MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR AWARDS

2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we gather for the Awards.

We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra.

We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.



Artist, BJ O'Toole. This artwork was originally commissioned for Parrwang Lifts The Sky

ABOUT THESE AWARDS

TThe MindTribes Foundation's Business in Colour Awards return for a second year to celebrate the employees, leaders, allies and communities driving meaningful change in race, cultural equity and inclusion at work.

At the MindTribes Foundation, we recognise that there remains a significant gap when it comes to recognising advancements in racial and cultural equity and inclusion. Often, businesses struggle to define what success or maturity in this space looks like. These awards will not only spotlight excellence, but also showcase leading practices, and amplify the good to influence others to strive for better. This night goes beyond to begin a movement towards meaningful progress.

The heart of the Awards is First Nations peoples: not siloed into a category, but centred throughout, as judges, applicants, and awardees, shaping every category, and grounding the awards in principles of anti-racism. With a diverse panel of leaders across sectors, this night redefines what recognition in anti-racism looks like. The Business in Colour Awards is a celebration for the future society and workplaces we're working towards.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS



Bridget Brennan

Event MC

Award Winning Journalist, Co-host, ABC News Breakfast

Bridget Brennan is a Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta woman and co-host of ABC News Breakfast. She joined the ABC as a cadet in 2010 and became its first National Indigenous Affairs Correspondent, reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country. She was the first Aboriginal journalist to be appointed an ABC foreign correspondent, reporting from London as Europe Correspondent, and later served as Indigenous Affairs Editor. Bridget was part of the Four Corners team whose investigation into missing and murdered First Nations women won a Gold Quill award. She also anchored the ABC's coverage of the Voice referendum.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS



The Hon Julian Hill MP

Guest Speaker

Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs, and Assistant Minister for International Education

Julian Hill has been the Member for Bruce since 2016. After the 2025 election he was appointed Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs, and Assistant Minister for International Education, having served as Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs in 2024–25. Julian has chaired several parliamentary committees, including the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit. He was elected to Port Phillip City Council at 25 and became the city's youngest Mayor. He later held senior executive roles in the Victorian Public Service across migration, international education, community development and local government.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS



Christine Castley OAM

Guest Speaker

Chief Executive Officer, Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Christine Castley is the Chief Executive Officer of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). She leads its work to advance gender equality in Australian workplaces through data, education and employer engagement. Before joining WGEA, Christine was CEO of Multicultural Australia and Deputy Director-General in the Queensland Departments of the Premier and Cabinet and of Housing and Public Works. She has led major reform in domestic and family violence, housing, disaster recovery and community services, including the secretariat for Queensland's landmark Not Now, Not Ever report. Christine believes gender equality is both a social and economic imperative.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS



Faustina Agolley

Event Keynote

Broadcaster, DJ, writer and entrepreneur

Faustina Agolley is a proud Black and Asian gay Australian of Ghanaian and Chinese-Malaysian heritage. Her career spans more than 15 years across television, music, DJing, writing and theatre. She was the first person of colour to host Video Hits, interviewing artists from Alicia Keys to Adele and Lady Gaga, and has co-hosted The Voice and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Faustina writes and speaks about queer life, identity and mental health, and was Oprah Winfrey's touring DJ across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. She is also the founder of a haircare brand for textured hair, selected for Credo's program for BIPOC founders.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS



Lydia Tesema

Fireside Chat

Host, interviewer and founder of Below The Surface

Lydia Tesema is an award-winning host, interviewer and creative entrepreneur, and a community development practitioner. Born and raised in Melbourne with proud Ethiopian roots, she founded Below The Surface, a creative platform helping young people think, communicate and act with intention through media, youth programs and cultural experiences. Lydia works in local government, designing and delivering social inclusion initiatives that strengthen community connection, equity and wellbeing. She is known for drawing out honesty and depth in conversation, turning lived experience into powerful shared dialogue across community, corporate and cultural spaces.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

AWARD CATEGORIES





BIC Exemplar

This award celebrates role models who have achieved remarkable success in their careers while leveraging their race, ethnicity and cultural diversity as a strength. These individuals inspire others by breaking barriers, advocating for inclusion, and actively supporting the advancement of diverse communities, by using their diversity to help other diverse people.



BIC Sponsor

This award honours allies and advocates who have been instrumental in promoting diversity and inclusion internally within their organisations. These champions are change-makers and influencers who actively work to advance CALD employees and create inclusive workplace cultures.



BIC Inclusive Companies

This award recognises organisations that have made significant progress in advancing race and cultural diversity and inclusion within their workplace. It celebrates companies that demonstrate a strong commitment to investing in and implementing initiatives that promote CALD representation and equity.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

AWARD CATEGORIES

BIC Research Excellence

This award highlights groundbreaking research conducted by universities, educational institutions, or students that advance understanding and awareness of cultural diversity, particularly in the current global context.

