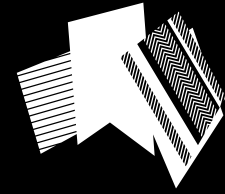


SYNOPSIS REPORT



DIVERSITY
COUNCIL
AUSTRALIA

Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership

A FRAMEWORK FOR (INTERSECTIONAL) ORGANISATIONAL ACTION

Report embargoed until 6 March 2023.

An electronic executive summary of this research can be found on the [DCA website](#).

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About Diversity Council Australia

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the only independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity advisor to business in Australia. We offer a unique knowledge bank of research, practice and expertise across diversity dimensions developed over 30 years of operation.

In partnership with our members, our mission is to: lead debate on diversity in the public arena; develop and promote the latest diversity research, thinking and practice; and deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to enable our members to drive business improvement. DCA works in partnership with members to generate groundbreaking high impact diversity research that drives business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

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Contents

4	Our project team
5	Our aspiration
5	Our thanks
6	Our approach
7	What is intersectionality?
9	Our language
12	Our method
15	State of play for CARM women in leadership
16	The case for change
18	A framework for (intersectional) organisational action
20	Talent Lock & Key 1
20	Lock 1: Gender equity overlooks race
21	Key 1: Get intersectional
22	Talent Lock & Key 2
22	Lock 2: Biased leader prototype
23	Key 2: Redefine leader prototype
24	Talent Lock & Key 3
24	Lock 3: Inaccessible social capital
25	Key 3: Make social capital accessible
26	Talent Lock & Key 4
26	Lock 4: Ignored voices
27	Key 4: Centre marginalised voices
29	References
31	Find out more

Our project team

Dr Virginia Mapedzahama, DCA Member Education Director

Virginia Mapedzahama (PhD, Sociology) is a first-generation Black African migrant woman. She is a critical race Black feminist scholar in the broader field of sociology of difference. Her research interest is understanding the social construction of all categories of difference: meanings attached to this difference, how it is signified and lived, as well as its implications for those assigned difference. This interest is fuelled by her own experiences of racism, racialisation, racial discrimination, and intersectional harms as a racially marginalised person living in Australia. Virginia's research interests include the subjective experiences of race, racism and ethnicity, migration, diaspora, Blackness and Black subjectivities, sexuality, hybridity, intersectionality, and gendered violence. Virginia has published extensively in these areas as well as the broader fields of cross-cultural identities, African feminisms, post-colonial feminisms, new African diaspora in Australia and African women diaspora. She brings both lived expertise as well as research and scholarly expertise to this project.

Farhana Laffernis, DCA Research Manager

Farhana comes from a migrant background, and has postgraduate degrees in development studies, Indigenous studies, and educational research. Her work in diversity and inclusion is driven by her own experiences as a South Asian woman and being racialised as non-white in Australia. Prior to DCA, Farhana worked in the university sector in a senior diversity and inclusion role, focused on anti-racism, embedding lived expertise, and research into student equity in Australian universities. Farhana brings her work experience in diversity and inclusion practice and research management and lived experience as a culturally and racially marginalised woman to this project.

Ameena Barhoum, DCA Research Assistant

Ameena Barhoum is an undergraduate, completing a double Bachelor of Arts and Laws at the University of Sydney, majoring in politics and international relations. As a scarfed Muslim woman, she has many lived experiences of racism and sexism which drives her interest in this work. Ameena is fascinated by the concept of female agency, especially in the workplace, and strives to pursue further education in this area and training with Diversity Council Australia. She is beginning her academic career, having written about the Muslim Australian diaspora, the politics of youth activism, racial injustice against First Nations peoples in the Australian legal system, and anti-racism education for law students.

Dr Jane O'Leary, DCA Research Director

As a white woman, whose mother is English and father is Irish Australian, Jane O'Leary acknowledges the racial privilege she has in Australia and leverages that privilege by joining the project team as an ally in-learning. Jane has a PhD degree in diversity and inclusion and has worked on numerous DCA projects which have aimed to create more racially diverse and inclusive workplaces.

Our aspiration

Five years on from DCA's release of *Cracking the Glass-Cultural Ceiling: Future Proofing Your Business in the 21st Century*,¹ Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) women's representation in leadership ranks remains scarce.

DCA's landmark report, *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up to and End Workplace Racism*,² emphasised the importance of centering conversations about race, to support and uplift a substantial amount of the Australian population suffering from the consequences of systemic racism.

This report goes one step further, examining the intersection of race and gender and how this restricts the leadership journey of ambitious, capable, and resilient CARM women. It responds to growing government and industry recognition of the state of play for CARM women in leadership in Australia,³ and draws on over a decade's work by DCA exploring gender, culture, and racism at work.

Our aspiration was to produce practical evidence-based guidance for employers looking to develop and promote this critical talent cohort into senior leadership roles.



Who are CARM women?

We use the term culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) to refer to people who are not white – research shows this group experiences racial marginalisation.⁴ This includes people who are Black, Brown, Asian, or any other non-white group, who face marginalisation due to their race. The term “culturally” is added because these people may **also** face discrimination due to their culture or background. For example, a woman who is a Muslim migrant from South Sudan may face discrimination because of her race and her religion and cultural background. Our category of CARM women is intended to be inclusive of cis women, trans women, as well as non-binary and/or gender diverse people who identify (or are identified by others) as CARM women.⁵

Our thanks

For this project, just over 370 Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) women shared their insights and experiences in our consultation survey and focus groups. Their insights were invaluable for shaping our thinking and the guidelines for action in this report.

We hope this report does justice to your stories and experiences. Thank you for sharing them with us. To treat your experiences with due respect and ensure your stories are heard, we have released all anonymised survey comments in a compendium called *CARM Women in Leadership: Your Experiences*.

The project team also gives our thanks to Professor Nareen Young for her generous guidance in the development of this project. We also acknowledge the contributions of DCA staff members, Lisa Annese, Dr Annika Kaabel, Dr Rose D'Almada-Remedios, Cathy Brown, and Sudha Narthakumar.

Our approach

DCA's approach to this project is defined by 4 key characteristics:



Recognise First Nations peoples' unique position

We sought to conduct a project that most respectfully honours the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, given their unique status as First Nations peoples. First Nations women indicated that a separate project was needed for First Nations women and non-binary First Nations people, given the unique place and experiences of First Nations people in the country and the experiences of colonisation. Consideration will be given to this need by DCA. DCA is guided in these considerations by its Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander External Advisory Panel and its partnership with UTS Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, with whom DCA has a close working relationship.



Apply an intersectional lens

As this project focuses on the impact of both race and gender on women's careers, we have taken an intersectional approach. This is important as it means the gender equity-related recommendations we make are more likely to be inclusive of and benefit all women. While workplace gender equity initiatives have made great strides towards inclusion at work, critiques of these approaches include the failure to consider the different life experiences and needs of all women and the tendency to improve outcomes mainly for white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgendered women.⁶



Centre voice

We have deliberately prioritised the perspectives of CARM women in this report as they understand the experiences of multiple marginalisations in ways that women who are not racially marginalised, and CARM men, cannot. One way we ensured CARM women's voices are centred was by being intentional about the fact that the majority of the DCA project team designing and undertaking the research were CARM women themselves. These researchers have both lived and subject matter expertise of multiple interlinked discriminations.



Respond to shifting language

We have deliberately shifted away from using the term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) in this report, offering the alternative language of 'culturally and racially marginalised' (CARM) in recognition of the significance of race and racism in the women's lives. Australia has shown longstanding reluctance to focus on race;⁷ preferring to use terms like ethnicity and culture.⁸ This is evident in the use of terms such as non-English-speaking background (NESB), culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and cultural diversity.⁹ As discussed in DCA's *Racism at Work* guide, Australia's reluctance to focus on race means we often struggle to talk in an informed, thoughtful, and transformative way about race, and to identify and respond to racism. As such, we have specifically used the language of marginalisation, race, and racism in this report. For more information about the specific terms we use, please refer to the next section, [Our Language](#).

