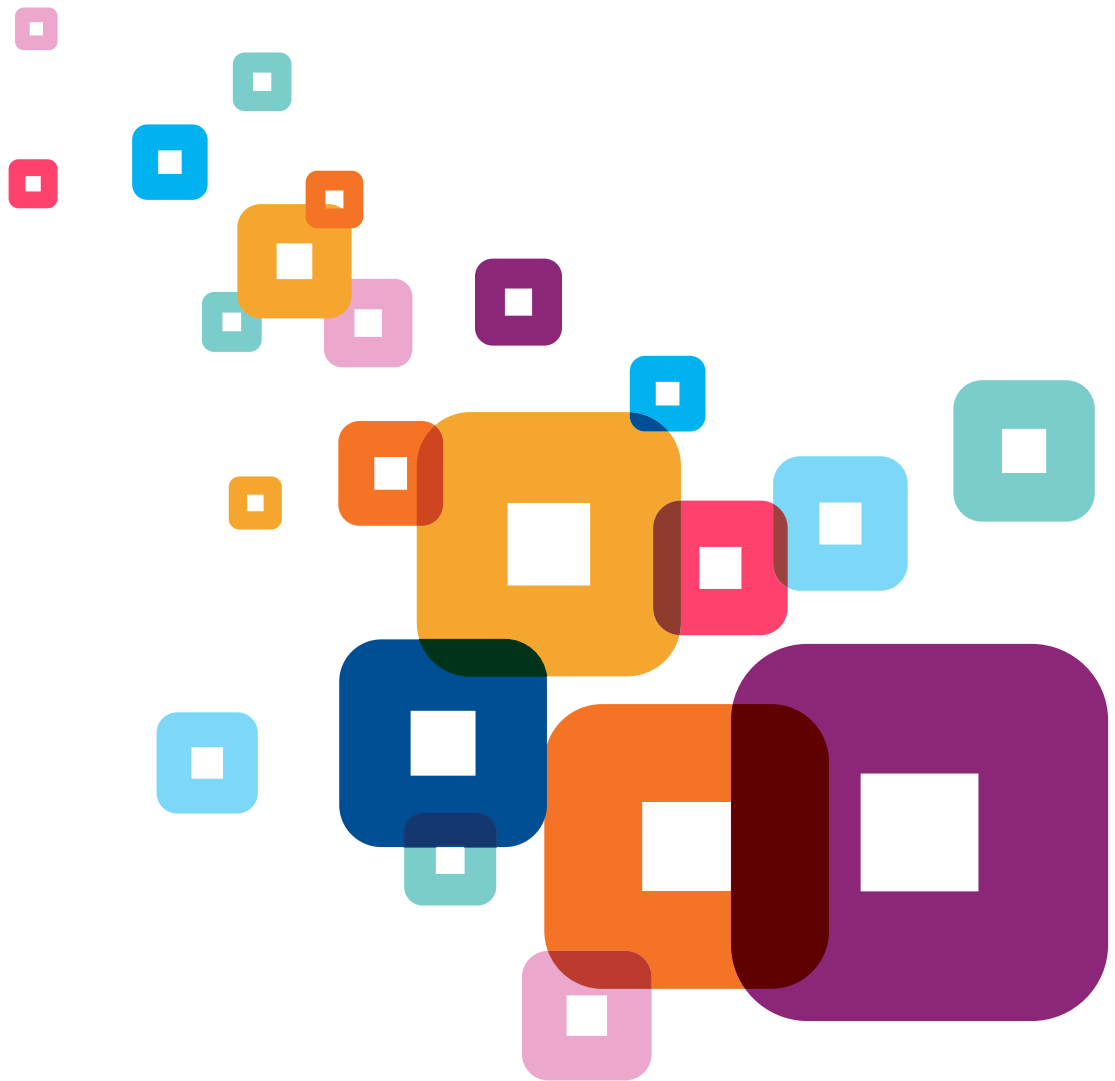


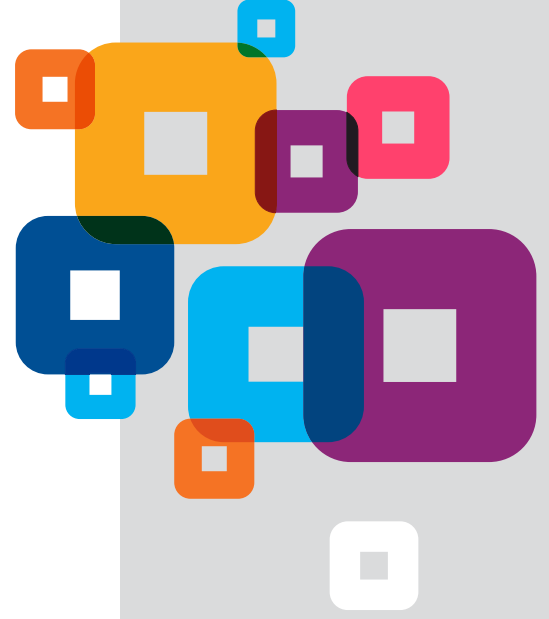
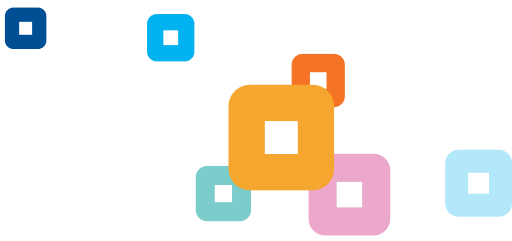


# Diversifying boards – your cultural advantage

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## A guide to pursuing a board role





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Diversifying boards—your cultural advantage is available for viewing and download in a variety of formats, including this Word version from the Office of Multicultural Interests website: [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au).

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## Foreword from Hon Mark McGowan MLA Premier of Western Australia

### Are you ready to make your mark on WA's boards and committees?

Western Australia is home to a culturally diverse population with a wealth of skills, talents and expertise.

Around one-third of us were born overseas, and close to a fifth (17 per cent) were born in a non-main English-speaking country.

It is recognised globally that a culturally diverse population stimulates new ideas and higher rates of innovation and creativity, as well as increased business formation, job generation and economic growth.

Boards that are more culturally diverse enjoy many of these advantages, and companies with diverse boards are 43 per cent more likely to experience higher profits.

