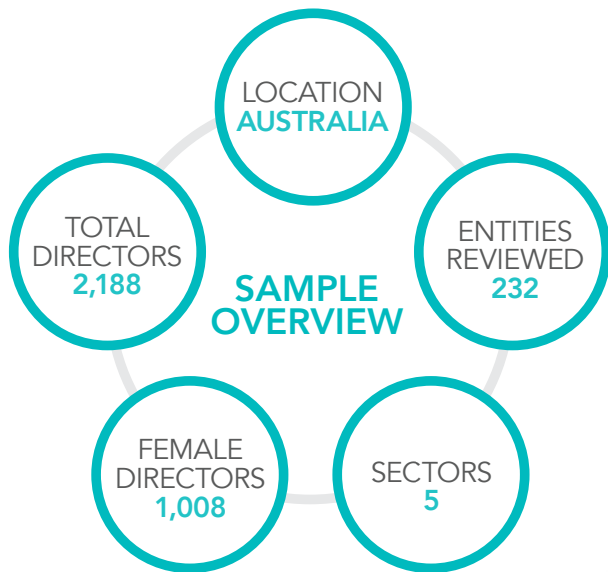
<sup>7</sup> Ref: 1249.0 Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups, 2019

# The Sample

WOB reviewed 232 organisations across five sectors to understand the gender and cultural diversity of board members. See Appendix 3 for full list of organisations.

## Sample Overview

Sector	Entities	Total Directors
CRCs	22	160
Fed Govt	94	845
NSOs	60	454
R&D Corps	15	115
Universities	41	614
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>2,188</b>



## The Australian Population

For context, key demographics from the 2021 Australian Census<sup>8</sup>

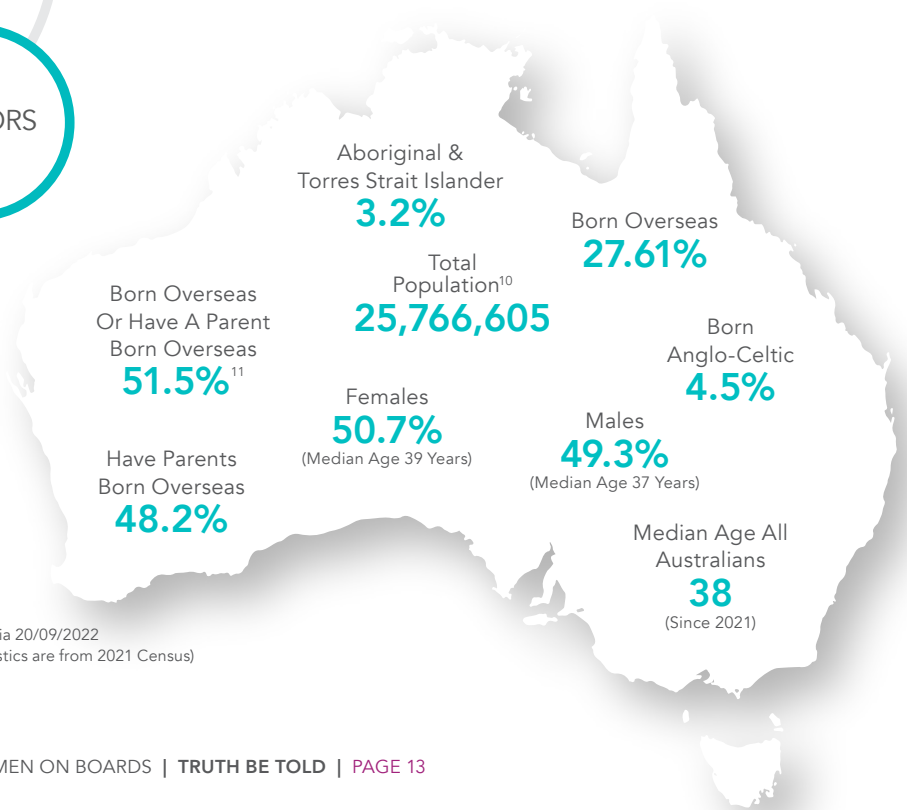
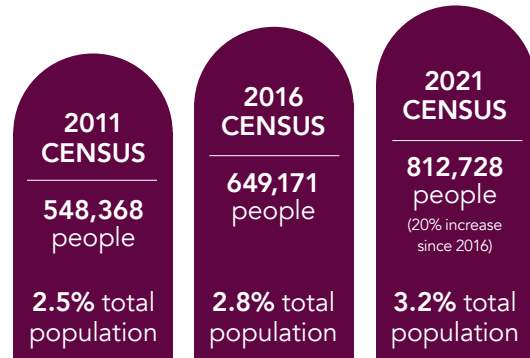
## Australian Population

### Most common countries of birth (outside Australia)<sup>9</sup>

Country	2021	%
England	967,390	3.8%
India	710,380	2.8%
China	595,630	2.3%
New Zealand	559,980	2.2%
Philippines	310,620	1.2%

Refer Appendix 2 for further population snapshot.

### Population identifying as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander



<sup>8</sup> ABS Australian Population by country of birth

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cultural diversity of Australia 20/09/2022

<sup>10</sup> ABS September 2022 (all other Australian Population Statistics are from 2021 Census)

<sup>11</sup> ABS Snapshot of Australia 28/06/22

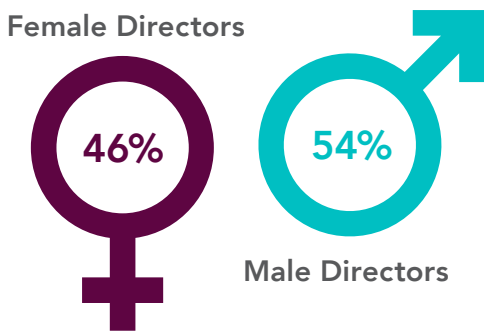
# Findings

## Gender Balance

### Total Sample

Across the total sample, Boards are achieving gender balance - defined as 40:40:20.