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality refers to how some people experience compounded discrimination due to multiple marginalising *and* interlinked characteristics. The term was first coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw¹⁰ in 1989, to talk about Black women's unique and specific experiences of discrimination in the USA.



Multiple marginalising characteristics

Intersectionality recognises that some people have **multiple marginalising characteristics** (e.g., Black women, women with disabilities, Asian non-binary women) which negatively affect their access to opportunities. Current approaches to gender equity often treat 'women' as one big homogenous group. Instead, intersectionality recognises that white women have more access to power, privilege, and resources than CARM women. For example, DCA research found that while 5.7% of all ASX directors in 2015 were Anglo women, only 2.5% of all ASX directors were from non-Anglo cultural origins.¹¹



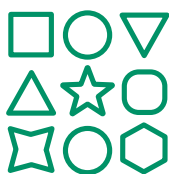
Interlinked characteristics

Intersectionality recognises that people experience multiple forms of bias or marginalisation all at the same time – these forms of bias or marginalisation are therefore **interlinked**. For example, an Asian woman at work may experience gendered racism (e.g., assumptions that she is not suitable for leadership as she will be passive and quiet) rather than sexism separately to racism.¹²



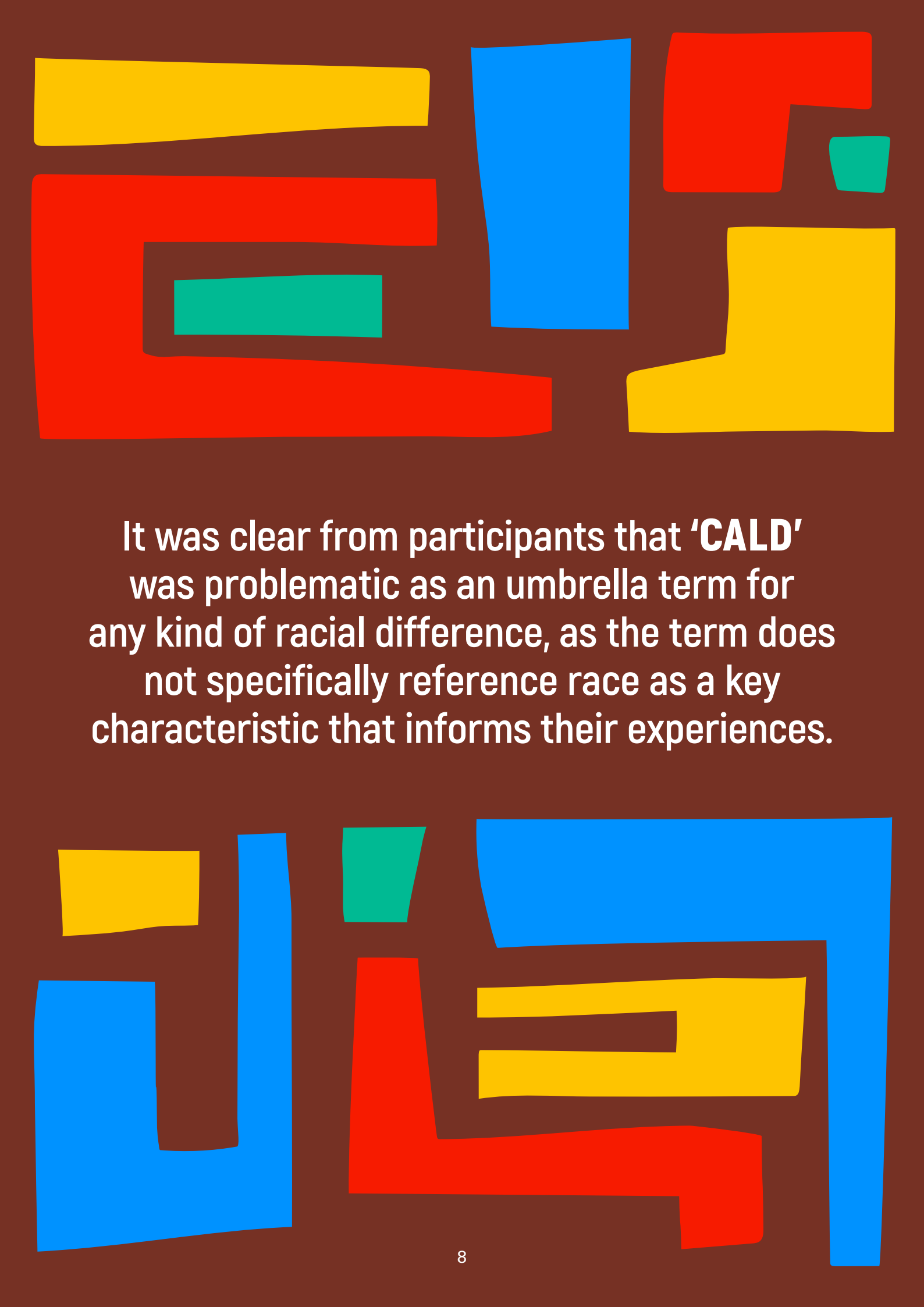
Compounding characteristics

Not only are marginalising characteristics interlinked, but they all act together to compound or amplify experiences of discrimination. For example, Black women are paid 67 cents for every \$1 that their white male counterparts earn. Among all women, the wage gap is smaller: about 84 cents for each \$1. The difference over a 40-year career would mean earning about \$907,680 less than their white male counterparts.¹³



Remember – not all characteristics are marginalising

For example, while "gender" is a characteristic for men, women, and non-binary people, in Australian workplaces today it is women and non-binary people who on average have less career opportunities than men and therefore experience workplace marginalisation.¹⁴ Similarly, race is a characteristic for both Black and white people, however it is Black workers who on average have less career opportunities than white people and therefore experience workplace marginalisation.¹⁵

The background of the slide is a solid brown color. It is decorated with several large, abstract, irregular geometric shapes in four colors: yellow, blue, red, and teal. These shapes are scattered across the top and bottom of the slide, framing the central text. Some shapes are solid, while others have internal cutouts or nested shapes.

It was clear from participants that **'CALD'** was problematic as an umbrella term for any kind of racial difference, as the term does not specifically reference race as a key characteristic that informs their experiences.

Our language

DCA's *Words at Work* guide tells us that for language to be inclusive, it should be respectful, accurate, and relevant.¹⁶

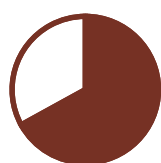
Inclusive language for CARM women

We know that many people in Australia, particularly people with lived experience of racism, feel the current language of 'cultural diversity' and 'culturally diverse' or 'culturally and linguistically diverse' ('CALD') is outdated and too broad to be meaningful.¹⁷

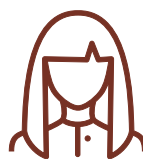
In this project we asked CARM women about their views. We found that, for many CARM women, language has moved past 'CALD,' and the term 'CARM' was seen as more accurately capturing their experiences. Two thirds of CARM women surveyed (67%) preferred a term other than 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD):

- 56% of CARM women surveyed preferred the term 'culturally and racially marginalised' (CARM).
- 11% of CARM women surveyed preferred a different term – the most common terms in frequency order were 'woman of colour', 'culturally and racially diverse' and 'non-white.'

Only 33% of CARM women surveyed preferred the term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD).



Two thirds of CARM women surveyed (67%) preferred a term other than 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD)



After CARM, the most common preferred terms were 'woman of colour', 'culturally and racially diverse' and 'non-white.'

'CALD' overlooks the profound impact of race. Some CARM women felt the term CALD described white, European migrant communities, rather than people who are racialised as non-white (i.e., those most likely to be the target of racism). They noted that race should be a part of any term used, as race so profoundly affects their access to opportunities, often more so than culture or language.

'CALD' doesn't necessarily capture CARM women's experiences. Other CARM women participants (particularly second-generation migrants) told us that while they do not identify as 'linguistically diverse' in the way the term CALD implies (i.e., not speaking English fluently, or even speaking it with a non-Australian accent), they are still referred to as CALD. The majority of CARM women felt that the term is not an accurate description of their linguistic experiences and realities as many spoke English as their first and only language.

