



WOMEN OF COLOUR AUSTRALIA

Championing Australia's Women of Colour

Submission: Department of Home Affairs Multicultural Framework Review - Terms of Reference (draft)

Introduction

Women of Colour Australia (WoCA) is a not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to support, advocate for and strengthen the lives and experiences of Women of Colour (WoC) in all places and spaces in Australia.

In Australia, WoCA recognises the social structures that continue to overlook and oppress Women of Colour across all aspects of Australian society. Through an intersectional lens, WoCA acknowledges the complexity of building an inclusive multicultural society where everyone feels that they belong. To achieve this, we need to identify and dismantle the systemic barriers at institutional and policy levels, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

WoCA is committed to the delivery of four key objectives:

- Building and maintaining a credible evidence base for policies, initiatives, and programs targeted towards WoC;
- Engaging with Women of Colour and allies to understand the opportunities and constraints for Women of Colour in the workplace and in the business space, and leverage data and insights to promote change within workplaces and business spaces;
- Providing access to industry-leading resources that will equip Women of Colour to succeed in the Australian workplace and business spaces; and
- Creating an active Women of Colour Australia community that champions and holds space for one another.

WoCA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Multicultural Framework Review - Terms of Reference (draft) on behalf of WoC across the country.

Response

We would like to commend the Federal Government for beginning a consultation process to review Australia's Multicultural Framework. Australia is increasingly recognising the diversity of our multicultural society as a source of talent and strength. Migration has undeniably shaped Australian culture and diverse communities are integral contributors to Australia's social and economic success. Thus it is essential to update institutional policies and processes to reflect these multicultural communities.

WoCA's inaugural '[Women of Colour in the Australian Workplace](#)' survey (2021), gives a unique insight into the systemic barriers and structural inequities Women of Colour face, in reaching their full potential in their workplaces. A total of 543 Women of Colour (with 7% identifying as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) from diverse backgrounds provided their insights and detailed description of their lived realities.

WoCA has four main recommendations for Multicultural Framework Review - draft terms as outlined below. We welcome more meaningful engagement in the subsequent phases of the review process.

1. The Review makes several references to “effectiveness”. It is our recommendation that the review clearly incorporates a definition of effectiveness that is benchmarked using intersectional data, recognising the diverse lived experiences in the Australia community and principles of “nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 2000). WoCA also recommends that “effectiveness” is measured through the impact on the lived experiences of multicultural individuals and communities that experience these diversity, equity and inclusion strategies.
2. This Review should also assess and make recommendations of funding.
3. Representation matters. The Review should consider representation in the leadership of Government organisations and groups that are responsible for designing, developing and implementing strategies to improve multicultural representation.
4. WoCA also recommends specific meaningful engagement with not-for-profit organisations which work in the space of multicultural communities, including WoCA.

Finally, we would like to highlight that providing a matter of weeks to make this submission is insufficient to digest the purpose of the Multicultural Framework Review, analyse the terms of reference and then listen to the voices of the community that are directly affected by this legislation. This timeline suggests that this review process needs to be recentered on the voices of those that it impacts and to ensure that a wide range of individuals, community-based organisations and others have the necessary time to carefully consider the multiple perspectives of the diverse people who make up Australia's rich, multicultural society.

Dr. Varina Michaels (she/her)
Director of Research and Advocacy
Women of Colour Australia (WoCA)

For further information, please contact
advocacy@womenofcolour.org.au.

References

Charlton, J. I. (2000). Nothing about us without us: Disability oppression and empowerment. Univ of California Press.

Women of Colour Australia (2021): Women of Colour in the Australian Workplace Inaugural Survey. <https://womenofcolour.org.au/workplace-survey-report-2021/>