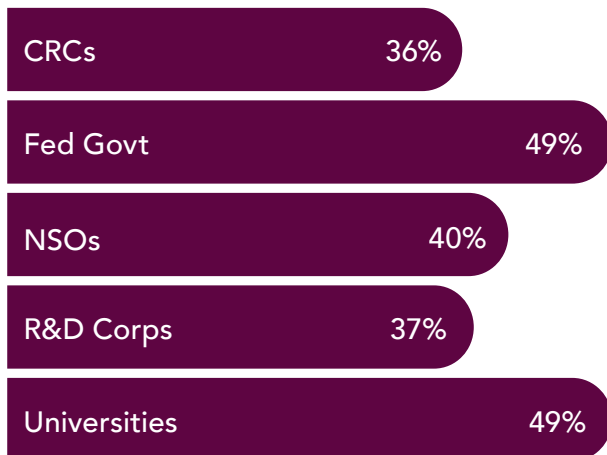
#### Gender balance



### By Sector

Each sector is largely achieving gender balance, with all achieving above 40% apart from R&D Corps, which sits at 37%.

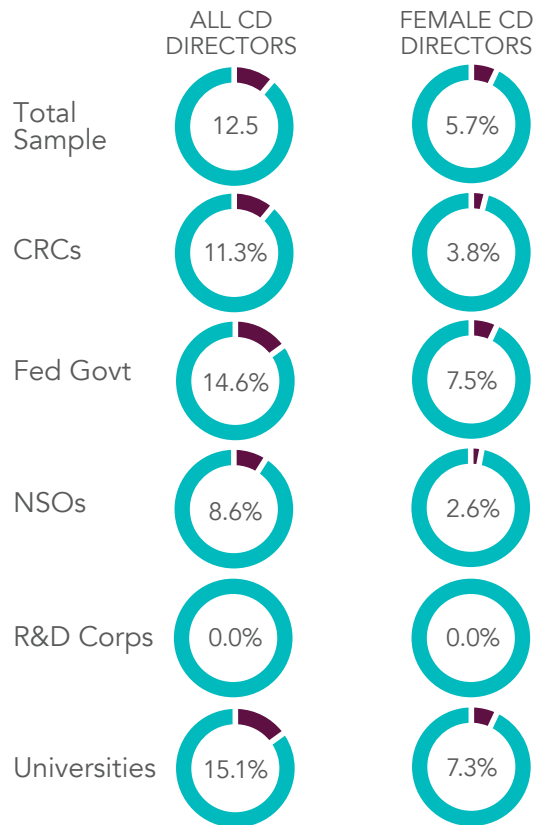
#### Female directors



## Cultural Diversity

Across the total sample, 12.5% of board members (270) were identified as culturally diverse. Of this group almost half (46.3%) were female (5.7% of total sample).