'CARM' recognises the profound impact of race. CARM women participants commented that there is great power in naming problems as what they are, and there was general support for 'marginalised' as an accurate reflection of CARM women's personal and professional experiences.

“ Commence using the language of CARM and change the way it's measured. I'm Australian born so I often don't qualify [as 'CALD'] but I look different and get treated differently because of it. ” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

Some may find 'CARM' confronting. While 'Culturally and Racially Marginalised' was the most popular term for survey respondents and focus group participants, participants also noted that they expected their workplaces may struggle with shifting away from 'diversity' in favour of 'marginalisation', as some employers may find the term confronting.

‘Marginalisation’ is what happens to CARM women at work – it is not their identity. One concern raised by several CARM women was that they felt that the term ‘marginalisation’ took a deficit approach to describing people, preferring terms such as ‘culturally or racially diverse’ or ‘person of colour’. DCA’s intention in using the term ‘CARM’ was to name what happens to CARM women as a result of the systemic racial and gender discrimination they experience – it is not meant to refer to CARM women’s personal identity.

Alternative terms to ‘CARM’ should reflect the unique Australian experience. While some CARM women suggested used terms such as ‘women of colour’, others voiced concerns that overseas derived terms such as this did not reflect Australia’s history of colonisation and migration policy.

White women preferred ‘CALD,’ while CARM women preferred ‘CARM.’ While our survey invited only CARM women to participate, 91 women who identified themselves as white completed the survey. Interestingly, we found:

- 53% of white women preferred CALD or another term which did not factor in race, and only 16% of white women preferred CARM
- While 67% of CARM women preferred CARM or another term which factored in race, and only 11% preferred CALD.

Our lessons learned...

Our lessons from discussing language with CARM women as part of the project were that Australian employers should:

Recognise that language constantly evolves. The terminology and language used to describe race/ethnicity/cultural backgrounds in Australia and globally constantly evolves. In Australia for instance:

- the term **‘New Australians’** was coined in 1949 to refer to non-British people who arrived in the wave of immigration following World War II,
- the 1970s saw a shift to the term **‘Non-English-Speaking Background’ (NESB)** people,
- this was then replaced in 1996 by **‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse’ (CALD)** people to recognise that cultural diversity goes beyond linguistic factors.
- More recently, we have seen the term **‘culturally diverse’** people used, as well as the importing from the United States (U.S.) of terms such as **‘Person of Colour’ (POC)** and **‘Black, Indigenous and Person of Colour’ (BIPOC)**.¹⁸

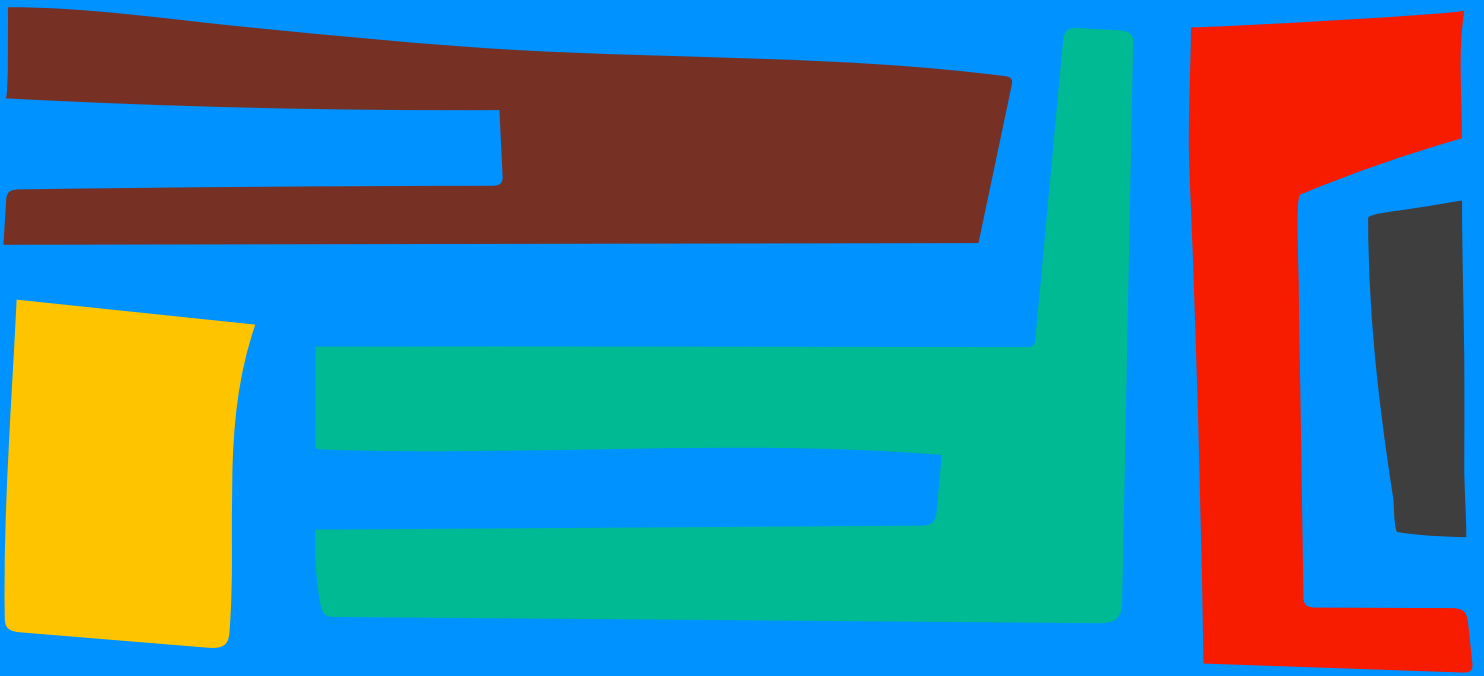
Keep up to date with developments in language. Make a conscious effort to maintain your awareness of developments in language and be open to changes led by CARM women themselves. It is important for organisations to develop awareness of how people relate (or not) to existing terms and respond with language that represents this group’s needs.

Centre CARM women’s voice in any organisational changes to terminology. Doing so reflects the leading practice social justice principle that there should be ‘nothing about us without us.’ Please see [Lock and Key 4](#) to find out more about how to centre voice in a meaningful way.

Gender inclusive language

As this project is focused on CARM women, binary gender language is used in these guidelines.

We recognise that some people’s experiences and identities cannot be captured by binary gender language, however these categories have very real effects and sometimes binary language is necessary to convey the gendered nature and dynamics of our society. (See [Our Method](#) for more information on inclusion of non-binary and gender diverse respondents in our dataset).



Race and racism can affect everything from how likely we are to suffer the effects of a polluted environment to what our expected healthcare outcomes are, to whether we own a house or even whether we ever need to think about race and racism at all.



Our method

This research was informed by the voices of CARM women with lived experiences of racialised gender discrimination (i.e., discrimination due to gender **and** race, sometimes referred to as gendered racism or racialised sexism) in the workplace.



What is racialised gender discrimination?

This is discrimination due to gender and race. The concept was coined by Philomena Essed and includes the simultaneous experience of both racism and sexism¹⁹. For example, this can include harmful stereotypes such as “oppressed Muslim woman” or “angry Black woman”

Our evidence-base

The research was multi-method, and drew on 4 data sources:



1. **DCA research** on workplace racism,²⁰ and the experiences of CARM women in leadership.²¹



2. **Literature review** of national and international academic and industry/government approaches to diversity in leadership and intersectionality.



3. **A consultation survey** of 374 CARM women across a range of industries and sectors to gain an understanding of CARM women’s pathways to leadership and how they navigate multiple discriminations.