BIC Collective Impact

This award celebrates the collective efforts of staff-led networks (ERGs) or committees that have driven meaningful change in promoting cultural diversity and inclusion within their organizations or communities. It recognizes the power of collaboration and grassroots initiatives in creating inclusive environments.

MEET THE FINALISTS



EXEMPLAR AWARD FINALISTS

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR EXEMPLAR



Alpana Modi Tyson
Inclusion and Diversity Lead, Australian Red Cross

Alpana Modi Tyson is the Inclusion and Diversity Lead at Australian Red Cross. Of Indian heritage, born in England and living in Australia since 2000, she knows how a question like 'Where are you from?' or a comment about her name can signal exclusion. Early in her career, she was often the only person from a culturally diverse background in leadership discussions and felt pressure to keep proving her credibility. She learned that lasting change takes both courage and collaboration: building allies and making room for under-represented voices.

In the past year, Alpana established the Red Cross Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Inclusion Network, giving employees a dedicated platform to connect and influence inclusion work. She led the organisation's first recognition of International Mother Language Day in February 2026 and its celebration of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development in May 2026. She also drives change through the Inclusion and Diversity Policy and inclusion inductions. Her work has opened new spaces for dialogue and made multicultural voices more visible across the organisation.



Andrew Williams
President, Tarwirri

Andrew Williams is a proud Palawa (Poredareme) man and President of Tarwirri – Indigenous Law Association of Victoria. He is also a lawyer at Gellung Warl (First Peoples Assembly of Victoria), supporting Victoria's Traditional Owners as Australia's first Treaty is put into practice. The first in his family line to go to university, Andrew was the only Aboriginal student in a postgraduate law intake of about 180. That experience drives his work: First Peoples are about 3% of the population but less than 1% of the legal profession.

In 3 years as President, Andrew has lifted Tarwirri's profile and standing across the profession. In the past year, he engaged judges, law firms, the Legal Services Commissioner and barristers' bodies. He advocated for the Law Institute of Victoria to relaunch its Reconciliation Action Plan for the first time in about a decade. He helped bring the profession together in Reconciliation Week to celebrate Australia's first Indigenous Supreme Court judge, and supported a new First Nations Law Student Representative body in the Northern Territory. He also mentors First Nations students finding their way into law.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR EXEMPLAR



Cu Phan
General Manager Integrated Operations
Copper SA, BHP

Cu Phan is General Manager Integrated Operations Copper SA at BHP. When Cu was 4, the family fled post-war Vietnam by boat, spending 30 days at sea and 3 years in a refugee camp before starting again in Australia with very little. Growing up as the child of refugees, with few leaders who shared that experience, Cu learned to navigate systems that were not designed with migrant families in mind. Today Cu shares this story openly so that others feel able to talk about race, belonging and equity.

As former Chair of BHP's Inclusion and Diversity Council (South Australia) and current Australian sponsor of the EmBRace employee resource group, Cu has championed conversations about race and representation across the business. Cu has helped grow the EmBRace Mentoring Program, personally encouraging senior leaders to become mentors so culturally diverse employees can access networks, development and sponsorship. Cu also took part in the Feeling Seen Matters ethnicity self-identification campaign. The aim is simple: to use leadership and influence so others feel empowered to use their own voices.



Elaine Laforteza
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion

Elaine Laforteza is the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead at the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion. A Filipino migrant, academic, practitioner and creative, she uses storytelling and inclusive teaching to help culturally and racially marginalised staff and students feel valued and heard. Elaine has faced assumptions about her authority as a petite Asian woman, questions from her own community about raising racism, and the realities of living with a long-term disability. Each has deepened her commitment to workplaces that are accessible and equitable.

Elaine co-coordinates the UTS Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan, launched in 2026. It commits the university to simpler racism complaints processes and its first mandatory anti-racism training for staff and students. Her Say My Name campaign explored the link between names, identity and respect, with resources taken up by the City of Sydney and other organisations. She also leads Acknowledging Country in Our Mother Languages, an online platform with Acknowledgements of Country in more than 40 languages. Its resources have been shared through the Adult Migrant English Program and recognised by Reconciliation Australia, the Australian Museum, SBS and NITV.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR EXEMPLAR



Lena Nahlous
CEO and Executive Producer, Diversity Arts Australia

Lena Nahlous is CEO and Executive Producer of Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS). An Arab Australian arts leader raised in Western Sydney by working-class migrant parents, she has spent more than 25 years advocating for culturally and racially marginalised communities. When she took on the leadership of Kultour, its annual turnover was as low as $220,000. She repositioned it as DARTS, which now operates at around $1.5 million, and brought international insights home through her Churchill Fellowship.