The McGowan Government is committed to increasing cultural and gender diversity on Western Australia's boards and committees, and we have directed that all State Government board and committee appointments should reflect this commitment.

The WA Government has developed the OnBoardWA online gateway, to ensure access to a diverse and talented pool of nominees with skills, insights, perspectives and experiences that can be utilised for the benefit of the State.

I encourage Western Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are seeking membership of a board or committee to register their interest through **OnBoardWA**.

As a further step on your journey to becoming board ready, Diversifying boards your cultural advantage is a guide to help



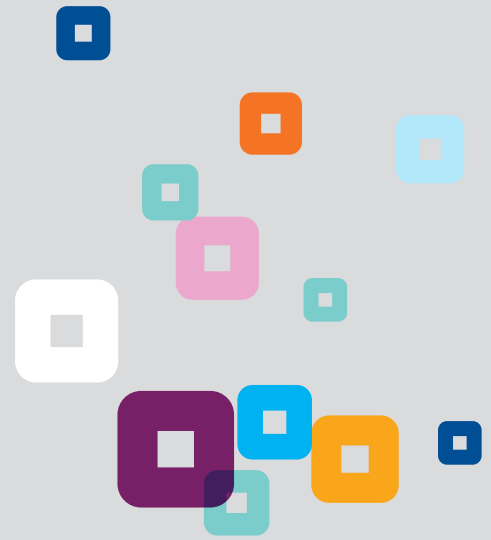
Western Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds harness their skills to make unique and significant contributions to boards and committees.

This publication explains how boards function, how to give yourself the best chances for board selection, and the benefits that this can bring to individuals, organisations and society as a whole.

I encourage you to take inspiration from this guide and add your voice to those boards and committees that shape our lives and our future.

**Mark McGowan MLA**  
**PREMIER**





## Acknowledgements

**This guide is adapted from the 2014 publication 'Being Board Ready: A Guide for Women' produced by the Department of Local Government and Communities Office for Women.**

The Office of Multicultural Interests also acknowledges the New Zealand Ministry of Women's Affairs 'All About Boards' website on which 'Being Board Ready' was based.

Special thanks are extended to Tony Chong, Pearl Proud, Maria Saraceni, Rasa Subramaniam, Dr Aesen Thambiran, Fadzi Whande, Dr Bernadette Wright and Andrea Creado who generously shared their stories.

We extend our gratitude to all the mentors who have volunteered their time and supported the mentorship part of the Leadership and Governance program, particularly those who have been involved with the program since its inception in 2015.

Thank you to all participants of the program and especially those who have shared their leadership journey—Madison Tran, Tina Tuira-Waldon, Tandi C. Kuwana, Raihanaty A. Jalil and Pramod Kapoor.





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## Introduction

### Have you ever thought about being a member of a board or committee?

Board membership offers an opportunity to develop personal and professional skills, contribute to the community, set the direction for organisations whose work you value, and be a role model for others.

This guide can help you assess your board-readiness and learn about how to pursue a board role.

Just like looking for a job, there are basic things to consider when working towards a board role. Board membership requires certain attributes and skills, and commitment.

A person's cultural and linguistic background is an attribute that is not always promoted by the

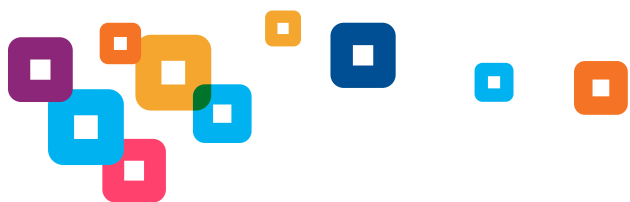
individual or recognised for the benefits it can bring to the functioning of a board.

The guide includes information about boards and what being a board member involves.

It also includes profiles of people from a wide variety of backgrounds who have become members of different types of boards. Some were born in Australia of migrant parents; most came to Australia as migrants. They represent countries and cultures from across the world.

The guide also includes resources that you can access to help you on your journey to board membership. Information and networks are available to support you.

Take the first step and turn the page!



## Section 1—The benefits

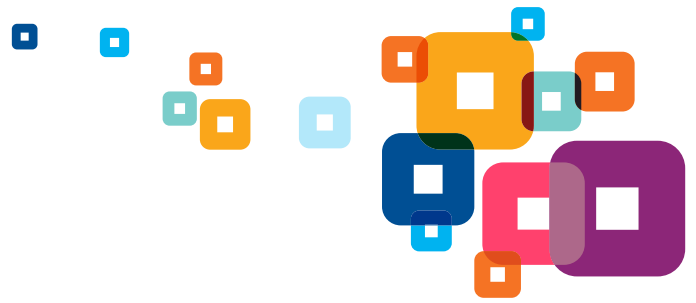
### Why cultural diversity matters in the boardroom

In today's interconnected world, flexibility and versatility have emerged as the key to success for individuals, companies, communities and countries.

Creating a culturally diverse and inclusive environment is the best way to ensure acquisition of these qualities. Diversity enables boards to serve their community, stakeholders and businesses better. It also helps influence policy priorities and delivery of services to clients, and ensures better responses to community or market needs.

Given that Western Australia is one of the most diverse States in Australia with almost half of residents having one parent born in a non-main-English speaking country, having diverse and inclusive boards has become even more compelling. There is a growing awareness of the need to broaden the composition and breadth of perspective of executive boards and committees so that they are more effective and responsive to the needs of our multicultural society. Research shows that:

- diversity increases the broader understanding of the organisation and society at large, which is necessary for effective decision making and competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment.
- having diversity on boards benefits business and services by developing appropriate products and/or services and responding to new markets and/or emerging needs or communities
- diverse talents, experiences, competencies and knowledge help build organisational trust and enhance financial and corporate social performance
- diversity is essential for boards to navigate and respond to the increasingly complex and dynamic issues faced by public, private and not-for-profit agencies
- including people of diverse backgrounds leads to better risk management, more innovation and stronger connections with customers, employees and business partners.



One report found that, worldwide, companies with higher cultural diversity on boards are 43 per cent more likely to experience higher profits than the national median. Similarly, companies with more diverse management teams earned on average 38 per cent more in their revenues from innovative products and services compared to those with less diversity.