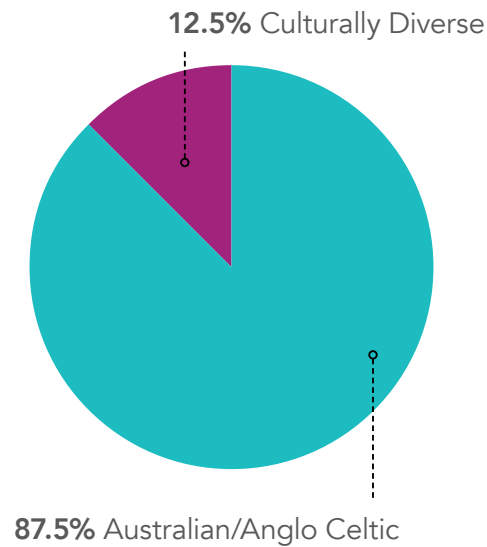
#### Culturally diverse (CD) directors



# Findings, cont'd

## Total Sample

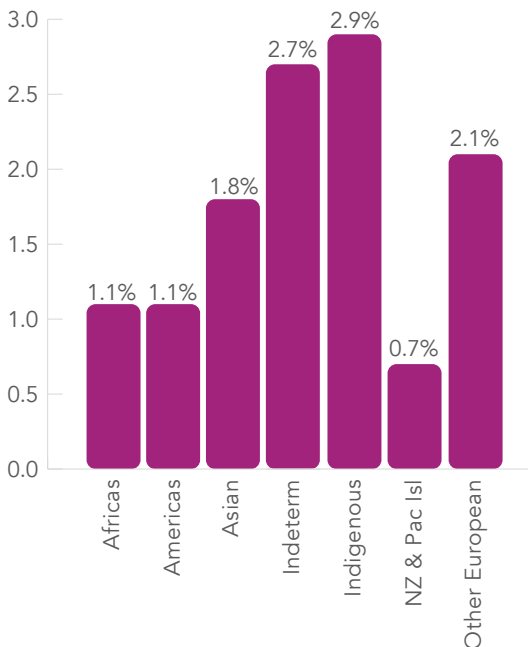
### Cultural diversity



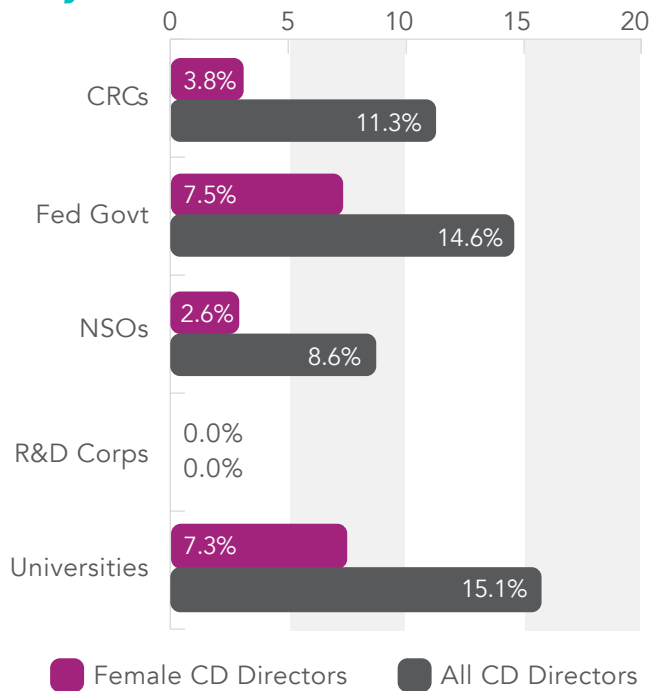
### Ethnicity and gender

Ethnicity	Female	Male	All
Africas	0.4%	0.7%	1.1%
Americas	0.6%	0.5%	1.1%
Asian	1.0%	0.9%	1.8%
Indeterm	1.2%	1.5%	2.7%
Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Indigenous	1.6%	1.3%	2.9%
NZ & Pac Isl	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%
Other European	0.7%	1.4%	2.1%
Australian/ Anglo Celtic	40.3%	47.2%	87.5%
<b>Culturally Diverse</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>

### Ethnicity



### By Sector



# Findings, cont'd

## Cultural diversity by gender

	ALL CD Directors	Female CD Directors
CRCs	11.3%	3.8%
Fed Govt	14.6%	7.5%
NSOs	8.6%	2.6%
R&D Corps	0.0%	0.0%
Universities	15.1%	7.3%

## Australian and Anglo Celtic Representation

The data shows that 87.5% of the total sample was Australian / Anglo Celtic, where Australian represented 84.3% and Anglo Celtic 3.2%.

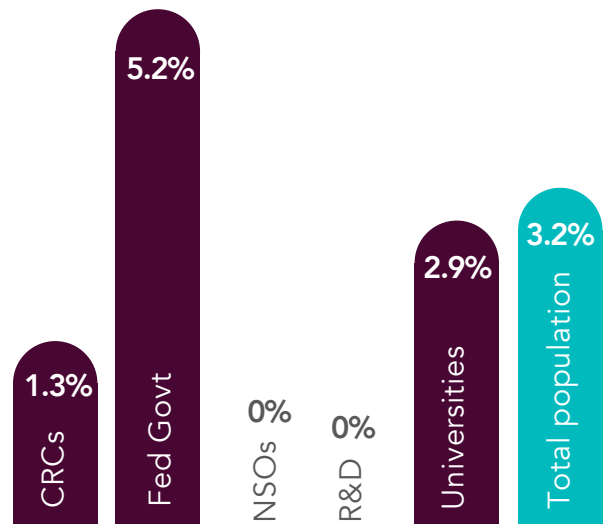
### Breakdown of Australian and Anglo-Celtic

	Australian	Anglo Celtic	Total
CRCs	86.9%	1.9%	88.8%
Fed Govt	82.5%	3.0%	85.4%
NSOs	89.0%	2.4%	91.4%
R&D Corps	99.1%	0.9%	100.0%
Universities	79.8%	5.0%	84.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>

## Indigenous Representation

Across the total sample, Indigenous representation was 3%, which appears representative based on the Indigenous population from the 2021 Census, which was reported at 3.2%.

### Indigenous directors



Indigenous were the easiest to identify as First Nations people generally identify their heritage on LinkedIn and in other publicly available profiles.



## Findings, cont'd

Further analysis reveals that some sectors are doing the heavy lifting for others.

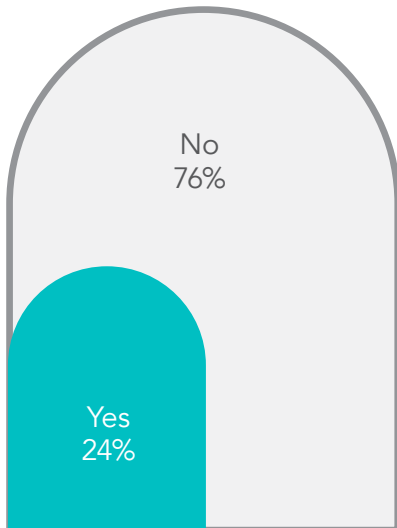
Of the top 94 Federal Government Bodies by remuneration of board members, Indigenous representation was 5.2%, Universities 2.9% and CRCs 1.3%.

NSOs and R&D Corps had zero Indigenous representation on their boards.

While Federal Government Bodies had a high percentage of Indigenous board members, their distribution is skewed, with Indigenous focussed organisations having a higher frequency of Indigenous boards members.

Overall, 71 out of the 94 Federal Government Bodies (76%) had zero Indigenous representation.