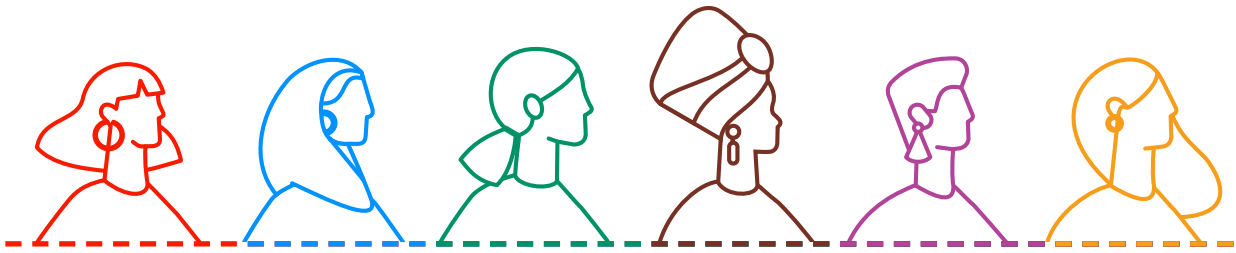


4. **Focus group discussions** with twelve professional CARM women in leadership to explore emerging data and key themes from the survey.

Based on insights gained from this evidence base, we crafted a framework for organisational action which explains:

- What **organisational locks** (barriers) prevent CARM women from accessing leadership?
- What **organisational keys** (actions) unlock the talents and contributions of CARM women and enable them to access leadership roles?

Importantly, these organisational locks and keys recognise that racialised gender discrimination in Australia plays out not just at the **interpersonal level** (between people) but also at the **systemic level** (in organisational policies, practices, and systems).



Our category of 'CARM women' is intended to be inclusive of **cis women, trans women**, and non-binary and/or **gender diverse people** who identify (or are identified by others) as CARM women. We hoped to capture some of these experiences in our survey.

What do we mean by 'CARM women'?

We use the term 'culturally and racially marginalised (CARM)' to refer to people who are not white. Research indicates this group experiences racial marginalisation.²² This group includes people who are Black, Brown, Asian, or any other non-white group, who face marginalisation due to their race.



Why "culturally"?

The term "culturally" is added because these people may **also** face discrimination due to their culture or background. For example, a woman who is a Muslim migrant from South Sudan may face discrimination because of her race and her religion and cultural background.

Our category of CARM women was intended to be inclusive of cis women, trans women, and non-binary and/or gender diverse people who identify (or are identified by others) as CARM women.²³ We hoped to capture some of these experiences in our survey.

However, we received only 7 responses from people who identified as CARM and non-binary and/or gender diverse who did not also self-identify as women/female. This small sample size meant we could not conduct a separate analysis without risk of identifying participants or making inaccurate claims which are not representative of their experiences.

We thank these respondents for participating in our survey and hope that this leads to further intersectional research that explores the experience of gender diverse CARM people.

An abstract graphic at the top of the page consists of several overlapping, irregular geometric shapes in a vibrant color palette. The colors include a deep red background, bright yellow, teal, light blue, brown, and white. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some shapes appearing to be layered on top of others.

We use the term **'culturally and racially marginalised (CARM)'** to refer to people who are not white. Research indicates this group experiences racial marginalisation.

State of play for CARM women in leadership

In 2023, data specifically on race and the representation of CARM women in leadership in Australia remains scarce. Below, we bring together the limited available data to capture the state of play as best as possible.

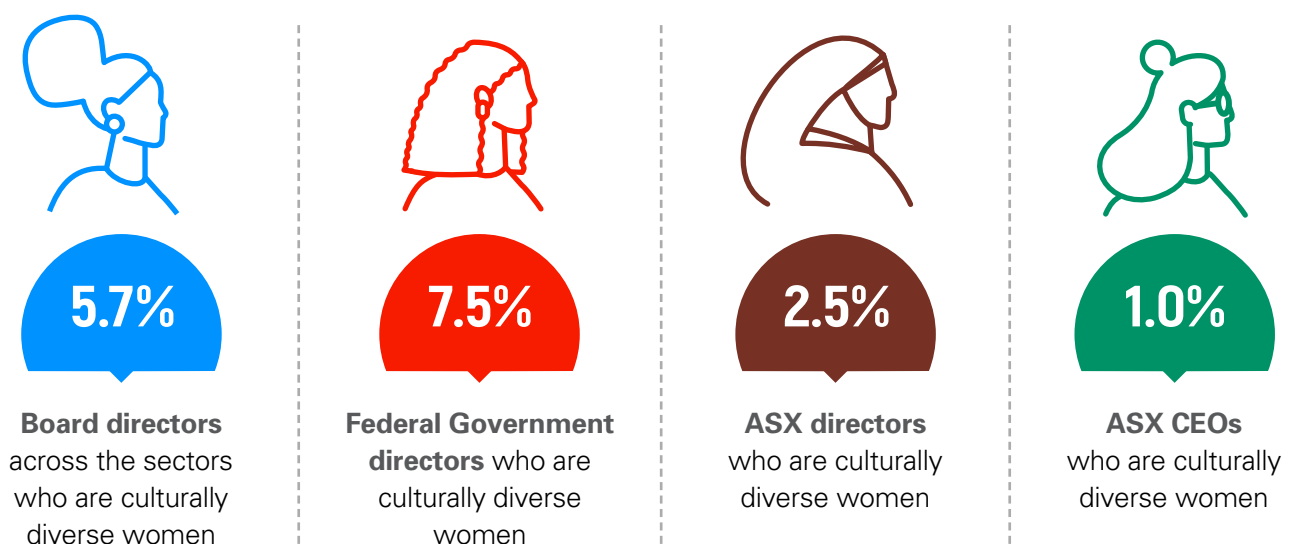
In 2022, Women on Boards conducted a desktop audit of the boards of 232 (non-corporate) organisations across 5 sectors²⁴ and found that:

- While women comprised 46% of board directors across the sectors, culturally diverse²⁵ women (defined as women with non-Anglo Celtic origins) accounted for 5.7%.
- Federal Government was the sector with the largest cultural diversity representation but still only had 7.5% of culturally diverse women directors compared to 48.5% of women directors overall.²⁶

In 2017, DCA released *Capitalising on Culture and Gender in ASX Leadership* report, which analysed the likely cultural origins of all ASX leaders, revealing that:

- 2.5% of all ASX directors were culturally diverse women (defined as women without Anglo Celtic origins), compared to 5.7% of women with Anglo Celtic origins. When a narrower definition of 'culturally diverse' was used – women without Anglo Celtic or North-West European origins – the figure of ASX directors who were culturally diverse women dropped to 1.9%.
- 1.9% of all ASX senior executives were culturally diverse women (non-Anglo Celtic origins), though this dropped to 1.5% when the narrower definition of culturally diverse was used (women without Anglo Celtic or North-West European origins).²⁷
- 1.0% of all ASX CEOs were culturally diverse women (non-Anglo Celtic origins), though this dropped to 0.5% when the narrower definition of culturally diverse was used (women without Anglo Celtic or North-West European origins).²⁸

It is important to note here that the above findings report on likely cultural origins rather than whether women directors and senior executives were racially marginalised. It is likely that the representation of CARM women directors and senior executives would be significantly smaller if this had been considered.



The case for change

Australian and overseas research highlights the benefits addressing racialised gender discrimination can bring to CARM women and the organisations they work in.



Wellbeing 39% of Black and Brown women workers report that their wellbeing has been affected by a lack of progression, compared to just 28% of white women.²⁹ Pressure to 'act white' to succeed at work is a key challenge for staff from racial minority groups and takes a significant psychological toll.³⁰



Markets 2 out of 3 culturally diverse women leaders and aspiring leaders are multilingual, a capability that organisations can leverage to access and service a broader range of markets and customers.³¹



Innovation 37% of culturally diverse women leaders and aspiring leaders have a bi/multicultural identity, in which they identify with more than one cultural background and so can communicate or 'broker' across cultural contexts.³² People with multiple cultural/racial identities and overseas immersion experiences display more creativity and are better problem solvers and more likely to create new businesses and products.³³



Profit Companies in the top quartile of racial diversity in leadership are 33% more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median, while for gender diversity, the figure is 21%.³⁴



Engagement Cultural/racial barriers at work have caused 6 in 10 culturally diverse women to 'scale back' at work (i.e., reduce ambitions, work fewer hours, and work less hard), according to DCA's *Cracking the Glass-Cultural Ceiling* report.



