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## Minority women leaders an undervalued resource

### WORKPLACES NOT UTILISING THE UNIQUE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES OF WOMEN FROM MINORITY GROUPS

Australian workplaces are missing out on a diverse array of leadership skills by not fully utilising the abilities and experiences of women from minority groups.

Women from minority groups (including Indigenous women, women with disabilities, LGBTIQ women, rural and regional women, older women, migrant women and refugee women) are the most underrepresented in leadership in Australia.

A new report conducted by the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW) found that while minority women's lived histories and experiences equipped them with exceptional leadership skills, their leadership style was not equated to leadership in mainstream society and in organisations.

The report also found that an array of organisational challenges and challenges unique to their particular context exclude minority women from leadership.

Report author ACLW Director Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey said that while workplace diversity and inclusion programs focus on including employees from minority groups so that organisations benefit from their different talents and experiences, most do not recognise the leadership of members of minority groups.

"What I found when interviewing women from a variety of minority backgrounds was that the challenges they had experienced in their lives had given them leadership skills that are highly prized in the workplace," Dr Rodgers-Healey said.

"Through their life struggles they had developed a high level of emotional intelligence. They have a transformational style, they are resilient, they are driven, they are inner focused and value focused.

"These are precisely the qualities that organisations look for in leaders."

Dr Rodgers-Healey, an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wollongong's [Wollongong Academy of Tertiary Teaching and Learning Excellence](#) (WATTLE), will present the report findings at the Unique Leadership of Minority Women Conference at Parliament House Sydney on Wednesday 27 September.

"Organisations need to move beyond diversity policies that just categorise minority identities for inclusion and recognise the rich leadership status and potential of minority women," Dr Rodgers-Healey said.

"Not doing so further marginalises minority women in organisations and perpetuates the imbalance of power.

The conference, which will explore how organisations can advance diversity and inclusion and better understand the leadership potential of minority women, will be opened by NSW Minister for Women, the Hon Tanya Davies.

The Federal Shadow Minister for Human Services the Hon Linda Burney MP has also lent her support to the conference.

"It is really pleasing and encouraging to see the University of Wollongong providing such leadership on gender and diversity equality. This conference is not only timely, but important," Ms Burney said.

The conference will feature speakers from different minority groups, who will talk about their individual leadership journeys and their experiences and observations in relation to the themes of the Report.

Christine Ryan, founding director of the Disability Leadership Institute, is one of the keynote speakers.

“One in five Australian women are women with disabilities, yet we are invisible as leaders because we don’t fit the expected image of what an Australian leader looks like,” Ms Ryan said.

The conference program and a list of speakers is available at <http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au/transform/unique-leadership-of-minority-women-conference>

## **ABOUT DR RODGERS-HEALEY**

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey is Director of the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women, which she founded in 2000. She has held positions of leadership and management in Australia and the United Kingdom in education, business and the not-for-profit sector. Dr Rodgers-Healey has authored several books including *Considerations for Australia’s Next Woman Prime Minister*, and edited and co-authored *Can Merit and/or Quotas Achieve Gender Equality in Australia?.* In 2014, she was recognised as one of Australia’s “100 Women of Influence” by the *Australian Financial Review* and Westpac.

## **MEDIA NOTES:**

Dr Rodgers-Healey is available for interview via the UOW Media Office. High resolution photographs of Dr Rodgers-Healey are available for download from [Dropbox](#) .

## **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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