In 2025–26, Lena oversaw the inaugural Luminas with Media Diversity Australia, honouring 6 First Nations and culturally and racially marginalised leaders at the Sydney Opera House. Of the 20 people in the first Shifting the Balance leadership program, 14 took up paid fellowships and mentoring, and 92% reported stronger leadership skills. She coordinated the consortium that secured $2.2 million in Australian Government funding for the Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot. DARTS' Anti-Racism & The Arts initiative won Diamond and Platinum LearnX Awards, and across the year DARTS worked with more than 200 organisations and directly supported 242 creatives.



Michelle Kam
Vice President Talent and Performance, BHP

Michelle Kam is Vice President Talent and Performance at BHP, and her commitment to inclusion is rooted in family history. Her grandmother was separated from her grandfather for 17 years under the White Australia Policy, a legacy that shaped Michelle's own sense of belonging as an Asian Australian. Her psychology studies gave her a clear 'why': when people feel capable and supported, they are more likely to thrive. She has challenged assumptions about what leadership looks like and named bias in systems many assumed were fair.

Over the past year, Michelle led the redesign of BHP's ethnicity self-identification framework with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Indigenous employee representatives. Employees can now choose from more than 250 ethnicities, up from 7, and have identified across more than 30 ethnic groups globally. She championed paid Cultural Leave for Indigenous employees in Australia and introduced fairness and equity controls into performance and reward processes after analysis showed inequitable outcomes for Indigenous employees. As a Director of Opera Australia, she also sat on the committee that appointed an Indigenous Director to its Board.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR EXEMPLAR



Katrina Rathie
Non-Executive Director, SBS

Katrina Rathie is a Non-Executive Director of SBS, Asia Society Australia and Knight Frank Australia, and NSW Ambassador for the Asian Australian Lawyers Association. Growing up with a Chinese cultural background under the White Australia Policy, she faced racist taunts at school. In 1985 she became the first person of colour to work at Mallesons, its first partner of colour in 1993, and in 2014 the first Asian Australian woman to lead its Sydney office. She helped shift the firm to over 60% women and more than 20% people of colour, and persuaded large law firms to sign a Cultural Diversity Pledge in 2017.

Katrina helped develop the first Indigenous and culturally diverse stream of the Australian Institute of Company Directors' Chair's Mentoring Program, and mentors several of the 12 culturally diverse women accepted in March 2026. Through Asia Society, she supports the Asian Australian Voices and Generation Forum Asia programs. After attending Garma for the SBS Board and NITV, she helped finalise SBS's second Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan. She also chairs the SBS Codes Committee, which sets governance principles for content in 60 languages.



Kelly Williams
Director First Nations Strategy, ABC

Kelly Williams is a Bundjalung woman and Director, First Nations Strategy at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Across 38 years in media, she has often been the only Indigenous person in the room, working to make sure First Nations voices shape decisions rather than simply being included. She leads the ABC's response to Listen Loudly, Act Strongly, the independent review led by Dr Terri Janke that heard from 120 current and former employees about racism. The ABC accepted all 15 recommendations in principle.

In the past 12 months, Kelly led the development and release of the ABC 2025–2027 Indigenous Employment Strategy, a framework for lifting representation and career progression. She established the Professor Jackie Huggins Leadership Program to develop emerging First Nations leaders, named for the ABC's Elder-in-Residence. She also set up the Listen Loudly, Act Strongly Standing Committee to oversee the review's recommendations. She is now leading the ABC's first Cultural Responsiveness Project to embed culturally responsive practice across the organisation.



SPONSOR AWARD FINALISTS

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR SPONSOR



David Anthony
Partner and Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Corrs Chambers Westgarth

David Anthony is Partner and Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Corrs Chambers Westgarth. His own experience of navigating professional life as someone seen as 'other' gives him a practical understanding of how exclusion works. Appointed Corrs' dedicated Diversity & Inclusion Partner in 2022, he chose to sponsor change beyond the communities he identifies with. He committed to sponsor rather than speak for, working in partnership with Arvind Dixit, Chair of the firm's Cultural Diversity network, and culturally diverse partner champions in every office.

David secured Board endorsement of Corrs' 2025–2027 Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, with Cultural Diversity and First Nations Inclusion among its 5 priority areas and 80% of actions underway. He backed the Empowering Diverse Leadership Program, which every participant rated highly relevant and which is now part of the firm's national curriculum. In FY25, Corrs contributed 1,849 pro bono hours supporting First Nations communities. He also secured Corrs' support for the AICD Chair's Mentoring Program and its stream for culturally diverse women. Asian Australian representation at Corrs is now about 18%, above the national benchmark of 11.8%.