**“ Diversity and inclusion are not just the right thing to do but are important to the business agenda. Boards are at their best when there is diversity of culture, thinking and perspective. ”**

Diversity and inclusive business culture are also important for good corporate governance:

- diverse viewpoints lead to higher intellectual property, can manage group conflict better and maximise creativity among members
- a diverse board offers better recruitment and retention of talents, which help maximise productivity, performance and profit
- diverse boards also ensure 37.9 per cent better assessment of consumer interest and demand, and 57.8 per cent more prospect to improve reputation
- diverse boards outperform the Standard & Poor 500 (S&P 500) Index in average stock returns during economic recessions.

<sup>1</sup> Russell Reynolds Associates, 2009

However, the Watermark Search International and the Governance Institute of Australia report *2020 Board Diversity Index* found that while there was slow progress to improve gender diversity on ASX 200 boards since 2015, “the cultural diversity of Australian boards is slipping backwards”.<sup>2</sup>

The report indicates that the Diversity Council Australia report of 2013, *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of the Cultural Origins of ASX 200 Business Leaders* found that, among the board directors of ASX 200 companies:

- 29.3 per cent of ASX 200 directors were born overseas
- three-quarters of the directors born overseas were from main-English speaking countries: North America and Canada (25.6 per cent), the UK (24.2 per cent), New Zealand (15.2 per cent) and South Africa (9.2 per cent)
- 13.5 per cent of the remaining one-quarter were born in Asia, 9 per cent in Europe, 2.1 per cent in South America, 0.2 per cent in Africa and 1 per cent in other regions
- most of the directors (92.4 per cent) were of Anglo-Celtic background, followed by 5 per cent non-European and 2.6 per cent European directors
- the number of directors on Australian boards with non-Anglo-Celtic background declined from 107 to 99 between 2019 and 2020
- departing directors with an Asian background were mostly replaced with directors from the USA, Canada and New Zealand
- the proportion of business leaders with Asian cultural origins is relatively low (5 per cent) compared to the general community (9.7 per cent), especially given the importance of the Asian region to Australia’s trade, tourism and education, and from a political perspective

In 2014 only one per cent—45 out of 4305 people—registered as members of public boards and committees in WA were from a CaLD background.<sup>3</sup>



## Benefits for you

There are personal and professional benefits to gain from participating on boards or committees. Personal benefits include:

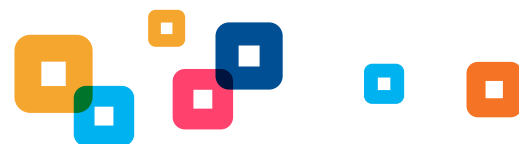
- satisfaction when you achieve goals, making a difference to people’s lives and helping to achieve a better community
- building your social skills such as cooperation and collaboration, and developing relationships and networks
- learning from other board members and executives
- influencing and leading an organisation
- increased confidence and communication skills
- enhanced intrapersonal competence such as self-awareness and self-control
- financial rewards for positions that attract a sitting fee.

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<sup>2</sup> Diversity Council Australia (2013) *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of the Cultural Origins of ASX200 Business Leaders*  
See [www.dca.org.au/dca-research/capitalising-on-culture.htm](http://www.dca.org.au/dca-research/capitalising-on-culture.htm)

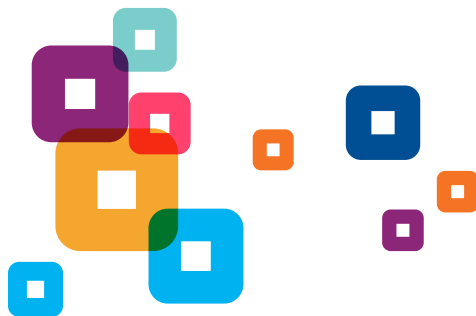
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<sup>3</sup> Hansard: 22 May 2014 p. 671b–674b



## Benefits to you professionally can include:

- enriching your résumé
- developing knowledge and understanding of the public, community, corporate and business sectors
- improving your future career prospects and widening your career opportunities by enabling you to develop valuable knowledge and skills, such as:
  - leadership and decision making, negotiation, influencing skills, conflict resolution, fund-raising, advocacy and networking
- day-to-day management processes
- current government standards and issues compliance
- accountable and transparent practices and procedures
- specific areas of interest.
- Benefits for the community
- Your membership of a board can also have benefits for the community. You can:
  - be a role model by directly or indirectly influencing others to seek leadership roles
  - mentor or teach other members of the community by sharing knowledge and experiences
  - promote cultural exchange within an organisation and advocate for consideration of the issues, perspectives and needs of culturally diverse communities.



## Challenges

There are also some challenges to consider. Taking on a board or committee role will require commitment, both in time and effort. Managing multiple responsibilities may require making compromises in your other work and life commitments. You may need to allocate time to:

- attend meetings
- prepare for meetings
- carefully read minutes of meetings and other documents
- check compliance standards.

Payment you may receive by joining a board could:

- create conflicts of interest
- affect other forms of income you have
- not adequately compensate your time.

Board membership has other challenges, such as dealing with differences of opinion and conflicting views. Lack of clear performance measures or key performance indicators (KPIs) may be frustrating. Dealing with a dysfunctional board can be a challenge.

It is also important to be sure that you:

- feel comfortable with the level of responsibility
- are clear about your personal responsibilities
- are aware of your legal responsibilities and are able to meet them.



## ▣ Profile—Pearl Proud

Pearl Proud has held various roles as a Board Director and has a longstanding governance career across various sectors. She is currently the Chair of ConnectGroups, a not-for-profit peak body for more than 640 Support Groups and Self-Help (Peer Support) Groups in Western Australia. She is also the Chair of CAN (Community Arts Network) which supports and facilitates community art projects, empowers artists and develops art sector capability.

Pearl was born in Durban, South Africa and migrated to Australia in 1987. Her first language is Zulu. Other than English, she also speaks Xhosa, Mpondo and Afrikaans. She obtained university degrees in psychology, literature and business administration in South Africa and Australia.

Her 25-year clinical career includes roles as a Consulting Psychologist, Clinical Lead and AHPRA Accredited Clinical Supervisor. She is currently overseeing a dedicated CaLD mental health program across metropolitan Perth. She has also consulted in policy within the public service and provided executive coaching and mentoring to professionals across a range of fields. She is passionate about the wellbeing of the community and is an avid Eagles supporter.

Pearl says she was interested in joining a board as a form of community service, to make a contribution, and as a way of gaining governance skills.

She found out about board membership opportunities mainly through her networks and was invited to get involved after expressing a general interest.