### Federal Government Bodies with Indigenous Directors



WOB calls for Boards to include both gender and culture in their boards skills matrix

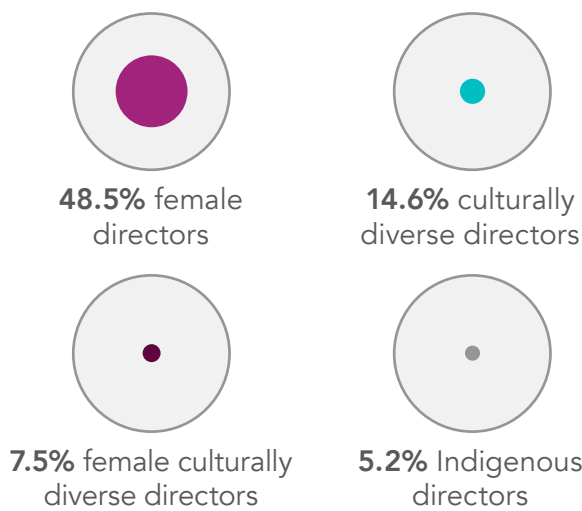


# Findings, cont'd

## Federal Government Bodies

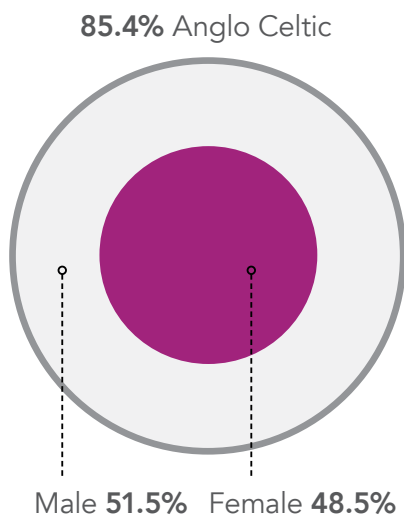
**ENTITIES - 94 DIRECTORS - 845**

Federal Government Bodies (top 94 by remuneration of board members) have published targets and had the best overall performance:

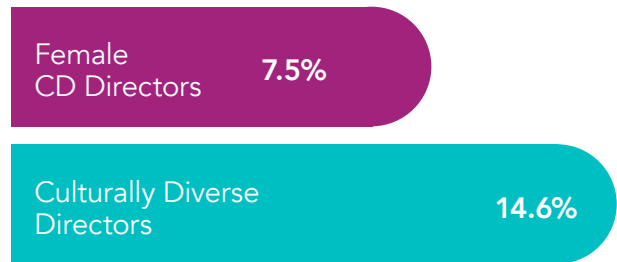


Indigenous results are skewed by the high number of Indigenous board members on the Indigenous focussed boards.<sup>12</sup>

### Anglo Celtic representation



### Cultural diversity



### Cultural composition

\*(ex Aust/Anglo-Celtic)

	All	Female
Africas	0.9%	0.5%
Americas	0.6%	0.4%
Asian	1.4%	0.8%
Indeterm	2.7%	1.4%
Indian	0.0%	0.0%
Indigenous	5.2%	3.1%
NZ & Pac Isl	1.2%	0.5%
Other European	2.5%	0.8%

### Frequency of Indigenous directors

Fed Govt Bodies	Number of Indigenous Directors
71	0
14	1
3	2
2	4
2	5
1	6

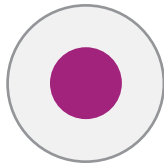
12. Boards in this category include - Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation; Outback Stores Pty Ltd; Aboriginal Hostels Limited; Indigenous Business Australia; Referendum Council

# Findings, cont'd

## Universities

**ENTITIES - 41 DIRECTORS - 614**

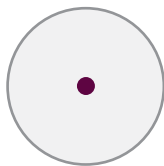
Overall Universities were the best performing across the five sectors, with gender diversity sitting at 48.5% female and 51.5% male. The sector boasts 15.1% overall culturally diverse directors - of which 7.3% were female. They also had 2.9% Indigenous directors.



**48.5%** female directors



**15.1%** culturally diverse directors



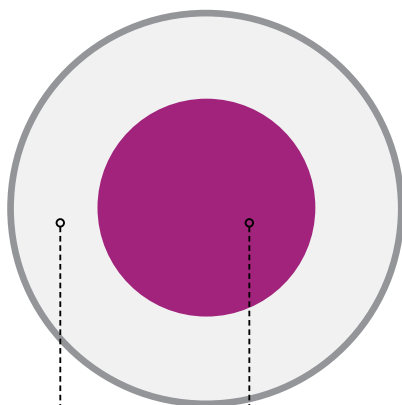
**7.3%** female culturally diverse directors



**2.9%** Indigenous directors

### Anglo Celtic representation

**84.9%** Anglo Celtic



Male **51.5%** Female **48.5%**

### Culturally diversity

Female CD Directors **7.3%**

Culturally Diverse Directors **15.1%**

### Cultural Composition

\*(ex Aust/Anglo-Celtic)

	All	Female
Africas	1.0%	0.3%
Americas	2.3%	1.3%
Asian	3.1%	1.8%
Indeterm	3.7%	2.0%
Indian	0.0%	0.0%
Indigenous	2.9%	1.3%
NZ & Pac Isl	0.5%	0.0%
Other European	1.6%	0.7%

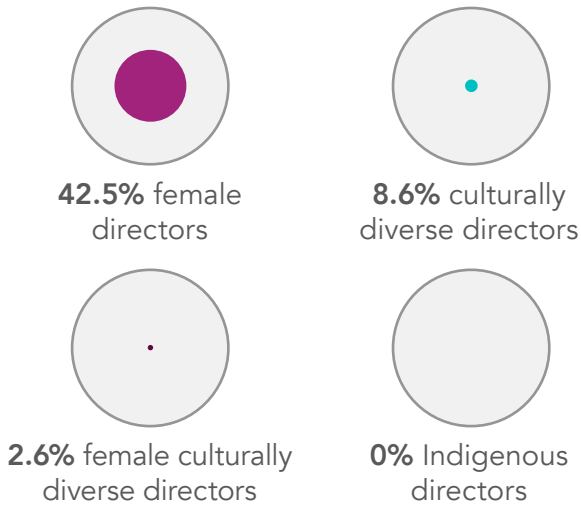
Anglo Celtic is the largest group, followed by indeterminate culture and Asian.