Melissa Haigh
First Nations Engagement, Lendlease

Melissa Haigh leads First Nations engagement at Lendlease, where she began her career as a graduate. Growing up in the 1980s alongside First Nations families in a country town, she saw people treated differently and subjected to overt racism. A secondment to CareerTrackers, supporting First Nations interns, deepened her understanding of racism at work. As a non-First Nations person, she is clear that she does not speak for First Nations people. Instead, she uses her access and operational knowledge to call out subtle bias, such as First Nations businesses being judged by standards not applied elsewhere.

Melissa created DeadlyScience Day, bringing First Nations people, Lendlease employees and families together to learn through science. For NAIDOC Week this year, she supported a collaboration between Lendlease, JLL, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and Clothing the Gaps to deliver Deadly Pop-Up Shops across Lendlease's commercial assets. The shops reached thousands of tenants and delivered $94,635 to First Nations businesses, along with mentoring and commercial experience for young First Nations artists. Much of her influence happens behind the scenes, through difficult conversations and persistent follow-through.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR SPONSOR



Louise Stark
CEO, Hachette Australia

Louise Stark is CEO of Hachette Australia. While campaigning for the Voice and serving on the board of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF), she saw the racism directed at First Nations people and set out to understand Australia's story through a First Nations lens. Ten years ago, Hachette launched its Changing the Story strategic pillar so its workforce and its books would better reflect Australian society. Louise introduced paid internships after hearing Antoinette Lattouf speak, and today more than half of Hachette's staff belong to a people-led network.

In the past year, Hachette staff completed anti-racism training and set personal Changing the Story goals that feed into their performance reviews. Its Thrive network hosted the first networking event for culturally and linguistically diverse publishing staff from across Sydney's publishing houses. Hachette sponsored the inaugural Luminas and launched its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. It supports the ILF with below-market rent and hosted Indigenous students from Alice Springs for a week of publishing support through the ILF Create Program. Every Hachette book by a First Nations creator is supported with sensitivity reads.



Andrew Thomas
Chief Legal Officer, Investments, Lendlease

Andrew Thomas is Chief Legal Officer, Investments at Lendlease. Born in Hong Kong with European, Chinese and Vietnamese heritage, he migrated to Australia as a young child and was one of very few Asian students at his Sydney school. While his own career progressed relatively smoothly, he saw that this was not everyone's experience, and he remains one of a small number of people of Asian heritage in a C-suite role. Three years ago, he became Executive Sponsor of EmbRACE, Lendlease's Race & Ethnicity Network.

Over the past year, Andrew guided EmbRACE through a significant leadership transition, supporting incoming co-chairs to lead in their own voice. He mentors emerging leaders from culturally diverse backgrounds, including coaching a quieter colleague with strong potential to build confidence and step into more visible leadership. He supports the network's strategic planning and advocates for it with senior leaders and at external events, including those of the Asian Leadership Project. Much of his sponsorship happens behind the scenes: connecting network leaders with senior stakeholders, securing support and removing barriers.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR SPONSOR



Ainslie van Onselen
Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand

Ainslie van Onselen is CEO of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ). Growing up on a farm in regional Western Australia, she questioned why farms passed to sons and not daughters – an early lesson in refusing to accept 'that's the way it's always been'. As Westpac's Head of Inclusion & Diversity and a co-author of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Cultural Diversity Blueprint, she has long pushed for cultural diversity at work. In 2021, a challenge from CA ANZ's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members Panel led her to champion cultural background data collection across the membership.

Since then, CA ANZ has run Inclusion & Diversity Surveys in 2021, 2023 and 2025, moved from a Reflect to an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, and doubled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at Provisional Member level relative to the broader membership. In the past 12 months, Ainslie built diverse member consultation into CA ANZ's strategic review to FY30 for the first time. Those insights shaped the FY26–28 Member Inclusion Strategy, which directs two-thirds of its targeted effort to Indigenous and culturally diverse communities. She also personally supported the development of Shared Journeys by First Nations artist Aysha Menzel.

INCLUSIVE COMPANIES FINALISTS

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR INCLUSIVE COMPANIES

SBS

At SBS, race and cultural diversity are fundamental to its purpose and embedded across its inclusion roadmap. SBS introduced its Anti-Racism Framework, the first of its kind in Australia's media sector, alongside its Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan, SBS First strategy and Grounded and Growing First Nations employment plan. The work is sponsored by 8 executives, including the Managing Director, and shaped by the SBS-Multi and Ngarra Employee Advisory Groups. All employees complete mandatory anti-racism education, and SBS is the only Australian broadcaster to report publicly against inclusion targets for cast and crew.

Since 2022, First Nations representation at SBS has grown from 4.1% to 5.8%, and people of colour from 21.4% to 27.7%. Since 2023, anonymously reported experiences of racism have fallen from 3% to under 1%, and the share of incidents that went unreported has dropped from 75% to 25%. In 2026, engagement for every tracked cohort sat within 3 points of their peers. Over the last 3 years, 20% of flagship development program participants have been people of colour and 10% First Nations people. Today, 90% of staff describe SBS as highly supportive for people from culturally diverse backgrounds, up from 83% in 2023.

