



Chief Executive Women

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Unlocking women's leadership: CEW calls for corporate Australia to amplify the conversation about gender *and* race

Chief Executive Women (CEW) has today released a report calling on corporate Australia to amplify the conversation about gender and race as a crucial step in harnessing the full potential of women in leadership for the economic benefit of all.

The *Unlocking Leadership: Conversations on Gender and Race in Corporate Australia* report explores the experiences of culturally and racially diverse women in senior leadership roles in Australia's ASX300 companies and indicates that conversations about racism remain largely taboo in corporate Australia.

CEW President Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz says "Culturally and racially diverse women leaders face a double-glazed glass ceiling, experiencing barriers because of their gender and race. We are calling on all leaders to reflect on how they can be allies to unlock women's leadership across the economy.

"Leaders in corporate Australia can take actions to support culturally diverse women in the workforce. Things like having a conversation about race at leadership tables, improving organisational data gathering on cultural diversity in the workplace and actively sponsoring the many highly capable culturally diverse women and men to accelerate change that benefits everyone."

CEW member and project steering committee member Dr Marlene Kanga AO says "With Australia facing a challenging economic climate and critical workforce shortages, businesses need to tap into the full talent pool and culturally diverse women are one of our greatest untapped resources."

"Culturally diverse women leaders are a force to be reckoned with. As a nation, we must work together to harness this talent, and embrace culturally diverse women's leadership in our workforces, and across our economy."

The report, which is based on 27 interviews conducted by Intersection, outlines five actions for leaders and businesses to unlock the potential of culturally diverse women leaders.

Lead a conversation about cultural and racial diversity

Intersectional diversity should be an organisational priority, not confined to a single department or team. Leaders should develop their understanding of intersectionality and create the space for more conversations about cultural and racial diversity.



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Role model curiosity and engage in self-reflection

Leaders and allies can role model curiosity and a learning mindset, in consultation with the workforce, while acknowledging any mistakes and committing to self-improvement. We caution leaders against placing the burden of cultural responsibility on culturally and racially diverse people.

Gather data, set goals, measure progress, and hold leaders to account

Data and targets have vastly improved the representation of women in corporate Australia. Now is the time to build on that success, improve data gathering, and work towards setting organisational targets for cultural and racial diversity. Boards and executives should regularly track progress and communicate outcomes.

Actively invest in sponsorship

Sponsorship is highly effective in building the talent pipeline. Leaders should seek opportunities to sponsor culturally and racially diverse women and lead executive teams to do the same.

Build culturally safe workplaces and break down systemic barriers

Examine organisational policies and practices (particularly in relation to recruitment and progression processes), assess cultural and racial safety, and take action. Reorganise social and networking events to ensure inclusion and create opportunities for cultural exchanges and celebrations of religious and significant cultural days.

The *Unlocking Leadership: Conversations on Gender and Race in Corporate Australia* report is sponsored by Macquarie Group. The full report is available [here](#).

CEW commitment

Our purpose is to be 'women leaders empowering *all* women' and we advocate for diverse women leaders at every decision-making table. We are committed to living this value and will adopt this report's recommendations in full.

To do this, we have started gathering data across our membership, and will work towards setting meaningful targets to drive greater diversity within our organisation. We acknowledge CEW has much work to do in this regard.

Report methodology

This research was undertaken between January 2023 and June 2023.

Intersection conducted a total of 27 semi-structured interviews and one focus group. This included 21 interviews with culturally and racially diverse women leaders, three interviews with culturally and racially diverse male leaders, and three interviews with managers of culturally and racially diverse women. The interviewee sample offered diversity in both experience and sector representation, including finance, technology, law, government, health, real estate, retail, media, mining, and sport. Intersection also conducted one focus group with a total of six culturally and racially diverse women leaders. The participants were recruited by Chief Executive Women primarily through their membership and Connect Community. Participants self-identified as culturally and racially diverse during recruitment.



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About Intersection

Intersection is a unique consulting team of professionals with deep expertise in gender equality and cultural change working with organisations and leaders to achieve best practice in diversity, equality and inclusion, and respect at work.

Our experience spans government, not-for-profit and the private sectors including the military, sport, resources, arts, media and entertainment, and transport.

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About Chief Executive Women

cew.org.au

Since 1985 CEW has influenced and engaged all levels of Australian business and government to achieve gender balance. Through advocacy, research, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW helps to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW's members work actively to realise our vision of a community where women and men have equal economic and social choices and responsibilities.