Retention 46% of women of colour plan to leave their job in the next 3-6 months compared to just 35% of white women.³⁵ While 45% of women of colour experiencing racism at work said it had affected their ability to do their job or desire to stay in their role.³⁶ Losing an employee can cost anywhere from 16% of their salary for hourly unsalaried employees to 213% of the salary for a highly-trained position.³⁷

Our findings revealed that addressing the ‘glass cultural/racial ceiling’ that CARM women experience is the right thing to do – for the women themselves, but also for their organisations.



Ambition 8 out of 10 surveyed CARM women (78%) seek to advance to senior leadership.



Contribution 97% of CARM women reported that they have valuable contributions to make to their organisation.



Resilience 68% of CARM women agreed that the career barriers they face have made them stronger and more adaptable. They described how their migration experiences, global experience, and workplace racism experiences contributed to their personal and professional resilience.



Career satisfaction Only 40% of CARM women were satisfied with their career progress, and workplace racism significantly affected this – 54% of CARM women who were not experiencing workplace racism were satisfied with their career compared to just 32% of CARM women who were experiencing workplace racism.



Job satisfaction CARM women who were not experiencing workplace racism were much more likely to be satisfied with their job – 56% of CARM women who had not experienced workplace racism were satisfied with their job, compared to just 37% of CARM women who had experienced workplace racism.



Pay equity CARM women highlighted that undervaluing their capabilities led to pay inequities.



Effort 85% of CARM women reported having to work twice as hard as others to get the same treatment or evaluation. Studies have shown that, all else being equal, relative to white men, CARM women must have more prior job-specific experience and more overall work experience before receiving a promotion.³⁸



Brand CARM women who were not experiencing workplace racism were twice as likely to recommend their employer to other CARM women – 66% of CARM women who were not experiencing workplace racism would recommend their employer to other CARM women, compared to just 32% of CARM women who were experiencing it.

A framework for (intersectional) organisational action

CARM women are undervalued and overlooked when it comes to leadership in Australian organisations, but why is this so, and what can organisations do to address this? Insights from our evidence base revealed answers, enabling us to craft an organisational framework for action organised around 4 organisational talent locks and their related keys.

What is locking CARM women out of leadership?



What can Australian organisations do to open up leadership opportunities for CARM women?



LOCK 1

Gender equity overlooks race

"I have been in the same level for 13 years, no career progression, as CARM women face an impossible cultural glass ceiling. With the Women in Leadership agenda, many women get promoted, however all of them are from Anglo-Celtic background."



KEY 1

Get intersectional



LOCK 2

Biased 'leader' prototype

"Diversity is espoused, even celebrated at the bottom levels. But as you climb higher, there are certain traits that they value... basically you have to be male, white, six feet tall."



KEY 2

Redefine 'leader' prototype



These 4 locks and key are informed by four principles of intersectionality: **awareness** of CARM women's position in organisations; **listening to** CARM women's voices; actively **creating listening spaces** at work; and ensuring **genuine collaboration** with CARM women.

What is locking CARM women out of leadership?



What can Australian organisations do to open up leadership opportunities for CARM women?



LOCK 3

Inaccessible social capital

"As a person who's grown up outside of Australia, someone who doesn't follow cricket, someone who hasn't gone to a private school locally, someone who doesn't have those cultural references that people who are white and privileged do have, it's very hard even for me to make connections with them."



KEY 3

Make social capital accessible



LOCK 4

Ignored voices

"Having my voice heard means that I am an expert in my own lived experience. It means that people examine their own internal biases and don't make me subject to them."



KEY 4

Centre marginalised voices



TALENT LOCK 1: Gender equity overlooks race

“I have been in the same level for 13 years, no career progression, as CARM women face an impossible cultural glass ceiling. With the Women in Leadership agenda, many women get promoted, however all of them are from Anglo-Celtic background.” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

CARM women participants told us that gender equity organisational initiatives often fail to consider the profound effect race (rather than just gender) has on their ability to access leadership roles. CARM women described:

- **Receiving fewer career advancement opportunities.** While 78% of surveyed CARM women aspired to a leadership position, 65% agreed that CARM women employees received fewer opportunities for career advancements than other women.
- **Being subjected to a higher bar.** 85% felt they had to work twice as hard as employees who weren't CARM women to get the same treatment or evaluation (sometimes, often, very often).
- **Being underestimated.** 75% reported that others assumed they worked in a lower status job than they did and treated them as such (sometimes, often, very often).
- **Being overlooked.** 65% felt they were ignored or not taken seriously by their managers because of being a CARM woman (sometimes, often, very often).
- **Being negatively singled out.** 63% said they felt singled out negatively because of being a CARM woman (sometimes, often, very often).
- **Being over scrutinised.** 42% agreed that supervisors closely scrutinised their work more than non-CARM women employees.

CARM women reported that their issues are often not included in gender equity spaces, limiting the benefits they can experience from any gender equity initiatives.³⁹

- 79% of CARM women agreed that 'In gender equality work, little attention is given to the double disadvantage that CARM women experience in the workplace (i.e., disadvantage because of their gender and their race).'

Are some white/racially privileged women inadvertently 'gatekeepers' rather than allies?

Many CARM women spoke of experiencing strong pushback in gender equity spaces, particularly from white women, when they tried to suggest that a racial lens be applied to gender equity initiatives.

- 60% of CARM women had been told that race is not important – and 74% of these CARM women found this distressing (extremely, very, or moderately distressing).
- 30% had been told by women advocating for gender equality not to mention race.

Participants felt that white women could be so “protective of the gender equity movement” that they failed to understand that CARM women can experience marginalisation in unique and amplified ways.

“I think [white women] have fought so hard over the last 20 years to get to where they are that they can't empathise. I'm also a woman but [white women] are discounting that we're different.” (FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT)



TALENT KEY 1: Get intersectional

“Learn about systemic racism and the experiences of CARM women. While I have some great supportive women who support me as a woman, they have no understanding of how race and racism impact my experience at work and they show no desire to learn.” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

To get intersectional in your organisation:

Start with yourself. For D&I practitioners, reflect on: “How might my gender and racial biases affect the way I design and deliver D&I initiatives?” For leaders, reflect on: “How might my gender and racial biases affect how I view, recognise and reward CARM women at work?”

Use the ‘Case for change’ section in this report to build understanding and engagement around the importance of creating a leadership team with gender and racial diversity.

Raise awareness about intersectionality – what it is and how it can be used to better understand and improve CARM women’s experiences at work. This is particularly relevant for senior leaders, D&I change agents, and gender equity-related Employee Resource Groups.

Break down diversity silos between Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Create collaboration opportunities between ERGs that focus on gender and race/cultural diversity.

Apply a racial lens to your gender equity initiatives. This will ensure these are having a positive impact on all women. Taking an intersectional approach to collecting, analysing and reporting on workforce gender metrics will enable you to do this. For example, compare the workforce representation, workplace inclusion experiences, and remuneration of CARM women, non-CARM women, CARM men, and non-CARM men.

Put pay equity for CARM women on the D&I agenda. There is an increasing push for awareness of racial and ethnic pay gaps internationally and in Australia.⁴⁰

Consider setting targets to get the momentum going – change agents know that ‘what gets measured gets done.’



What makes a good ally?

CARM women said good allies:

1. **Centre lived experience.** They validate CARM women’s personal experiences of racialised gender discrimination rather than diminishing or dismissing these.
2. **Seek to understand.** They ‘do the work’ to educate themselves, others, and their organisation, about racialised gender discrimination, rather than relying on CARM women to shoulder the burden of always educating others.
3. **Stand up and speak out.** They stand up and speak out about racialised gender discrimination.
4. **Accelerate CARM women’s career progression.** They promote CARM women to influential people to open up CARM women’s career opportunities.
5. **Genuinely engage.** They go beyond empathy to action. They take everyday action to change themselves, others, and the organisation, including when no one is looking, and if this may be at their own expense.