University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne embeds anti-racism through First Nations leadership, executive accountability and sustained investment. Its standalone Indigenous Portfolio, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous), sits alongside core portfolios such as Research and Education. The Anti-Racism Action Plan 2024–2027 was developed with students and staff with lived experience of racism and acknowledges the university's own legacy of racism. It works with Murmuk Djerring, the university's Indigenous Strategy. In 2025 and 2026, $2.4 million was allocated to implementing the plan, 30% of the strategic diversity and inclusion allocation.

Gahgook, meaning 'Respect' in Woi Wurrung, is the university's mandatory Indigenous Cultural Education Program, building staff capability to understand and address racism. Indigenous staff headcount reached 314 by February 2026, up 22% in under a year and approaching the target of 350. Indigenous enrolments reached 549 in 2025, working towards 1,000 by 2029. An Annual Report on Racism records complaints and actions taken, and a First Peoples' Advisory Group provides cultural authority and oversight. In 2026, the Centre for Truth-telling and Dialogue supported the 905 km National Walk for Truth.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR INCLUSIVE COMPANIES

Corrs Chambers Westgarth

Corrs Chambers Westgarth places race and cultural diversity at the foundation of its inclusion strategy. Its 2025–2027 Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan makes Cultural Diversity and First Nations Inclusion 2 of its 5 priority areas, each with dedicated actions, partner champions and staff-led networks. Racism is named as a psychosocial hazard, and a staff consultation shaped culturally responsive onboarding, refreshed Workplace Contact Officer training and the Empowering Diverse Leadership Program. Staff receive 5 days of paid leave for cultural and religious occasions, and 40% of the firm's diversity and inclusion budget goes to race and cultural diversity, including First Nations inclusion.

Corrs contributed 1,849 pro bono hours to First Nations communities in a year, including advice to the Wellington Aboriginal Community on the award-winning Bulabul Battery Project. It has supported 18 CareerTrackers placements since 2016 and hosted 7 CareerSeekers interns since 2022, 5 of whom joined permanently. Measured against the AALA 2025 Cultural Diversity Snapshot, Asian Australian representation is about 18% firm-wide (11.8% nationally) and 24% among early-career lawyers (15% nationally). In staff surveys, 92% of employees report feeling safe and included.

CQUniversity

At CQUniversity, reconciliation is a whole-of-university responsibility, with First Nations success and self-determination at its centre. The Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan sets the framework for equity, cultural inclusion and anti-racism, led through the Vice-President Indigenous Engagement portfolio and overseen by University Council. The university has invested in a dedicated Indigenous Engagement Division, a First Nations Workforce Strategy, Indigenous student success programs, cultural safety initiatives and Indigenous data governance reform.

Two initiatives stand out. The RAP Champions Program has grown from a grassroots initiative into a network of 121 staff and student reconciliation advocates across campuses and regions, now supported by a new Community of Practice. CQUniversity also built its own RAP Reporting Application, turning a largely manual process into a single source of truth for actions, evidence, approvals and executive reporting. Recognised by Reconciliation Australia, the model has drawn interest from other universities. Progress is also tracked through workforce participation, retention, student outcomes and cultural capability learning.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR INCLUSIVE COMPANIES



Victoria Legal Aid

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) places race and cultural diversity at the centre of its intersectional approach to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Its anti-racism journey began in 2018, when staff asked why VLA celebrated Harmony Day rather than the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Since then, VLA has built a cultural diversity staff network, made inclusion one of its 4 organisational values, set up a dedicated DEI team and, in 2025, created the standalone Barring-ga Balert (First Peoples) Directorate. In 2026, its strategies came together in an Intersectional Equity Action Plan.

VLA has 7 inclusion-focused staff networks, each with an executive sponsor, and every staff member completes a cultural safety reflection in their performance review. In 2026, VLA made a submission to the federal parliamentary inquiry into racism directed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and its 2025 Racism in the Workplace survey is informing action across the justice sector. First Peoples staff made up 4.4% of the workforce in 2026. In the 2025 People Matter Survey, 92% of staff were confident applying a DEI lens to their work, and in 2026, 80% agreed they could be themselves at work.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FINALISTS

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE



Miriam Forte
Wongutha CAPS

Miriam Forte is Program Lead – Partnerships and Research at Wongutha CAPS. Her research set out to understand why Aboriginal young people graduating from the school were struggling to find work, and why the gap in First Nations employment persists in remote Western Australia and across the country. She reviewed 10 years of student data, examined First Nations-led research and community programs, and consulted widely with First Nations staff, students, families, community leaders and Elders. Working remotely from Melbourne, she secured a Community Research Fellowship with the University of Melbourne's Melbourne Social Equity Institute to extend the project.

