



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Australian television news and current affairs' racial and cultural diversity report card is a fail, says media union

Australia's media employers must step up their policies to increase cultural and racial diversity in newsrooms following a new report that shows television networks have actually gone backwards over the last two years.

The Media Diversity Australia report, *Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories 2.0*, shows that despite growing awareness that the faces on television do not reflect the Australian population, presenters and reporters from an Anglo-Celtic background remain vastly over-represented on our screens.

Disappointingly, their representation increased slightly between 2019 and 2022, while the share of appearances on television by presenters and reporters from non-European backgrounds remained severely under-represented, particularly on commercial networks.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance who helped fund *Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories 2.0*, which follows an initial research project in 2020 which found a stark lack of cultural diversity in television news and current affairs on screen, on boards and in senior management roles. The new study was conducted by researchers from the University of Sydney and UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research.

The report shows there has been little progress, and in some respects the Australian television industry has gone backwards over the past two years:

- The overall share of appearances on television by presenters and reporters of Anglo-Celtic background increased slightly to from 75.8% to 78%.
- The share of appearances on television by Indigenous presenters and reporters improved to 5% but was inconsistent across the networks.
- The share of appearances by presenters and reporters of European cultural backgrounds declined to 10%, while the non-European category remained the most severely under-represented, particularly on commercial networks.
- More than three-quarters of journalist survey respondents believed that Indigenous and culturally diverse presenters and reporters experience greater barriers to representation in front of the camera.
- Perceptions of how the inclusion of Indigeneity and cultural diversity is managed in the workplace were unchanged.
- In TV news leadership positions, there is slightly better gender representation, but cultural diversity remains poor with two free-to-air networks appearing to have exclusively Anglo-Celtic senior television news leadership teams.

"Clearly there is a long way to go before Australian television news can claim to be representative of the broader population," said MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy.

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“More than one-in-five Australians identify as Indigenous or non-Anglo-Celtic yet we do not see this on television screens, nor in decision-making positions at television networks, nor in leadership positions on the boards of broadcasters.

“This lack of cultural diversity influences the tone of reporting and the angles that media outlets take on particular stories, consciously or unconsciously reinforcing misunderstandings, stereotypes and prejudices.

“It means Australians are seeing a narrower version of themselves.

“It also feeds into the declining sense of trust in news; audiences are less likely to trust or consume a news or current affairs source if they cannot see people from their own community on their screens.

“While this report only looked at diversity of race, culture, and gender in television news and current affairs the lack of diversity is an issue across the spectrum of Australia’s media.

“Australian television networks need to remove barriers for non-Anglo-Celtic people in their newsrooms to allow a greater diversity of staff in their workforces.

Where policies are already in place, news editors and managers need to ensure they are being put into practice effectively.

“This will produce better and more accurate reporting about contemporary Australia, it will help build trust, and it will grow audiences in non-Anglo-Celtic communities, resulting in a better bottom line.”

MEAA Media Director Cassie Derrick said the new MDA report reinforced the union campaign for a rigorous racial and gender pay gap audit at the ABC.

“ABC staff want a working environment that will enable them to provide audiences with the news and information that they deserve, and which will truly reflect the diversity of the Australian public,” she said.

“There needs to be increased racial and gender diversity at the ABC through real action to tackle the pay disparities felt by women and people from a minority background, beginning with a thorough race and gender pay audit.”

MEAA thanks Media Diversity Australia, the universities, and the participants in this report for this essential work.

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