# Findings, cont'd

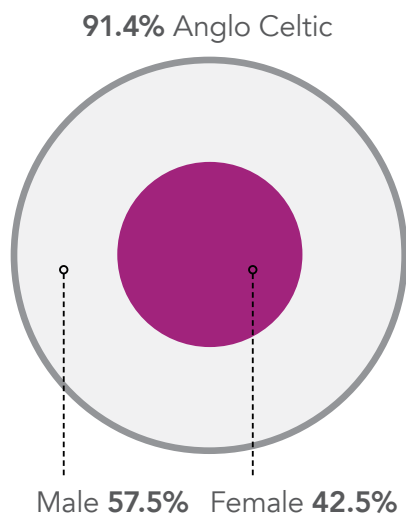
## National Sporting Organisations

ENTITIES - 60 DIRECTORS - 454

The boards of National Sporting Organisations have achieved gender balance but are below par in terms of their cultural diversity. They are also lacking in Indigenous board members.



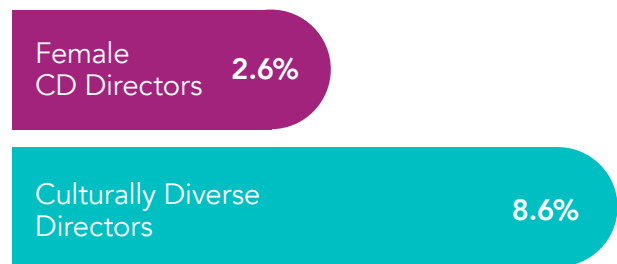
### Anglo Celtic representation



Gender balance sits at 42.5% overall, however only 8.6% of directors were identified as culturally diverse, and only 2.6% of these were female.

Indigenous directors were not represented in this group.

### Cultural diversity



### Cultural composition

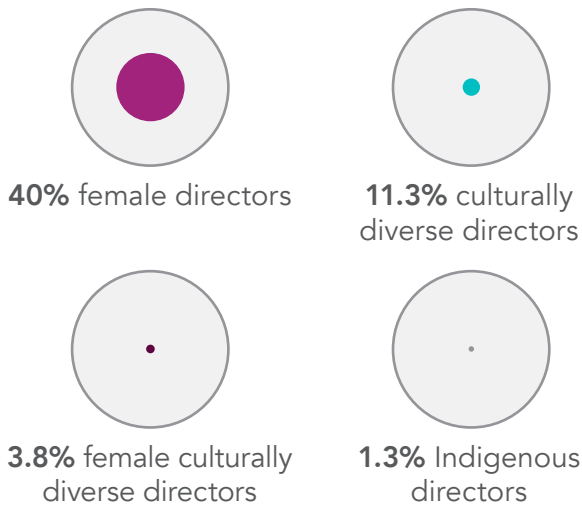
	All	Female
Africas	0.9%	0.2%
Americas	0.9%	0.4%
Asian	1.1%	0.7%
Indeterm	2.6%	0.4%
Indian	0.0%	0.0%
Indigenous	0.0%	0.0%
NZ & Pac Isl	0.4%	0.0%
Other European	2.6%	0.9%

# Findings, cont'd

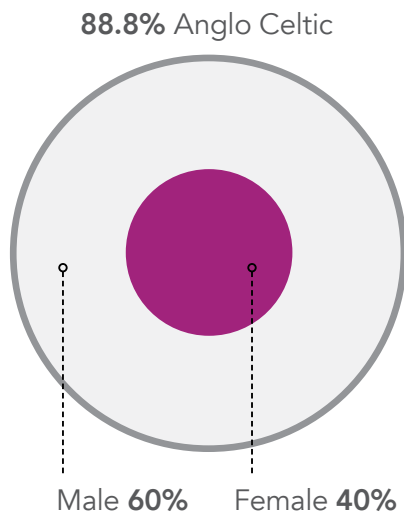
## Cooperative Research Centres

ENTITIES - 22 DIRECTORS - 160

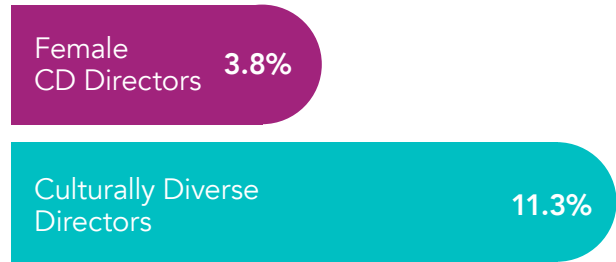
CRCs are tracking well on gender balance, with 40% female directors across 22 entities analysed. Cultural diversity is sitting at just 11.3%, with 3.8% female cultural diversity.



### Cultural diversity



### Cultural diversity



### Cultural composition

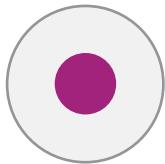
	All	Female
Africas	1.9%	0.6%
Americas	0.6%	0.6%
Asian	2.5%	0.0%
Indeterm	0.0%	0.0%
Indian	0.6%	0.6%
Indigenous	1.3%	0.6%
NZ & Pac Isl	0.0%	0.0%
Other European	2.5%	0.6%

# Findings, cont'd

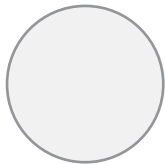
## Research and Development Corporations

ENTITIES - 15 DIRECTORS - 115

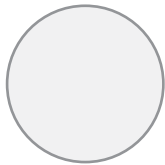
R&D Corporations were the worst performing boards across all sectors, with only 1 (female) culturally diverse board member on the 15 boards analysed.