Pearl notes the many personal benefits of being a board member have included developing governance and leadership skills, making a contribution to the not-for-profit sector, being engaged and supporting others, building networks, and making a contribution as a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) background.

Pearl believes that her cultural background helps bring a broader and more inclusive perspective to her work and helps highlight the positive contributions the CaLD community makes in Western Australia and beyond.

Other interests that she considers have helped her to be of value as a board member are her participation in leadership courses and



workshops, being a mentor to younger people, involvement in the arts, and a general interest in politics and current affairs as well as reading and travelling.

Pearl notes that there are challenges to board membership. Some that she has experienced have been maintaining board cohesion

and, on a personal level, balancing board responsibilities with work and other demands.

Good communication, conflict management and leadership skills have been important to address matters affecting board cohesion.

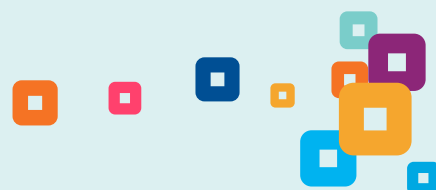
Planning and prioritising wellbeing including exercise, meditation and good nutrition have been important in balancing board, work and other life responsibilities.

Pearl says she did not encounter any difficulties gaining board membership on the boards of which she has been a member. However, she acknowledges that this may not be the case in gaining corporate board directorships—her current goal.

She notes that improving skills and inviting support or mentorship would assist in overcoming challenges if they were to emerge.

Pearl offers the following advice to people from culturally diverse backgrounds interested in becoming a board member:

“Be involved! It is a highly enjoyable endeavour. Find a mentor for support, identify an area of interest and gain skills and knowledge in governance.”



## □ Profile—Tony Chong

For Tony, understanding your strengths and weaknesses and understanding how you can add value as a board member are important.

“Working closely with the chair and other board members and executives and asking questions helped overcome these challenges”, he says. “There are no dumb questions.”

Tony says that for him the benefits of board membership have been an overwhelming satisfaction in being able to assist and partake in the community. He believes that different cultural backgrounds help provide a different perspective and the ability to tap into separate networks. He stresses that it is important to believe in the organisation and its mission:

“It is through this, that you get an understanding of what the organisation needs and how best to add value.”

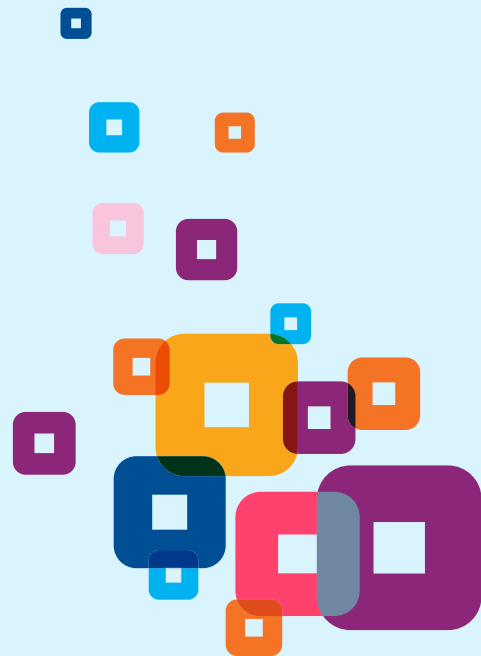
Tony’s advice to a person from a culturally diverse background considering a board role is to understand what makes this background special and how it can add value to an organisation.

Tony Chong is a member of Murdoch University’s Art Collection Board, President of Buick Holdings (DVG Automative Group) Board , Senior Vice President of the WA Chinese Chamber of Commerce, a member of Royal Perth Hospital Medical Research Foundation’s Finance Committee and an advisory board member of Murdoch University Law School.

Tony was born in Malaysia and arrived in Australia in 1985. He speaks Mandarin and Cantonese. He has qualifications in law, accounting and taxation from Murdoch University and the University of New South Wales. He is currently a managing partner of the Perth office of a global law firm.

Tony says he was interested in joining a board to assist in the not-for-profit sector in a strategic way. He says he was either approached or was nominated to join the boards.

He says the challenges he faced in seeking a position on a board were narrowing down his interest and knowing where to look for vacancies. Persistence and patience were necessary.



## ▣ Profile—Alumni Member: Madison Tran

Madison is a corporate lawyer and works as Legal Counsel at Gold Corporation - The Perth Mint. She also volunteers as a lawyer for the document review service panel at the Arts Law Centre of Australia.

Born in Vietnam, Madison arrived in Australia in 1991. She holds a Bachelor of Law degree, a Bachelor of Commerce degree and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. She speaks Vietnamese and is learning Spanish.

Madison joined the OMI Leadership and Governance Program in 2015 while she was Vice President, Social Services for the Vietnamese Community in Australia WA Chapter.

She enrolled in the program to develop herself professionally and personally. She hoped to join a board where she could make a difference by contributing to programs and services that supported communities and helped them grow and thrive.

The Leadership and Governance Program gave Madison board-relevant knowledge and confidence. Once she had clarity on the kind of boards she was interested in and how she could be a valuable addition, she started her board journey.

Her main challenges were finding a board that aligned with her goals and values, and making the time to commit to and fulfill her responsibilities as a board member. She wanted to serve on a board whose work she believed to be important. She reviewed organisations' websites, read reports and talked to staff and board members. She also reached out to her network who were on boards to learn about their experience.

Since completing the program, Madison has held the position of Human Rights



Committee Member for United Nations Association of Australia WA (2017 to 2019) and, since July 2020, member of the Gaming Community Trust, Gaming and Wagering Commission of WA.

Madison says the board experience has enabled her to apply her skills in new areas.

Developing a holistic view of an organisation that includes its financial position are challenges she has faced as these are not usually part of her profession as a lawyer.

She believes that her cultural background has helped her bring a unique perspective to boards and committees. Being open to new ideas and challenges has also enabled her to be more involved, robust and effective.

Madison's advice to anyone of CaLD background looking to join a public, private or not-for-profit sector board or committee is to first have a good understanding of themselves.

"Make sure you know what makes you unique, what skills you have, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and what you find inspiring and meaningful.

"This understanding will help leverage your cultural background and your leadership qualities so that you can contribute effectively. The best way to get board experience is to start with not-for-profit organisations that you are passionate about. Having said that, no one experience is the same, you need to find what works for you."