The research focused on school leavers across the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance regions. It has already changed practice at Wongutha CAPS, from professional development for educators in culturally safe, trauma-informed careers education to a review of careers and work experience programs and the school's strategic planning. Schools, TAFEs, not-for-profits and corporate organisations have shown strong interest in the findings. Miriam is now working with an Indigenous-led partner organisation to create an accessible learning resource to guide First Nations employment initiatives across sectors, with free access for the communities who took part.



William Lukamto
SBS

This research explored what drives a sense of belonging among multilingual communities and the role media plays in strengthening it. It engaged 1,400 Australians in 7 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Italian, Mandarin, Punjabi, Vietnamese and English. The study found that belonging is shaped by factors such as age and residency status, not only English-language confidence and time in Australia, and that media representation makes a real difference.

Conducted between December 2024 and January 2025, the research showed how wider events shape belonging: Arabic-speaking respondents reported a lower sense of belonging and felt significantly less represented in Australian news. Findings were briefed across SBS, to Parliament and to government departments including the Department of Home Affairs, which reported that the research informed its work across policy, grants and partnerships. Input from Home Affairs on the first wave also shaped the second, adding residency status and citizenship. The team created Language Community Snapshots to help organisations communicate with each community in the ways most relevant to it.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE



Dimitria Groutsis
University of Sydney

Professor Dimitria Groutsis researches how ethno-racial diversity is experienced, measured and reported in Australian workplaces. Over a 25-year career at the intersection of migration, race, ethnicity and gender, she has produced 100 publications and reports, including the national studies Counting Culture, Cracking the Glass Cultural Ceiling, Beyond the Pale and Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories. With many workplaces reluctant to count ethno-racial diversity or name race directly, she has built measurement frameworks from first principles in partnership with Diversity Council Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission, Media Diversity Australia and others.

Counting Culture was named by the Australian Policy Observatory among the 10 most influential policy tools nationally. It shaped the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's intersectional reporting, was adopted by Women on Boards and was credited with prompting a Federal Government review of Census ethnicity data. As Academic Director of the University of Sydney's SAGE program, Dimitria led the university to Silver accreditation in 2026, with Racial Visibility, Voice and Inclusion at its core. Her questions on ethno-racial diversity are now part of the university's HR data collection, and she co-led a panel at the 69th UN Commission on the Status of Women.



Alanna Kamp
Western Sydney University

Alanna Kamp is an Associate Lecturer at Western Sydney University whose research over almost 2 decades has advanced understanding of racism, belonging and social cohesion in Australia. Her work combines national attitudinal surveys, qualitative research on lived experiences of racism and community-engaged methods. Through the university's partnership with SBS, this research has surveyed 15,000 Australians since 2015. Alanna works across academia, government, community, media and business to turn evidence of racism into practical tools for action.

A national survey she co-led in 2015–16 informed the SBS documentary Is Australia Racist?, which reached more than 500,000 Australians and won the international Realscreen Diversity and Inclusion Award. Evaluation found that watching it reduced racist attitudes. Her research on Asian Australians' experiences of racism informed the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report and the Asian Australian Lawyers Association's workplace racism reporting tool. In the past year, she contributed to the ABC documentary End Game and its Know the Real Score racial literacy tool, used by more than 3,000 Australians. Since 2023, she has shared her findings with more than 1,300 government and industry stakeholders.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE



Huong Thi Lan Nguyen
La Trobe University

Huong Thi Lan Nguyen is a Lecturer in Management and Human Resources Management at La Trobe University. Her research asks why highly capable ethnically diverse women enter management yet remain under-represented in senior and executive roles. The question is personal: Huong was a Dean in Vietnam at 27, managing about 130 staff, and had to rebuild her networks and professional standing after migrating to Australia. Supported by a $25,000 La Trobe research grant, her Ethnically Diverse Women in Leadership (EDWIL) program drew on 43 interviews across 2 ASX200 organisations in financial services and healthcare.

The research has produced 4 models explaining how capable women can be recognised without being given executive authority, and a framework for 3 practical toolkits for women, organisations and policymakers. It has generated 2 industry reports and an accepted article in Gender, Work & Organization, and findings were returned to both participating organisations. In August 2026, Huong ran an Unlocking Multicultural Talent workshop at the Greater Shepparton Business Festival, prompting follow-up from Workforce Australia and WomenCAN Australia. She has also shared the work with nearly 40 multicultural women leaders at the International Women's Peace Day Forum in Melbourne.