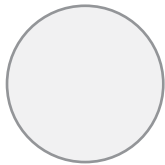
37.4% female directors



0% culturally diverse directors

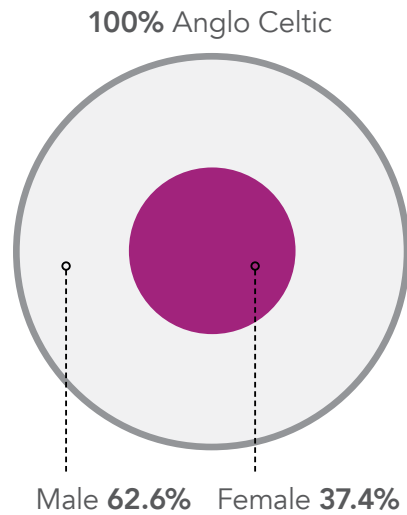


0% female culturally diverse directors



0% Indigenous directors

## Cultural diversity



Number of entities	15
% Female Directors	37%
% CD directors all genders	0%
% CD directors who are female	0%

# Recommendations

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:

## 1. 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.

Examples of confusion WOB encountered include:

- Anglo Celtic was deemed not to be culturally diverse. Is this reasonable in all cases?
- Within each database many directors presented as white Anglo Saxon, but upon investigation identified as culturally diverse because they were born overseas.

## 2. Counting Culture<sup>14</sup>

WOB supports Diversity Council Australia's (DCA) recommendation that to address cultural gaps, as a starting point organisations should follow a set of guidelines to help measure and report on their cultural diversity.

## 3. Reporting Changes

- WOB encourages the Australian Business 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.

## 4 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 information (Annual Reports, on website).

<sup>13</sup> WGEA Review Report 2022 – Office for Women

<sup>14</sup> Diversity Council Australia, Counting Culture: It's about more than asking "Where are you from?" 07 May 2019

## 5 Sector Change

- It is recommended that R&D Corporations review their Charters and Terms of Reference to ensure that they actively include culturally diverse directors on their Boards. As R&D Corporations are usually established for a finite period, this should be considered at formation.
- Federal Government bodies to consider expanding Indigenous board representation to ensure an even distribution.
- It is recommended that R&D Corporations and CRCs review their Charters and Terms of Reference to ensure that they actively include culturally diverse directors on their Boards. As CRCs are usually established for a finite period, this should be considered at formation.
- National Sporting Organisations should look to increase Indigenous Representation. Sport Australia to take an active lead.


Indigenous culture was the easiest to identify in the study as Indigenous self-identify.

### Barriers

- Disclosing ethnicity can potentially lead to discrimination or unfair treatment, which is why people may choose not to identify. This is a legitimate concern as people tend to prefer to disclose ethnicity to those who similarly identify.
- It can exclude people who may not know their ethnic background.



WOB supports Diversity Council Australia's (DCA) recommendation that to address cultural gaps, as a starting point organisations should follow a set of guidelines to help measure and report on their cultural diversity.



Cultural Diversity is hard to measure – it is very complex with no consistent approach or methodology.



# Appendix 1 BDI 2020

For full BDI results since 2010 refer WOB Boardroom Gender Diversity Index (BGDI)

Percentage of female directors	Number of organisations	Sectors
< 40% female	702	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charities / NFPs (top by revenue)</li> <li>National Sporting Organisations</li> <li>Primary Health Networks</li> <li>Affordable Housing Bodies</li> <li>State Owned Corporations in New Zealand, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia</li> <li>Federal Government bodies (top 91 by rem)</li> <li>Health Services (NSW, Qld, Vic)</li> <li>Health Boards regulated by AHPRA</li> </ul>
30 - 40% female	537	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASX200</li> <li>Australian Deposit Taking Institutions Credit Unions / Building Societies / Banks</li> <li>Cooperative Research Centres</li> <li>Research and Development Corporations</li> <li>State Owned Corporations NSW</li> <li>Superannuation Funds</li> <li>Health Funds</li> <li>Medical Colleges</li> <li>RDA Committees</li> </ul>
> 30% female	96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASX200 – 301 (at 23% this also pulls the ASX300 below 25%)</li> </ul>

## Changes by Sector since 2016

% Female directors	2022	2020	2018	2016	% change from 2016
Federal Govt Bodies	49%	47%	45%	39%	10%
Cooperative Research Centres	40%	30%	28%	26%	14%
Nat Sporting Orgs	43%	42%	37%	34%	8%
R&D Corporations	37%	33%	30%	22%	15%
University Governing Bodies	49%	48%	42%	37%	11%

## Raw data

While R&D Corporations still have the lowest percentage of female directors of the sectors analysed, they have made the greatest growth in female directors since 2016, showing that the sector is looking to correct the issue. Cooperative Research Centres have also seen a 14% increase of female directors since 2016.