## Section 2—What are boards?

A board is the governing body of an organisation. Governing bodies can also be known by other names, such as committees and councils, however, they all perform similar roles. A board's role is to provide purpose, leadership, direction and overall strategy for the organisation for which it is responsible and to oversee the performance and activities of management. Boards typically perform four main functions:

- compliance—ensuring that operations are legal and procedures work
- strategic direction—directing or setting the overall corporate strategy
- performance management—ensuring competent and efficient management and that the finances of the organisation are sound
- risk and crisis management—managing risks and crises to ensure the organisation's long-term viability.

### Types of boards

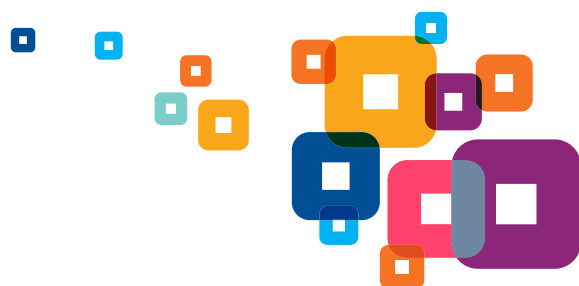
Most organisations operating within the private, not-for-profit and public sectors have some type of governance body. They can vary significantly in size, structure and function.

#### Not-for-profit sector

These boards support organisations that serve the community or provide services to support the community.

They cover many different sectors including human and community services, sports and recreation, culture and the arts, and environment and heritage. They can be a good entry point for learning about governance.

Appointments are usually endorsed by the membership at an annual general meeting or by election. Many not-for-profit boards are governed by legislation, particularly the Associations Incorporation Act 1987.



#### Public sector

As the stakeholders for these boards are generally taxpayers and Australian citizens, public sector boards are driven by considerations of the public interest.

Members are required to work within a legal framework.<sup>4</sup> These roles are often paid, but generally not paid to the same degree as large corporate boards. Appointments are usually made by Ministers or the Governor-General. Western Australian Government boards can be broadly grouped into the following types:<sup>5</sup>

**Trading enterprises:** boards of public trading enterprises engaged in commercial activities. In some cases, these trading enterprises may be government owned, such as the Fremantle Port Authority, Gold Corporation, Electricity Networks Corporation (Western Power) and Busselton Water Board

**Governing:** boards of statutory authorities that govern the operation of an agency, such as the Art Gallery of WA, WA Planning Commission and Botanical Parks and Gardens Authority



Policy or review or specialist: State level committees with a policy or coordination role, such as the Industry Management Committee and State Emergency Management Committee

Regulatory or registration or appeal: boards with a regulatory or registration role, such as the Liquor Commission, Plumbers' Licensing Board, Legal Practice Board of WA and Local Government Standards Panel

Stewardship: boards that manage public assets or trusts, such as the Aboriginal Land Trust, Public Education Endowment Trust and Western Australian Local Government Grants Commission

Advisory or consultative: boards and committees with an advisory or consultative role, such as the Geographic Names Committee and Pest Animal Control Ethics Advisory Committee. These boards do not have decision-making authority.

### Private sector

The private sector is profit-driven. Governance roles with these organisations are usually paid. The sector covers a broad range of organisations from large corporations to small businesses. Board appointments are usually made by shareholders, but often led by existing directors. The appointment process is highly competitive. Operation of boards of private sector companies is governed by the Corporations Act 2001.

## Relationship between boards and management

Broadly, governance involves “the systems and processes in place that shape, enable and oversee management of an organisation. Management is concerned with doing—with coordinating and managing the day-to-day operations of the business”.<sup>6</sup>

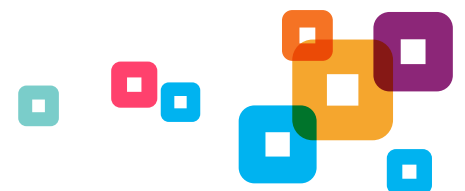
The relationship between boards and the management of an organisation will vary depending on factors such as the size of the



organisation and funding arrangements. These are formally explained in the rules or by-laws of the organisation.

Large organisations usually have paid staff members who take care of day-to-day management matters. In these organisations, board members focus on high-level strategic issues and staff deal with operational matters. In small organisations with voluntary or part-time staff, board members may take on many or all staff responsibilities as well as their duties as board members.

The relationship between boards and management is outlined on the next page.



<sup>4</sup> More information about the relevant legislation and other requirements can be found at [www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/public-sector-governance/good-governance-boards-and-committees](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/public-sector-governance/good-governance-boards-and-committees)

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from [www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/public-sector-governance/good-governance-boards-and-committees](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/public-sector-governance/good-governance-boards-and-committees)

<sup>6</sup> Meredith Edwards and Robyn Clough, 2005



Board	Management and staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets strategy and goals and authorises all major decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend the strategic direction and translate these into operation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approves the business plan, budget and corporate policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage physical, human and financial resources to achieve the organisation's objectives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors and assesses the performance of the organisation, management and major projects, agrees on KPIs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out day-to-day responsibility in conformity with relevant laws, regulations and compliance frameworks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures the organisation's long-term viability and sound finance, its compliance and accountability system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, implement and update policies and procedures, prepare budget, operate programs and organise events</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures effective communication with stakeholders and CEO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as a conduit between the board and the organisation</li> </ul>

## How boards work

Each board follows a set of rules and is guided in its operations by procedures. The rules and procedures will vary according to the type of organisation and the purpose of the board, but the rules will usually specify:

- how the board is to be established
- the boundaries and extent of the board's powers
- the number of members and length of their terms
- procedures to appoint members and to fill vacancies (such as the qualities that the office holders on the board should have)
- roles and responsibilities of office holders' procedures for removing board members
- meeting requirements and procedures
- guidelines for remuneration or reimbursement for expenses
- expected conduct
- conflict of interest consideration
- frequency of meetings.

## Board member responsibilities

Board members may also be called directors, committee members, councillors or trustees, depending on the type of governing body and the organisation it oversees. Responsibilities will vary and the board's role should be clearly defined by the organisation and reviewed regularly. Board members are responsible for:

- setting the strategic direction of the organisation, including the vision, objectives, and strategic and operational plans
- approving key organisational policies
- ensuring that the organisation has adequate funds, approving the budget and monitoring expenditure
- appointing the chief executive officer and holding her/him accountable for implementing the strategic plan consistent with organisational policy and the approved budget
- ensuring legal requirements are met
- developing a risk management plan and ensuring it is implemented
- ensuring the board is functioning well, reviewing the work of the board and planning for the succession and orientation of board members.

