

WOMEN OF COLOUR AUSTRALIA

Championing Australia's Women of Colour



SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2012

[Women of Colour Australia \(WoCA\)](#) is a not-for-profit organisation run by women of colour for women of colour. We are an Australian Public [Company Limited by Guarantee](#). We are a [registered charity](#) with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We are working towards securing our DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status.

We are an emerging organisation, however, we have already established a credible network at the state and national levels. Our [Ambassador Tasneem Chopra, OAM](#), is a leading cross-cultural consultant based in Melbourne (Naarm). Tasneem addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion across organisational leadership, including intersectionality within government, corporate, arts, and community sectors.

Vision and Purpose

We envision a world where girls and women of colour are afforded equitable opportunities to reach their full potential

We exist to champion Australia's women of colour in all spaces and places through programs of education, community support initiatives, and advocacy work

We stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the original and first matriarchs of this land

Focus and Values

We **educate** ourselves and seek with purpose and intention opportunities for **growth**

We **support** each other to build a sense of belonging

We **advocate** for ourselves and for our **community** to drive change

Leadership

WoCA is led by an [all-women Board of nine](#), who are leaders in their own professional fields, including finance, law, business, marketing, medicine, government, communications, and the arts. Our Board includes Aboriginal women and women with migratory roots from Africa, South America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. We strongly believe that having a culturally rich, racially & ethnically-diverse board with an intersectional approach to solving systemic and structural issues facing Australia's women of colour of today and in the future is what's fundamentally going to help us drive the change that we want to see in our communities, our society, and the world.

Our Community (as of Nov 21)

Private Facebook Group, Women of Colour Collective (& Allies): 1,583 members (96% WOC, 3% women from Anglo/European background, 1%, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women)

Email list: 596 subscribers (96.5% WOC, 2% men & women from Anglo/European background, 1.5%, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women)

Social media followers: Facebook 4,095, LinkedIn 2,085, Instagram 1,582, Twitter 503

Volunteers: 126

Our Research

WoCA's inaugural '[Women of Colour in the Australian Workplace](#)' survey (June 2021), highlights why an intersectional approach is required, provides a unique insight into the systemic barriers and structural inequities women of colour face, and what is now critically needed to improve women's experiences in ethnocentric workplaces.

A total of 543 women of colour completed the survey, with 7% identifying as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Most respondents (70%) were between 25 and 34 and 70% worked full-time. Questions were not mandatory, so some questions had fewer answers than others. The women reported being employed in more than 250 different roles, and those who did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander had heritage from more than 60 different nations.

Most of the women who responded had experienced discrimination in the workplace (60%) while 40% had not. While 30% believed their identity as a woman of colour was valued in the workplace, 43% did not, and the remainder answered "maybe".

Most respondents (57%) felt they had faced challenges in the workplace related to their identity as a woman of colour, while 21% did not believe so and the remainder were unsure (answered 'maybe'). While 59% said their workplace had a diversity and inclusion policy, 22% said it did not, and the remainder were unsure.

The majority of respondents (57.61%) said the leader of their organisation was a man, not a person of colour, followed by a woman, not a person of colour, (25.63%) with just over 2% saying they were the organisation's leader and 6.58% saying the leader was a woman of colour.

Many of the women responding named 'mentoring' as a key need for future development in their careers, and other suggestions included networking, counselling, and structural change.

Comments on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency

We applaud the work the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has undertaken thus far and would support WGEA in increasing its powers, tools and levers to achieve the objectives of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. We would also support any additional initiatives to ensure WGEA applies an intersectional approach to solving these systemic and structural issues facing Australia's women. This approach is what's fundamentally going to help us drive the change that we want to see in our communities, our society, and the world.

Upon reviewing WGEA's various reports, we believe that the gender equality indicators and the data collected with respect to the equality indicators can be improved by inclusion of broader measures of diversity not limited to age and location but also via other measures of intersectionality accounting for the lived experiences of all women and non binary workers in Australian workplaces. Furthermore, outside of our own research undertakings, there is very limited data available on workplace gender equality from an intersectional lens. Data from the WGEA, whilst accessible, is limited in transparency and lacks critical remuneration, pay and salary information which is required to bridge existing pay disparities.

We look forward to engaging with WGEA further and would be happy to arrange a meeting to provide additional insights.