Ramona Vijeyarasa
University of Technology Sydney

Professor Ramona Vijeyarasa is Chair in Gender and the Law at the University of Technology Sydney. Her research asks a simple but searching question: when governments pass laws, do those laws actually work for women? To answer it, she created the Gender Legislative Index (GLI), a world-first framework that assesses whether legislation advances, ignores or undermines women's rights. She built a multidisciplinary team across law, data science and machine learning, pairing expert human evaluation with a transparent model that keeps every score grounded in legal analysis.

The GLI has been applied to laws in multiple countries and across 12 areas of law, from gender-based violence to taxation and public procurement. One criterion assesses whether legislation reflects how race, Indigeneity, migration status, disability and disadvantage shape women's experience of the law. In Tasmania, the GLI informed a 2022 parliamentary motion that led to Australia's first parliamentary committee dedicated to scrutinising legislation through a gender lens. Ramona has given evidence to support the committee, now the Gender, Gender Based Violence and Equality Committee, and the GLI is being expanded into a global database.



COLLECTIVE IMPACT AWARD FINALISTS

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

ASIC Multicultural Committee

ASIC's Multicultural Committee is a volunteer, staff-led network of about 45 employees working to value cultural difference as a strength and build a workforce that reflects the community ASIC serves. Supported by ASIC's Diversity Council, a Sponsoring Commissioner and the Diversity & Inclusion lead, it runs events such as a session with Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman on the National Anti-Racism Framework. It also led a dedicated anti-racism stream, exploring staff experiences of racism and helping map an anti-racism framework for ASIC. The committee helped build an inter-agency network whose first event, chaired by RBA Governor Michele Bullock, drew more than 800 attendees.

While 38% of ASIC staff are culturally diverse, that diversity is not yet reflected at leadership levels. In response, volunteers designed and ran a 10-month reverse mentoring pilot. Culturally diverse staff, from a graduate upwards, mentored 10 senior leaders, including the then Chair, the CEO and 3 Commissioners, on topics such as racism, barriers to promotion and leadership stereotypes. Mentees said the experience reshaped their approach to leadership, and mentors said they felt 'seen'. The pilot was endorsed as a success, and ASIC is now exploring how to embed it permanently.

DEECA Women of Colour Network

The DEECA Women of Colour Network began in 2020, when 2 founding members attended the VPS Women of Colour Network and saw a gap in their own department. Formally endorsed by the Secretary in 2021, it gives women of colour and gender-diverse people of colour a space to connect, feel represented and grow their careers. What started as informal coffee catch-ups among 5 members has grown to about 80 members in 2026, supported by allies, executive sponsors and the Diversity and Inclusion team. As a volunteer-led network, it keeps its priorities focused so members can contribute without burning out.

A key milestone was establishing one of the first VPS departmental mentoring programs designed by and for women of colour, pairing members with senior leaders. In 2026, the network built a business case to fund a 3-part Cultural Safety, Sensitivity and Responsiveness workshop series for 25 mentor–mentee pairs, framing it as an investment in capability and risk management. Participants reported greater trust in their mentoring relationships, practical tools for workplace challenges and a deeper understanding of sponsorship. Members have since stepped into leadership roles and executive committee positions, creating opportunities for the next generation.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

DITRDCSA Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Network

The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) Network at the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts is open to all staff, and defines CALD to include ethnically, racially and religiously diverse people. Six years ago, it had 2 co-chairs and about 20 members. Today it has more than 200 members, about 10% of the department, from graduates to senior executives, who speak more than 30 mother tongues between them. At one point the network was advised not to use the word 'racism'. A staff consultation gave it the evidence and moral authority to name racism and make the case for change.

The network helped lead a cross-agency push for better cultural diversity data in the annual Australian Public Service (APS) census, securing Secretary-level support that helped other agencies follow. The department has since used that data to set workforce targets. As a trusted adviser to the APS-wide Secretary-level CALD Champion, the network helped shape senior executive reforms endorsed by the Secretaries Board. These include the Commonwealth's first CALD sponsorship program, running across 8 agencies, with the department's 5 sponsees already stepping into executive acting roles.



Hall & Wilcox Cultural Inclusion Committee

The Hall & Wilcox Cultural Inclusion Committee formed in 2018 with 5 members and a clear ambition: a workplace where cultural diversity is celebrated and everyone belongs. It now has 43 members, from law graduates to partners and the Chief Operating Officer, led by Partner Co-Leads Seun Idowu and Kristopher Kunasingam and lawyer Co-Chairs Aash Velhal and Stephen Lin. The committee has worked to make cultural inclusion relevant to everyone, opening events to all and extending its reach across 8 offices nationally. It also supported name pronunciation functionality across Microsoft 365 and email signatures.