## Directors

A director oversees the management of the company on behalf of its shareholders. There are different types of director positions.

**Executive Director:** usually a full-time employee of the company or organisation who also holds a position on the board.

**Managing Director:** the most senior executive in the company or organisation who also sits on the board.

**Non-Executive Director:** not an employee but holds a position on the board.

**Independent Directors:** non-executive directors who may receive a director's salary, but do not have any material or financial relationship or transactions with the company, its promoters or shareholders, its management or its subsidiaries, which may affect their independence of judgement. All independent directors are non-executive directors but a non-executive director is not necessarily an independent director.

## Office holders

Most boards are made up of a group of office holders including at least a chair, deputy chair and treasurer, whose roles are described below. Many boards also have sub-committees that focus on particular areas, such as audit, risk management and ethics.

Directors are often asked to sit on one or more board committees such as an audit committee or human resources committee.

Appointment procedures for the different office holders should be outlined in the board's rules.

**Chairperson:** The chair serves as the board's spokesperson and takes a leading role in the functioning of the board. The chairperson is responsible for managing board meetings, ensuring that the discussion remains focused, decisions are reached and that members observe meeting rules.

Some chairpersons are also given an additional casting vote, to use when the votes on the board are evenly divided. With larger boards, the chairperson may act as the link between the board and the head of the organisation or chief executive officer.

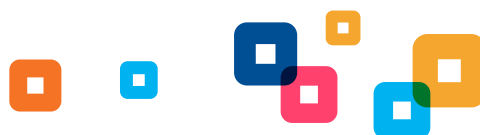
**Deputy Chairperson:** many boards appoint a deputy chairperson to support the chair and to fill in when the chair is absent. The deputy chairperson is also expected to play a major role in board leadership.

**Treasurer:** the treasurer is responsible for monitoring the financial position of the organisation and keeping other board members informed of financial matters.

**Company Secretary:** company secretaries make sure that a company complies with its legal and regulatory obligations and that decisions made by the board are implemented.

**Executive Officer/Secretary:** administrative support for boards can either be provided through the management structure of an organisation or as a board role, often known as a 'secretary' or 'executive officer'. This role is responsible for tasks such as preparing and distributing meeting agendas and minutes, and maintaining records.

In the not-for-profit sector, the board secretary may also be responsible for ensuring the preparation and adoption of a media policy and serves as spokesperson for the organisation as appropriate, promoting the organisation in the community as opportunities arise.



## Board documents

There are a number of key documents relevant to boards. These relate to:

- induction
- insurance
- finance
- annual reporting.

### Induction documents

Most boards provide new members with a governance handbook that includes information about the organisation, board and board members:<sup>7</sup>

- organisation—strategic plans and structure, core operations, policies, role of management and key stakeholders, legislation, reporting requirements and compliance obligations
- board—role of the board, board structure, code of conduct, board rules and procedures, legislative and/or compliance requirements, board policy, minutes from recent board meetings and an annual calendar of activities
- board members—roles and responsibilities including financial and legal obligations.

### Insurance documents

Some common insurance policies include:

public liability insurance (to protect against negligence claims against the organisation or company)

directors' and officers' (D&O) liability insurance (to protect individuals against negligence claims).

The higher the risk, the more insurance the board and its members need. You may need to consult a broker to determine if any other types of insurance are required for your particular role. The board should have details available of any insurance it holds for its board members, how much coverage is provided and for how long they will be covered. An insurance policy's Certificate of Currency

and policy document will provide information about what is covered and for how long.

### Financial papers

Financial accountability requires that all transactions are recorded, all payments authorised and that the board does not authorise the expenditure of more money than it can afford.

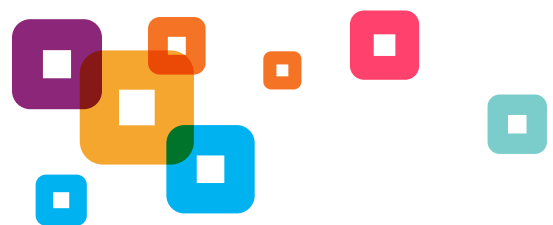
The board's financial documents should include a statement of the budgetary position, and allow members to have information available about assets and liabilities. Board members should become familiar with all financial documents as financial accountability is one of the board's most important areas of supervision. Board members are often expected to review and approve financial

papers at regular intervals. They may also be involved in preparing documents in readiness for external auditing.

### Annual report

The annual report outlines the activities that have taken place during the previous year and provides an outlook for the future. An annual report can be important because it demonstrates the board's fulfilment of its duty to be accountable and transparent. It can also show the efficiency and effectiveness of the board through a description of the year's achievements.

Annual reports vary greatly depending on the style and the responsibilities of particular boards. They may be freely available to the public or produced only for internal and government reporting purposes.



<sup>7</sup> Sourced from Public Sector Commission, Western Australia Resources, links and tools for CEOs, board and committee members, board and committee chairpersons, Ministers and their staff, and staff supporting boards and committees, November 2009 [www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/boardsandcommittees/Pages/ResLinksTools.aspx](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/boardsandcommittees/Pages/ResLinksTools.aspx)

## Resources

### How boards work

Links to some of the resources available are provided below:

The **Western Australian Government website** publishes a guide to assist members of Western Australian Government board members in understanding their obligations and the scope of the task ahead:

#### Good governance for WA boards and committees

See: [www.wa.gov.au/organisation/public-sector-commission/good-governance-western-australian-boards-and-committees](http://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/public-sector-commission/good-governance-western-australian-boards-and-committees)

The website provides general information about the responsibility for ensuring good governance of a public sector body, types of boards and committees, and links to two publications: 'Board essentials' and 'Conduct guide for public sector boards and committees'.

The link to the 'Board essentials' publication is here: [www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/board-essentials](http://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/board-essentials)

The link to the 'Conduct guide for public sector boards and committees' publication is here: [www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/code-of-conduct-requirements-the-western-australian-government-sector](http://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/code-of-conduct-requirements-the-western-australian-government-sector)

The Governance Institute of Australia is an independent professional association that focuses on the practice of governance.

It provides education and support for practising chartered secretaries, governance advisers and risk managers.