TALENT LOCK 2: Biased leader prototype

“Diversity is espoused, even celebrated at the bottom levels. But as you climb higher, there are certain traits that they value... basically you have to be male, white, six feet tall.” (FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT)

CARM women reported that leadership models used to assess talent in Australian organisations were inherently biased towards **more masculine Western or ‘Anglo’ leadership styles**, overvaluing extroversion and self-promotion and undervaluing introversion, humility, and respect for seniority. This has the effect of inadvertently excluding them from consideration for senior roles.

“I come from a culture that you don’t brag about yourself – you are humble, humility is part of how you do things. Whether it’s introverted or extroverted, these are different attributes each one of us has, but they should not limit how we are recognised.” (FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT)

Many felt that emulating this leader prototype meant trying to “**act white**” and “**masculine**”:

- CARM women spoke of **‘proximity to whiteness’**⁴¹ being a key enabler in their leadership journeys. Here, the closer their appearance, speech, behaviour, expression, name, education etc. was to ‘whiteness,’ the more likely they were to be seen as leadership material.
- 83% of surveyed CARM women reported experiencing pressure to act, look, and sound like existing leaders (who are most likely to be white men).
- 69% reported having to “act white” to fit in and 66% to “act white” to get ahead.
- CARM women reported **needing to ‘code-switch’** to get ahead. If they chose not to, they were often inaccurately stereotyped as “**compliant**”, “**timid**”, and/or “**submissive**” – all qualities at odds with the ‘ideal leader’ prototype.



What is ‘code-switching’?

Code-switching refers to the ways CARM people in interracial situations adapt their behaviour (e.g., change their speech, appearance, behaviour, expression). They do this to optimise the comfort of the white people they are interacting with and to try to minimise the chance of being discriminated against or excluded.⁴²

CARM women, particularly those with migrant experience, reported that **employers did not value their international experience, cultural capabilities, and multilingual abilities**. Importantly, CARM women spoke of how international experience was only valued if it was gained in Western countries.

- only 1 in 4 (25%) migrant CARM women surveyed felt that their workplace valued their experience as a migrant.
- 69% of migrant CARM women believed that being a migrant had limited their career options in Australia, while 52% agreed that employers’ requirement for Australian-specific experience had limited or stalled their career.

“We are looking at how we can promote women in leadership, but in my current org all the leaders that are above me or have been promoted recently are (white) migrants from the UK!” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)



TALENT KEY 2: Redefine leader prototype

“We are always seen as the hard workers and advisers on token issues but not in relation to general leadership capability. [Organisations need to] accept our ways of thinking might not fit the mould and that’s a good thing. Validate our seniority, subject matter expertise and lived experience.” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

To redefine leadership in your organisation:

Start with yourself – reflect on, “How might my gender and racial biases affect my recruitment, recognition, and reward decisions? For example, do I unconsciously see CARM women as hard workers rather than strategic leaders?”

Redefine your organisation’s leader prototype to avoid unintentionally filtering out CARM women talent, and to challenge your organisation’s thinking on the ‘ideal candidate.’

- CARM women may lead in less masculine and Western ways (e.g., deferential indirect communication) – research shows that this type of more introverted leadership is just as, and sometimes more effective than extroverted leadership.⁴³

Value teams with a diversity of capabilities, including racial/cultural diversity, non-Western global experience, multilingual skills, cultural knowledge, and qualifications that don’t necessarily come from elite Western universities and formal settings.

Review recognition and reward practices for racialised gender bias that inadvertently excludes CARM women. For example, only using promotional images of white men or women, requiring ‘executive presence’ for leadership, relying on self or sponsor nomination for participation in leadership development programs.

Diversify assessment. Avoid over-relying on behavioural-based interviewing as this tends to recognise an individual’s ability to interview rather than their actual performance. Self-assessment, presentations and 360 feedback may not do justice to CARM women who can be more modest about their own achievements and reluctant to openly question managers.

Disrupt bias in candidate evaluation by using compensatory strategies such as setting work tests, using structured interviews, having objective promotion criteria, and using structured evaluation forms that require leaders to provide more than one piece of evidence per criteria and to reach out to others for alternative perspectives.

Centre CARM women’s voices in reviews of policies and practices to ensure CARM women are involved in designing, delivering, and leading any review of your organisation’s recruitment, recognition and reward practices for gender and racial bias.

Educate about effective (bias-free) decision-making, including inaccurate biases and stereotypes, when and where these occur, and compensatory strategies.

Get proactive about promotion and pay for CARM women, instead of waiting for them to leave for another offer.

Profile successful CARM women leaders to demonstrate that leadership roles are possible, and to challenge inaccurate stereotypes.

“The current interview processes do not favour CARM women e.g., where they may have culturally different body language and communication styles which are often misinterpreted by panels [as timidity or submission] and accents also put off some of the panel.” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)



TALENT LOCK 3: Inaccessible social capital

“As a person who’s grown up outside of Australia, someone who doesn’t follow cricket, someone who hasn’t gone to a private school locally, someone who doesn’t have those cultural references that people who are white and privileged do have, it’s very hard even for me to make connections with them.” (FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT)

Lack of **access to influential networks and sponsors** was a significant leadership barrier for CARM women, particularly recent migrants and women who grew up outside of Australia.

- 77% of surveyed CARM women agreed that decisions about hiring and promotions are made through informal networks.
- 58% agreed that the combination of their race and gender limited their access to influential networks.
- only 28% reported having access to a sponsor at work.

CARM women attributed their lack of access to influential networks and sponsorship to:

- **Lack of formal programs.** CARM women reported that workplaces were more likely to offer formal sponsorship opportunities to employees already working at senior levels, where CARM women were unlikely to be. This meant CARM women were notably less likely to be able to access the sponsorship they needed and benefit from this kind of support and advocacy.
- **Few shared experiences and interests.** Participants also reported difficulties in making connections with colleagues and senior leaders with whom they have few shared experiences and interests.

CARM women pointed out that **sponsorship, mentoring, and leadership coaching was often structured around a Westernised masculine leadership model.**

- Here, advice was given on the assumption that CARM women needed to ‘act white’ to get ahead. Not only did this undervalue a diversity of leadership styles it could also make sponsoring, mentoring, and coaching biased and sometimes not culturally or racially safe.



What is social capital?

This refers to the resources and networks available to individuals because of shared values or interests. For example, it includes personal relationships with senior executives and high-profile individuals within a sector, who provide opportunities for career advancement.⁴⁴



Who is a sponsor?

A sponsor is a senior leader who advocates for an employee’s advancement and visibility. Effective sponsors of CARM women focus on contribution and capability (rather than ‘difference’), challenge biases and assumptions, and drive career progress.⁴⁵



TALENT KEY 3: Make social capital accessible

“ Leaders can help by scrutinising their closest networks – who do they hang out with the most? Do they have diversity, not just in the workforce, but in their friendship groups? How are they seeking different experiences to lift their cultural/racial IQ? ” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

To make social capital accessible in your organisation:

Start with yourself. Encourage leaders to self-reflect on the diversity of their own networks and diversify this if needed. Advise leaders to look past whether applicants are the sort of person they would like to spend time with ('culture fit') and instead look for applicants who can provide an alternative perspective ('culture add').

Formalise access to sponsorship and networks to create more equitable access for CARM women and reduce the pressure on them to source these themselves.

Ask senior CARM leaders to be sponsors. Sponsorship could be enhanced by providing CARM women with access to sponsors and coaches with similar lived experiences.

Open up access to executive coaching to employees with leadership aspirations who sit outside the C-suite. CARM women saw benefit in executive coaching but noted that this was often reserved for the most senior staff and was rarely made available to staff at their level.

Build the racial literacy of sponsors, mentors, and coaches. Invest in racial literacy training to ensure that these development opportunities are culturally appropriate and psychologically racially safe for CARM women.

Monitor metrics including sponsorship, succession planning, and high performing talent pools to ensure CARM women have been nominated and included. Build in accountability by, for example, requiring sponsors to report every six months on what actions they have taken to advocate for their protégé (e.g., how many important introductions provided, key projects secured).

Profile CARM women talent. Increase the visibility of CARM women leaders in your organisation to demonstrate that reaching the C-Suite is possible.

