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## **Australian media must do more on diversity**

A new report revealing that just 6% of television news and current affairs reporters have a non-European background is a wake up call for Australia's media.

The Media Diversity Australia report, *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories*, shows just how far we have to go before the people reporting and presenting news and television is representative of the broader Australian population.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance provided funding for the project, which was conducted over 12 months by researchers from four universities.

The final report released today confirms that Australian television news is still dominated by white, Anglo-Celtic faces. Key findings include:

- 75% of presenters, commentators and reporters have an Anglo-Celtic background while only 4.7% have a non-European background and 1.2% are Indigenous, as measured by frequency of appearance on screen in news and current affairs broadcasts.
- In a survey of 300 television journalists, more than 70% rated the representation of culturally diverse men and women in the media industry as either poor or very poor.
- 77% of respondents with culturally diverse backgrounds believe their backgrounds are a barrier to career progression.
- 100% of free-to-air television national news directors have an Anglo-Celtic background (and they are all male), and 35 out of 39 board members of Australian free-to-air television are Anglo-Celtic.

"This report tells us that opportunities in journalism for people from a non-European or Indigenous background are far less than for people from an Anglo-Celtic background," said MEAA Media Federal President Marcus Strom.

"Twenty-four per cent of the Australian population are either from a non-European or Indigenous background, but the proportion of television news reporters or presenters is half that. If not for the existence of SBS/NITV, these figures would be even worse.

"In a modern, culturally and racially diverse Australia, those who interpret or report the news should reflect those they are reporting on and those who watch their bulletins. It is particularly appalling that according to this report there is not a single Indigenous presenter, commentator or reporter on television screens in the Northern Territory or Queensland, two states with large Indigenous populations.

"Australian television networks are seriously letting down their audiences by not having more diverse talent on screen. This results in reporting about sensitive issues involving race and religion being filtered through a single, white Anglo-Saxon perspective, consciously or unconsciously reinforcing misunderstandings, stereotypes and prejudices.

"In this respect, MEAA also has to accept that historically our Media section leadership has been from European background, and while that is changing we have more work to do."

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The acting Director of MEAA's Media section, Adam Portelli, said the MDA report contained several practical recommendations that would make inroads on the lack of diversity at little or no financial cost to television networks.

"The bottom line is that not only will greater diversity in newsrooms produce better and more accurate reporting about contemporary Australia, but it will help build trust and gain audiences in non-Anglo-Celtic communities," he said. "This can only be a good thing.

"More needs to be done to give people from diverse backgrounds opportunities to work in Australian television journalism, and to encourage them to apply for jobs in the industry. But paths for career progression must also be created so that people from diverse backgrounds can move into leadership positions within news organisations."

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