Its work now reaches clients and the broader legal profession. The firm has hosted the Asian Australian Lawyers Association's National Mentoring Program launch for 2 consecutive years, connecting emerging culturally diverse lawyers with established practitioners. At the Sydney event in August 2026, Partner Seun Idowu joined Jane Paingakulam, Deputy President of the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW, and barrister Wilson Chan to discuss their pathways into law. The committee's public podcast explores culture, identity and belonging; its latest series, What's in a name, examined the personal and professional significance of names.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

BUSINESS IN COLOUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

PwC First Nations, Friends and Allies Network

PwC's First Nations, Friends and Allies Network began in 2019 as Reconciliation Action Plan working groups across 6 offices, each co-chaired with PwC's Indigenous Consulting so First Nations voices were at the table from the start. It became a formal People Network in 2021, and in 2022 Mob Connect was created as a separate, culturally safe space for First Nations employees. When PwC divested PwC's Indigenous Consulting in 2024, the network lost significant cultural capability, and rebuilding it became central to its work. After listening to members, it relaunched in early 2026 with 3 pillars: Belong and Connect, Grow, and Amplify.

Through a period of significant change for the firm and the country after the 2023 referendum, the network kept building cultural capability. Between January and November 2025, members recorded 179 volunteer hours. The network hosted its largest event yet, a national webcast with First Nations leaders on economic empowerment, while local chapters offered cultural walks on Country, workshops with First Nations artists and learning from an Aboriginal-owned social enterprise. Today, 77% of members are actively engaged, 82% feel a sense of belonging in the network and 77% say it brings purpose to their work.



VPS Women of Colour Network

The Victorian Public Sector (VPS) Women of Colour Network was founded in January 2019 as the first women of colour network in the Australian public sector. Run by and for self-identifying women of colour, it addresses challenges at the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender. It has grown to more than 1,000 members and helped establish 8 local chapters, including at the Department of Health, Victoria Police and Victoria Legal Aid. Largely volunteer-run, it refreshed its Champions program to turn senior leaders' goodwill into active sponsorship, and convenes quarterly cross-sector roundtables.

In 2021, the network collaborated on the first VPS Diversity and Inclusion Survey focused on the experiences of women of colour. With more than 1,000 responses, it remains the largest VPS data collection of its kind. Its recommendation for a dedicated VPS Cultural Diversity Strategy was realised by the Victorian Public Sector Commission in 2026. The network has also contributed to the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report, VEOHRC's race discrimination guidance and the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector's Intersectionality at Work report.

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

MEET OUR JUDGES

To protect the credibility of these awards, MindTribes Foundation has built a rigorous and impartial and externally verified process for nominations, assessment, and judging. All our sponsors, partners, and nominees were all briefed on the integrity of the process. This ensures all nominees are evaluated solely on merit and impact, without any influence from the MindTribes Foundation team.

The BIC Awards are governed by integrity and fairness. Our facilitative role safeguards impartiality so nominees and their organisations can be assured of the independence, transparency, and credibility of outcomes.

- Div Pillay (CEO, MindTribes) & Vick Pillay (Managing Director, Mindtribes)

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

JUDGES
BUSINESS IN COLOUR EXEMPLAR

Judge



Amy Crookes

EY

Judge



Cass Tratt

ANZ

Judge



Yusuf Liban

Multicultural Youth Group

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

JUDGES
BUSINESS IN COLOUR SPONSOR

Judge



Fiona Vines

Telstra

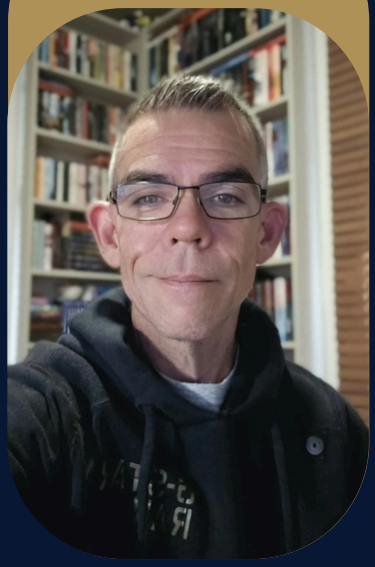
Judge



Rosie Thyer

The Foundation for Young Australians

Judge



Andrew Scott Mullay

Ex-Telstra

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

JUDGES
BUSINESS IN COLOUR INCLUSIVE COMPANIES

Judge



Ro Allen

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

Judge



Celia Tran

The Social Fabric

Judge



Sam Muir

Coles

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

JUDGES
BUSINESS IN COLOUR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Judge



Pearl Subban

Monash University

Judge



Phoebe Mwanza

Diversity Council Australia

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

JUDGES
BUSINESS IN COLOUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Judge



Adam Fenessy

Public sector leader

Judge



Glenn Milliken

Bupa

Judge



Jamad Hersi

Department of Justice and Community Safety

MINDTRIBES FOUNDATION

STAY TUNED FOR THE WINNERS!

Contact us at info@mindtribes.com.au

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