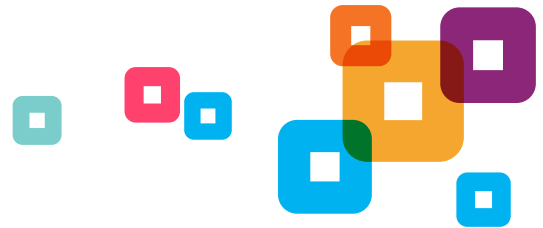
By signing up to **The Good Governance Institute of Australia** email list, you have access to a number of resources available from their website. These include resources that are free for members or subscribers/non-members, and others that are free to members only.

One resource that is free to subscribers/non-members is the 'Good Governance Guide - Board structure for not-for-profit organisations' which can be found through the search facility under 'Resources'.

The **Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)** is an independent national organisation that aims to be the trusted agency for building the governance capability of directors and senior leaders of business, government and not-for-profit sector boards for the benefit of society.

The organisation's website includes a 'Resources' section with governance and directorship tools relevant to business, not-for-profits and the public sector. This includes a 'Not-for-Profit Governance Principles Framework' to help NFPs understand and achieve good governance:

<http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/resources/not-for-profit-resources/not-for-profit-governance-principles>



## ▣ Profile—Fadzi Whande

Fadzi Whande is one of the founding members of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board for Business Chicks, Deputy Chair of the Board for Volunteering WA, and a member of the Board of Directors for the Museum of Freedom and Tolerance. She is an Auspire Ambassador for the Australia Day Council, and an Ambassador for 100 Women and Common Purpose, UK.

Fadzi is an award-winning Global Diversity and Inclusion Strategist and Social Justice Advocate. She has worked across the not-for-profit, government and business sectors in Africa, Australia, the UK and the USA.

Born in Zimbabwe and migrating to Australia in 2006, Fadzi is fluent in English and Shona, one of the local dialects of Zimbabwe.

Fadzi's interest to serve was stimulated by a desire to ensure that the needs of her community were not forgotten and to highlight the difficulties she faced as a single mother in creating a work/life balance. She wanted to ensure that the voices of those in a similar situation were heard loudly and clearly.

The challenge for her, she says, was getting on a board. Registering for board membership did not produce results and she found resilience and strength to persevere through her faith.

“There is a biblical story that talks about a persistent woman who kept going back to ask this unrelenting judge for something she needed”, she said. “Because of her pestering persistence, the judge ended up granting her request. So I just kept telling myself to keep knocking on the doors because, at some stage, someone would get tired of all the knocking and open the door.”

Fadzi notes that the benefits of being a board member have included being provided with professional development opportunities, and exposure to governance principles and the decision-making process. She adds that networking has contributed to her knowledge and opened doors to further opportunities.



She says her public speaking skills and confidence have allowed her to expand her network and use these networking opportunities to maximum advantage.

Fadzi acknowledges that her fellow board members have been appreciative of what she can bring and the mutual feeling of respect and reciprocal learning have provided her with positive experiences and the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual.

Her cultural background has been an advantage on boards seeking to better engage with CaLD communities. She concedes that the personal experiences, challenges and barriers she has faced, coupled with her education and training, have been a benefit to the performance of the boards she has been a part of and says that she has been able to highlight the needs of CaLD communities as a focus of board discussions.

Fadzi encourages people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to become board members, particularly those who may be considering a board position but may lack the confidence to apply or are afraid of being rejected:

“Answers are available; and often times they will come on their own if one brings the will and desire to serve,” she says. “More and more boards are seeing the need to be more inclusive. I think people like me from CaLD backgrounds and who have ethnic names are there to show others that it is possible.”



## ▣ Profile—Ms Andrea Creado

Andrea is Chief Executive Officer of Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services, a position she secured in 2006. Born in India, she migrated to Australia in 2001 and speaks both English and Hindi.

Andrea has university degrees in human development from India and degrees in psychology from Australia. Following her studies, she became a volunteer and soon secured a position as project officer at Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre in 2003.

With more than 20 years of experience working in a health setting and with CaLD communities, Andrea's interests include facilitating the delivery of culturally appropriate health services, and coaching service providers to find innovative solutions for culturally sensitive service provision.

Andrea is the Chair of the WA Community Women's Health Network and a member of the Women's Hall of Fame, the Multicultural Women's Health Network and the People's Panel for the New Museum for WA. She was the inaugural Chair of the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests' Multicultural Advisory Group.

Her reasons for joining a board were that she wanted to share her knowledge and skills, improve her strategic planning and governance skills, learn about different sectors and expand her networks.

She has found that her cultural background has helped her bring to the board information relating to the needs of CaLD communities. Her education and work experience in another country, coupled with her Australian education and work experience, have given her a deeper perspective of the importance of equality. This in turn has enabled her to influence decisions that promote equity for CaLD communities, particularly in relation to health.

In 2013, Andrea decided to further strengthen and explore the influence she was able to have in making changes at policy level for the improvement of outcomes for CaLD communities and vulnerable women. She nominated as a candidate for the electoral district of Mirrabooka and found that her



experience as a board member was very helpful throughout the process.

Although she did not win the election, she came a close second. Her experience as a candidate gave her a deeper understanding of how government works, for example the factors affecting State budgets, party policies and election commitments.

Andrea says she has faced many challenges as a board member as well as during her campaign period. However, these challenges have enabled her to grow professionally and personally.

"I find I am now more patient, engage in a lot of self-reflection, and am more confident in sharing my thoughts in an open and respectful manner and in asking for help without hesitation.

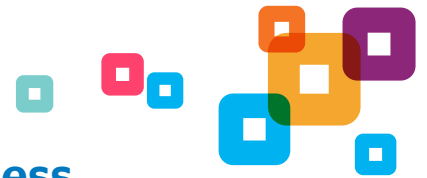
"My persistence has continued to serve me well, my networks have grown and I have learnt a great deal from the people I have met and worked with."

Andrea's advice to anyone of CaLD background considering becoming a board member is to read about the organisation you are interested in and the sector in which it operates.

"Make sure that the values of the organisation align with yours and that you have the time to commit to the roles and responsibility of being a board member.

"Present yourself professionally, offer to help with tasks that suit your skills set, and do not hesitate to voice your opinions."