Type	No. entities in 2020 sample	2020 Total directors	2020 No. female directors	2020 % female directors	2018 BDI	2016 BDI	% change from 2016	No. of entities with zero female directors 2020
ASX201-300	96	572	133	23.25%	19.10%	15.9%	7.4%	18
ASX300	296	2027	575	28.37%	24.50%	20.6%	7.8%	28
Cooperative Research Centres	27	209	63	30.14%	28.30%	25.5%	4.6%	0
ASX200	200	1455	442	30.38%	26.70%	23.0%	7.4%	10
Australian Deposit Taking Institutions Credit Unions / Building Societies / Banks	86	639	200	31.30%	30.00%	26.1%	5.2%	5
ASX100	100	807	260	32.22%	29.30%	25.3%	6.9%	1
Research and Development Corporations	15	119	39	32.77%	30.40%	22.3%	10.5%	0
ASX50	50	434	145	33.41%	30.50%	24.1%	9.3%	0
State Owned Corporations_NSW	9	57	20	35.09%	31.70%	29.7%	5.4%	0
Superannuation Funds	96	749	281	37.52%	26.60%	29.6%	7.9%	4
Healthfunds	36	220	83	37.73%	28.90%	26.4%	11.3%	0
Medical Colleges	16	162	62	38.27%	28.40%	20.3%	18.0%	0
RDA Committees	52	452	175	38.72%	36.70%	36.9%	1.8%	1
Charities / NFPs (top by revenue)	140	1266	512	40.44%	40.20%	NA	NA	4
National Sporting Organisations	62	453	189	41.72%	37.20%	34.4%	7.3%	0
Primary Health Networks	29	250	114	45.60%	40.80%	39.2%	6.4%	0
Affordable Housing	122	918	421	45.86%	42.30%	39.6%	6.3%	1
State Owned Corporations_Tas	14	76	35	46.05%	47.40%	36.0%	10.1%	0
Government_Federal	91	808	381	47.15%	45.30%	38.6%	8.6%	0
State Owned Corporations_New Zealand	11	73	35	47.95%	38.00%	NA	NA	0
University Governing Bodies	41	614	295	48.05%	42.30%	37.4%	10.6%	0
State Owned Corporations_SA	7	39	19	48.72%	46.70%	50.0%	-1.3%	0
State Owned Corporations_WA	15	100	49	49.00%	34.70%	29.1%	19.9%	0
State Owned Corporations_Qld	12	66	33	50.00%	48.10%	36.1%	13.9%	0
State Owned Corporations_Vic (A1, A2 & A3)	36	280	145	51.79%	52.00%	35.6%	16.2%	0
Health Services (NSW, Qld, Vic)	107	961	510	53.07%	49.60%	43.0%	10.1%	0
Health Boards regulated by AHPRA	15	153	95	62.09%	56.30%	60.1%	2.0%	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1781</b>							

# Appendix 2 - Population Snapshot

Snapshot 2021 Census (Source ABS)

The First Nations population growth

Since 2016 there has been a 25% increase in the number of Australians who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This has grown by 25% since 2016, with 812,728 people (or 3.2% of the population) indicating it on their 2021 census form.

## Indigenous status, Australia, 1996-2021.

Year	%
1996	2%
2001	2.2%
2006	2.3%
2011	2.5%
2016	2.8%
2021	3.2%

## Cultural Diversity

More than half of the population (51.5%) reported either being born overseas or having a parent who was. Almost a quarter of the population (24.8%) speak a language other than English at home.

Just over a quarter (27.6%) report being born overseas, and of those, India has risen to become the second-most common overseas country of birth after England, surpassing New Zealand and China.

## Top 20 Countries of Birth

Country of birth	2011	2021
England	991,040	967,390
India	337,120	710,380
China(d)	387,420	595,630
New Zealand	543,950	559,980
Philippines	193,030	310,620
Vietnam	207,620	268,170
South Africa	161,590	201,930
Malaysia	134,140	172,250
Italy	201,680	171,520
Sri Lanka	99,740	145,790
Scotland	141,220	130,060
Nepal	27,810	129,870
USA	90,090	109,450
Germany	125,750	107,940
South Korea	85,930	106,560
Hong Kong	85,990	104,990
Greece	121,180	100,650
Iraq	54,980	99,360

## Percentage of overseas-born - Australians<sup>15</sup>

Year	% overseas-born
1891	32.4
1895	28.5
1900	23.6
1905	20.4
1910	17.6
1915	16.4
1920	15.6
1921	15.4
1925	14.8
1930	14.1
1935	13.1
1940	11.7
1945	10.4
1950	11.7
1955	14.7
1960	16.6
1965	18.1
1970	19.9
1975	20.0
1980	20.4
1985	21.1
1990	22.8
1995	23.0
2000	23.0
2005	24.2
2010	26.7
2015	28.3
2020	29.8
2021	29.1

## Top 5 languages used at home, other than English,

- Mandarin **2.7%**
- Arabic **1.4%**
- Vietnamese **1.3%**
- Cantonese **1.2%**
- Punjabi **0.9%**
- Chinese **5.5%**

## Reference

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/cultural-diversity-census/2021>

# Appendix 3 - Organisations in research sample

## Federal Government Bodies

1. Aboriginal Hostels Limited
2. Airservices Australia
3. Army and Air Force Canteen Service
4. Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
5. ASC Pty Ltd
6. Australia Business Arts Foundation (Creative Partnerships Australia)
7. Australia Council
8. Australia Post
9. Australian Broadcasting Corporation
10. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Board
11. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
12. Australian Digital Health Agency Board
13. Australian Electoral Commission
14. Australian Film Television and Radio School
15. Australian Fisheries Management Authority Commission
16. Australian Hearing Services
17. Australian Heritage Council
18. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Ltd
19. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
20. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare\_Ethics Committee
21. Australian Institute of Marine Science Council
22. Australian Maritime Safety Authority
23. Australian National Maritime Museum Council
24. Australian Naval Infrastructure Pty Ltd
25. Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
26. Australian Rail Track Corporation
27. Australian Renewable Energy Agency
28. Australian Sports Commission
29. Australian Sports Drug Medical Advisory Committee
30. Australian Statistics Advisory Council
31. Australian Transport Safety Bureau Commission
32. Australian War Memorial Council
33. Board of Taxation
34. Cancer Australia Advisory Council
35. Civil Aviation Safety Authority Board
36. Classification Review Board
37. Clean Energy Finance Corporation
38. Clean Energy Regulator
39. Climate Change Authority
40. Commonwealth Grants Commission
41. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
42. Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation
43. Defence Housing Australia
44. Export Finance and Insurance Corporation
45. Financial Reporting Council
46. Food Standards Australia New Zealand
47. Foreign Investment Review Board
48. Future Fund
49. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
50. Independent Hospital Pricing Authority
51. Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
52. Indigenous Business Australia
53. Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
54. Industry Innovation and Science Australia
55. Infrastructure Australia
56. International Air Services Commission
57. Medical Services Advisory Committee
58. Moorebank Intermodal Company Limited
59. Murray-Darling Basin Authority
60. National Capital Authority
61. National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency
62. National Film and Sound Archive
63. National Fishing Advisory Council
64. National Gallery of Australia Council
65. National Health and Medical Research Council
66. National Health and Medical Research Council\_Australian Health Ethics Committee
67. National Health and Medical Research Council\_Research Committee
68. National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation
69. National Library of Australia Council
70. National Museum of Australia Council
71. National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority Board
72. National Portrait Gallery of Australia
73. National Schools Resourcing Board
74. National Water Grid Advisory Body
75. NBN Co Limited
76. Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility
77. Old Parliament House Board
78. Outback Stores Pty Ltd
79. Payments System Board
80. Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee
81. Protheses List Advisory Committee
82. Public Lending Right Committee
83. Radiation Health Safety and Advisory Council
84. Referendum Council
85. Regional Investment Corporation Board
86. Reserve Bank of Australia
87. Safe Work Australia
88. Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
89. Screen Australia
90. Snowy Hydro Limited
91. Special Broadcasting Service
92. Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
93. Tax Practitioners Board
94. Tourism Australia