Diversify socialising events and activities. For example, organise events for different times (during the day rather than just evenings and early mornings) and different activities (alcohol-free lunches and café meetings, rather than just after-work drinks or sporting events, cycling, golf etc.)

Profile supportive networks. Raise awareness about and encourage participation in networks and community organisations available to CARM women – for example, Women of Colour Australia, Asian Leadership Project, Australian South Asian Centre, African Women Australia and Muslim Women Australia. These organisations may offer programs to raise CARM women's career profile and strengthen their psychological and racial safety in the workplace.

“ Before embarking on mentoring, educate leaders on bias. We want to see an adjustment so mentoring shifts from 'advice based on someone like me' to 'advice tailored just for you' and more importantly 'let me help create opportunities and an environment that respects what you can bring.' ”
(SURVEY PARTICIPANT)



TALENT LOCK 4: Ignored voices

CARM women reported that their voices are not centred in matters that directly impact them – in particular, in relation to understanding and addressing what is locking CARM women out of leadership. And yet CARM women had **significant authoritative expertise** in this regard due to their lived experiences of racialised gender discrimination.

- **Racism and sexism.** 61% of surveyed CARM women reported experiencing racism at work in the past 2 years, while 48% had experienced sexism at work over that same period. Only 15% of CARM women agreed or strongly agreed that 'There is no racial discrimination against CARM women in my present workplace.'



What is lived experience?

Someone with lived experience of being culturally or racially marginalised has been the **target of** and has had personal first-hand experience of racialised gender discrimination. This is not the same as someone who has **witnessed** racialised gender discrimination – for example, someone who works in the field of gender or racial equity but has never been on the receiving end of racialised gender discrimination (e.g., white women, men, or non-binary people) or someone who is a friend or partner of a CARM woman.⁴⁶

“I’d like not to be the token ‘Black’ women for the sake of a company marketing campaign. It doesn’t happen to me but I have seen this happen to others who may look more ‘Black’.” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

Overlooking CARM women’s voices was evident in tokenistic inclusion – 78% of surveyed CARM women said they had experienced being the token CARM woman in groups or organisations. This left CARM women feeling invisible at work, as well as:

- **not valued or taken seriously** – 41% reported that when they were consulted as a CARM woman, they felt their ideas were not taken seriously
- **lacking racial safety** – not feeling psychologically safe to share their experiences of gendered racism without their concerns being dismissed, disregarded, or used against them
- **limiting their capacity to challenge and change the status quo**, resulting in ineffective D&I initiatives which allowed harmful biases and stereotypes to perpetuate
- **taking on the (unrecognised and unrewarded) cultural/racial load** for representing marginalised communities and educating white colleagues about racism – 86% of surveyed CARM women said that they had to educate their colleagues about race issues, and 71% of these CARM women found this distressing.



What is racial safety?

It is the creation of a work environment where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Black, Brown, and other racially marginalised people who experience racism, feel socially, culturally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe, and where they feel that their racial identity is not used to exclude, marginalise, harass, and/or assault them.⁴⁷



TALENT KEY 4: Centre marginalised voices

“ Having my voice heard means that I am an expert in my own lived experience. It means that people examine their own internal biases and don't make me subject to them. ” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

To centre CARM women's voices in your organisation:

Start with yourself – reflect on, “What actions do I take to centre and listen to CARM women's experiences at work?”

Value and prioritise the perspectives of CARM women. Recognise that women who have been on the receiving end of gendered racism are experts about what is locking them out of leadership – ensure they lead discussions on this topic.

Prioritise meaningful representation (rather than tokenistic inclusion) of CARM women in leadership, consultations, and decision-making forums about matters that relate to them. Avoid having just one CARM woman as a ‘token’.

Expect and welcome different views among CARM women about the state of play and the best way forward – spend the time needed to work through different views to find common ground and keep everyone informed about the consultation processes and outcomes.

Create racial safety. Ensure CARM women lead sessions on matters that affect them. Listen empathetically. Take the time needed to listen and learn, without dismissing or diminishing what CARM women say, and without it negatively affecting their career. When instances of racialised gender discrimination are raised, be accountable, so they are not repeated.

Build racial literacy including at senior levels. This will help build psychological and racial safety in the workplace. See DCA's Racism at Work Guidelines for practical steps.

Act on insights shared – and make it meaningful. Act on the insights CARM women share and keep them informed about steps being taken to address the issues they've raised.

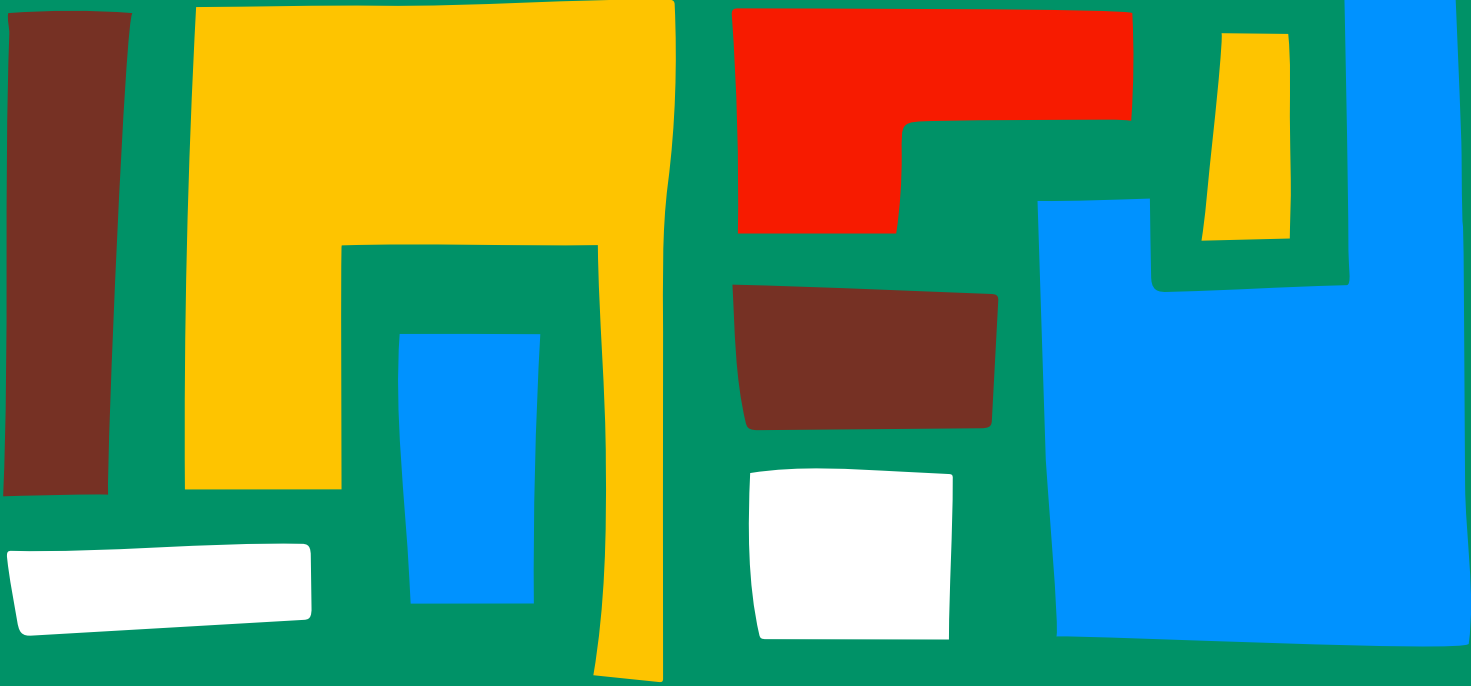
Ensure genuine consultation. When reviewing policies and practices for racialised gender bias include CARM women at all stages of the process - initial discussions, design, and implementation.

Use ERGs for change. Ensure Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are used not just for social support but can also help affect meaningful organisational change.

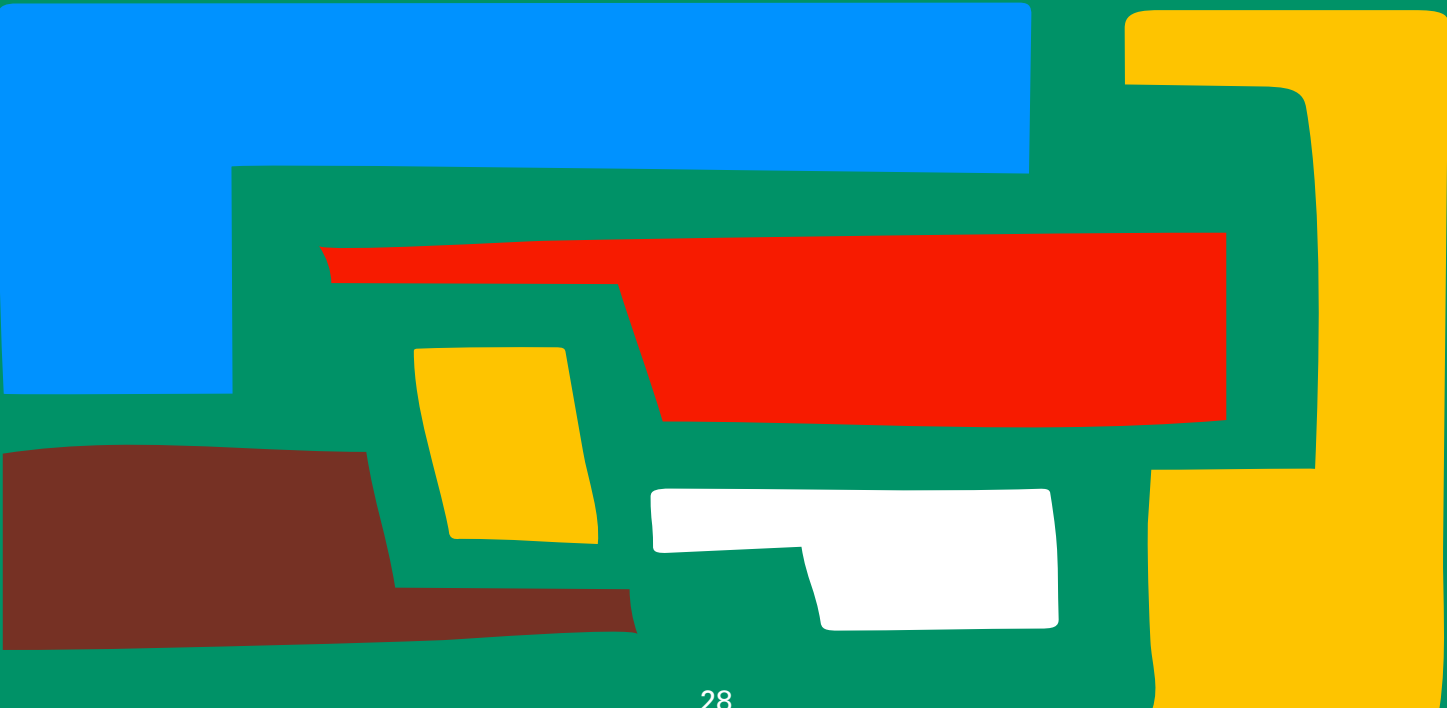
Recognise and remunerate cultural/racial load – the invisible work that is beyond a person's job description and done by racially marginalised workers to build their organisation's racial literacy. Build recognition into formal organisational processes (e.g., structured consultations, performance reviews, remuneration, promotion).

“ Invite us to share our lived experiences. Listen and act to make changes that will ensure real equality beyond lip service. ” (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)

“ Listen with the intent to understand, not react or shut down. ”
(SURVEY PARTICIPANT)



**“By having my voice heard means
that other CARM woman’s voices
will also be heard. It would mean that
others don’t have to be scared to
stand up and speak.”** (SURVEY PARTICIPANT)



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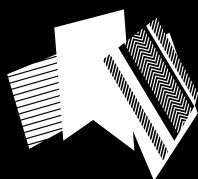
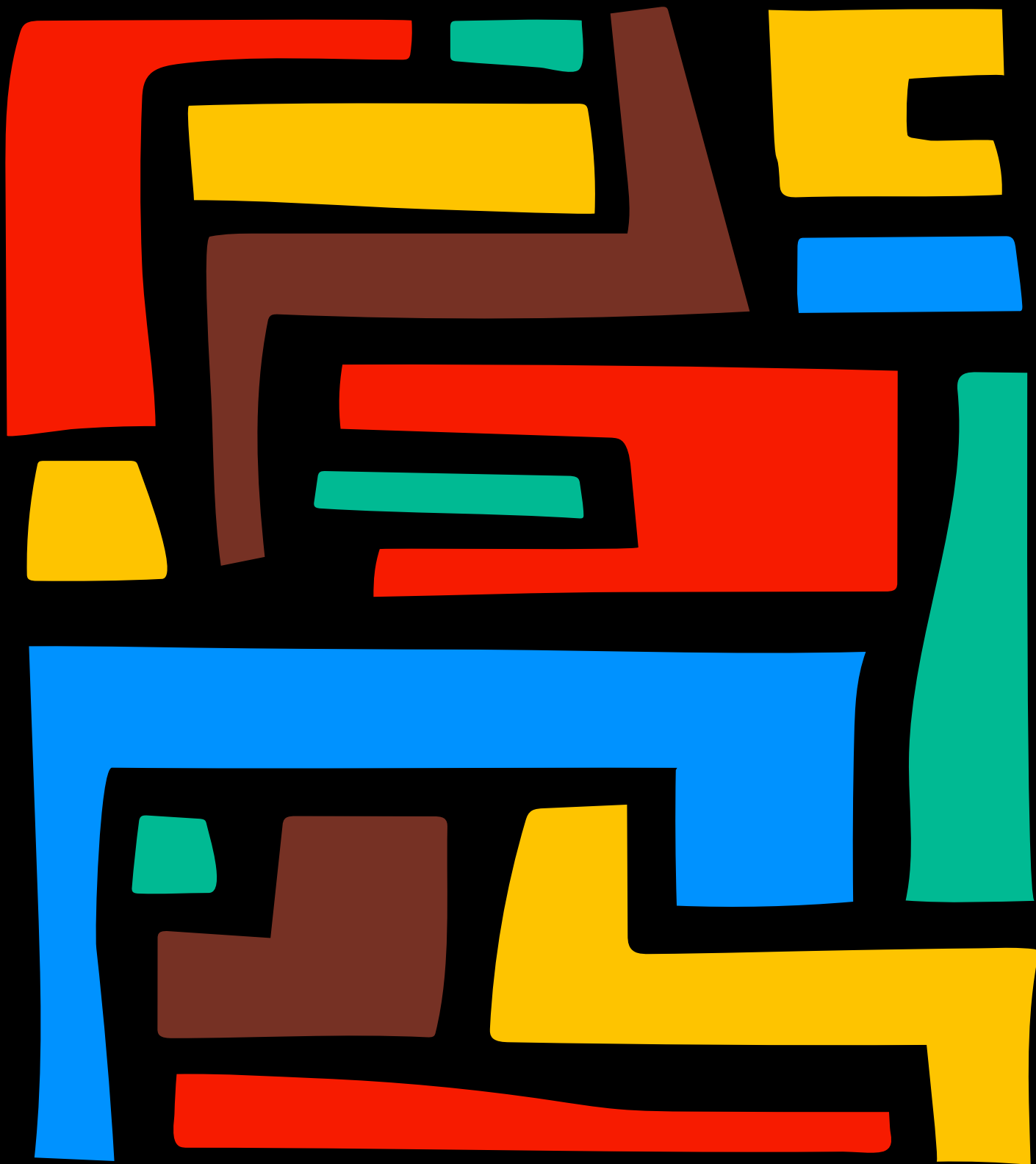
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Find out more

DCA members can access the full report, *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A Framework for (Intersectional) Organisational Action*, by logging into the Members Only area of the DCA website.

The Full Report includes detailed information on:

- explanation of and rationale for language and terminology used
 - the case for CARM women in leadership
- four organisational keys that can help elevate CARM women into senior leadership in Australian workplaces
 - research methodology and all research references.



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