## Universities

1. Australian Catholic University
2. Australian National University
3. Bond University
4. Central Queensland University
5. Charles Darwin University
6. Charles Sturt University
7. Curtin University
8. Deakin University
9. Edith Cowan University
10. Federation University
11. Flinders University
12. Griffith University
13. James Cook University
14. La Trobe University
15. Macquarie University
16. Monash University
17. Murdoch University
18. Queensland University of Technology
19. RMIT University
20. Southern Cross University
21. Swinburne University of Technology
22. Torrens University
23. University of Adelaide
24. University of Canberra
25. University of Divinity

26. University of Melbourne
27. University of New England
28. University of New South Wales
29. University of Newcastle
30. University of Notre Dame
31. University of Queensland
32. University of South Australia
33. University of Southern Queensland
34. University of Sydney
35. University of Tasmania
36. University of Technology Sydney
37. University of the Sunshine Coast
38. University of Western Australia
39. University of Wollongong
40. Victoria University
41. Western Sydney University

#### **R&D Corporations**

1. AgriFutures Australia
2. Australian Eggs Limited
3. Wine Australia
4. Australian Meat Processor Corporation
5. Australian Pork Limited
6. Australian Wool Innovation Limited
7. Meat & Livestock Australia
8. Cotton Research and Development Corporation
9. Dairy Australia Limited
10. Fisheries Research & Development Corporation
11. Forest and Wood Products Australia
12. Grains Research & Development Corporation
13. Horticulture Innovation Australia
14. Livecorp
15. Sugar Research Australia

#### **National Sporting Organisations**

1. Archery Australia
2. Athletics Australia
3. Australian Fencing Federation Inc
4. Australian Ice Racing Inc
5. Australian Karate Federation Inc
6. Australian Lacrosse Association Ltd
7. Australian Sailing
8. Australian Taekwondo
9. Australian Weightlifting Federation Inc
10. Badminton Australia
11. Baseball Australia
12. Basketball Australia

13. Blind Sports Australia
14. Bocce Australia
15. Bowls Australia Inc
16. Boxing Australia Inc
17. Combat Institute of Australia
18. Cycling Australia
19. Deaf Sports Australia
20. Disability Sports Australia
21. Disabled Wintersport Australia
22. Diving Australia Inc
23. Equestrian Australia
24. Football Federation Australia
25. Golf Australia
26. Gymnastics Australia Ltd
27. Hockey Australia
28. Judo Federation of Australia inc
29. Motorcycling Australia Ltd
30. Motorsport Australia
31. Netball Australia
32. Olympic Winter Institute of Australia
33. Orienteering Australia
34. Paddle Australia
35. Paralympics Australia
36. Polocrosse Association of Australia
37. Pony Club Australia
38. Riding for the Disabled
39. Rowing Australia Ltd
40. Rugby Australia
41. Shooting Australia
42. Skate Australia Inc
43. Snow Australia
44. Softball Australia
45. Special Olympics
46. Sport Inclusion Australia
47. Squash Australia Ltd
48. Surf Lifesaving Australia
49. Surfing Australia
50. Swimming Australia Ltd
51. Table Tennis Australia
52. Tenpin Bowling Australia Ltd
53. Touch Football Australia
54. Transplant
55. Triathlon Australia
56. UniSport Australia
57. Volleyball Australia
58. Water Polo Australia Ltd
59. Waterski & Wakeboard Australia
60. Wrestling Australia Inc

#### **Cooperative Research Centres**

1. Heavy Industry Low Carbon Transition CRC
2. Food Agility CRC
3. Cyber Security CRC
4. Digital Health CRC
5. MinEx CRC
6. Future Fuels CRC
7. Fight Food Waste CRC
8. CRC for High Performance Soils
9. CRC for Honey Bee Products
10. CRC for Developing Northern Australia
11. CRC for Living with Autism
12. iMove CRC
13. Innovative Manufacturing CRC
14. Future Batteries CRC
15. SmartTSat CRC
16. Building 4.0 CRC
17. SmartCrete CRC
18. Blue Economy CRC
19. Future Food Systems CRC
20. RACE for 2030 CRC
21. CRC TIME
22. Future Energy Exports CRC



Truth Be Told  
Cultural Diversity on Australian Boards

A Women on Boards Research Report

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