## Section 3—Assessing your board readiness

### Do you have relevant attributes and skills?

While boards and committees are different and have specific membership requirements, there are some common attributes and skills needed to be an effective member of any board or committee.

Consider whether you're ready to serve on a board or committee by asking yourself the following questions.

#### Am I—

- a team player
- committed to the board and its mission
- confident of my knowledge and skills
- positive and proactive
- flexible and adaptable
- creative and innovative
- of strong moral and ethical character?

#### Do I have—

- the skills to communicate well with a diverse range of people including stakeholders, other board members and directors
- the capacity to analyse, evaluate and solve problems and apply strong critical reasoning
- the ability to juggle professional and personal life, meet deadlines and work under pressure
- board or leadership experience in a relevant sector or industry
- relevant expertise specific to the board (such as financial management or legal skills)?



The following link may be helpful if you would like a more in-depth assessment of your leadership skills and board strengths.

- How Good Are Your Leadership Skills? [www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_50.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_50.htm)

## Checklist for personal and professional development

The following checklists will help assess your board readiness. You do not have to tick all the boxes. Only tick the ones you need to focus on to begin your journey.

### A: Your education

Do you need to upgrade your formal education to be attractive to a board? If no, go to B.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If yes, which of the following options could you commit to?

Accounting	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Financial analysis	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Company directors course (see Australian Institute of Company Directors' website)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) board training	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other board training	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other education or training	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*Note: subjects such as accounting, law and financial analysis can be studied at various levels, from certificate level to degree and beyond.*

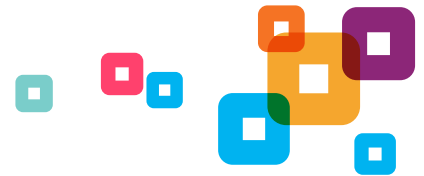
### B: Your professional development

Are there areas of knowledge and skill that you need to upgrade to be attractive to a board? If no, go to C.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If yes, which of the following areas of knowledge and skill do you need to upgrade?

Leadership and management skills	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Financial literacy, such as how to understand a budget, cash flow, profit and loss	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Working with teams and building teams	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial relations and human resource management	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational dynamics	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding cultural difference and diversity	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Risk analysis	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Ethics in business	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Investment decisions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Shareholder rights and responsibilities	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic planning	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Accountability	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Public speaking	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Time management	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*Note: it is not necessary to be knowledgeable and skilled in all of these areas. Select the ones that you feel would increase your appeal as a board member. Aim to develop a mix of skills.*



## C: Your work experience

Have you had limited work experience in management roles, in a limited number of industries? If no, go to D.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If yes, which of the following career strategies would help expand your experience?

Find a mentor who could advise you on career opportunities	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Move 'sideways' to a different industry or sector	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Take on a specific project that will expand your skills and experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Be seconded to a role that will expand your skills and experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Take on a role on a committee with a challenging task	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Be promoted to a position with more management responsibilities	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Another strategy to expand your work experience (please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*Note: choose one or two strategies that you feel would be most effective for you. You may like to talk to colleagues or friends to explore other opportunities to increase your management experience.*

## D: Your networks

Having identified the sector in which you aspire to have a board role, do you need to expand your networks and contacts in that sector? If no, go to E.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If yes, which of the following strategies would assist you?

Join an industry or professional association and attend functions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Join an organisation that aims to increase awareness of board issues, such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors or Institute of Community Directors Australia	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Subscribe to the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) newsletter for information on issues and events in the not-for-profit sector	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Another strategy (please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*Note: you may wish to scan the internet or talk to colleagues and friends to identify relevant networks and contacts.*

## E: Your personal development

Are there areas of personal development that you need to work on so that you could better manage the demands of being a board member?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health and fitness	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Supportive family and friends	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Managing your emotions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Managing difficult people	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Making time for yourself	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other issues (please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*Note: identifying the areas in which you can develop your knowledge and skills is the first step. Use the checklist on the next page to develop a plan for some specific actions to take.*

## F: To do list

	Action areas	Steps you plan to take	Review date	Progress
<b>Your education</b>				
<b>Your professional development</b>				
<b>Our work experience</b>				
<b>Your networks</b>				
<b>Your personal development</b>				
<b>Your registration on OnBoards WA</b>				

*Note: Use this 'To do' list to plan some specific actions you can take to build your knowledge and skills. Review the list regularly and update your progress. You may wish to go back to the checklists to identify new areas for development.*



## ▣ Profile—Alumni Member: Tandi Kuwana

Tandi is the founder of Mental Wellness Keys, an agency that promotes awareness of mental health and positive self-image in ethnic minority communities. She is also a Registered Mental Health Nurse and is passionate about improving people's mental health literacy, particularly from CaLD backgrounds. She has extensive experience in adult, adolescent and postnatal mental health and was inducted in 2020 to the WA Women's Hall of Fame for her work in mental health.

Born in Zimbabwe, Tandi migrated to Australia in 2008. She is fluent in Shona and obtained her Mental Health Nursing qualification in the UK.

Tandi is a member of the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Framework Advisory Group; Federation of Ethnic Communities Australia - New and Emerging Communities Committee; and the Mental Health Australia: Alliance Committee, all of which she joined in 2018.

Tandi joined the OMI Leadership and Governance Program in 2019 to develop her understanding and skills. She wanted to build her board profile and nominate for public and private sector boards, particularly those that made a positive impact on the Australian health system. She was also keen to have a mentor to guide her on her journey.

One of the main challenges Tandi experienced in joining boards/committees was articulating her skills on board applications. The program provided resources that helped her to achieve this.

Aside from what she learnt through the program, Tandi says her skills in public speaking have been beneficial to her as a board/committee member. She now finds that her experience on boards and committees has helped her improve her listening, conflict management and time management skills.



Tandi now has a mentor who she consults when she is having difficulties. Her mentor has always advised her to keep in mind the reason why she joined a board or committee and to remember that her presence is an opportunity for others to learn from her knowledge, culture and experience as a migrant.

Through her participation, Tandi has raised awareness of the importance of co-designing programs with communities using evaluation methods that they easily understand. She has assisted boards and committees in navigating complex issues relating to CaLD communities and continues to advocate for them, particularly in the mental health space.

Tandi notes the lack of diversity on boards and committees and hopes that more people of CaLD background will nominate so they can help improve and influence policies and programs. Her advice to a person of CaLD background who is considering becoming a board/committee member is:

“Enrol in the OMI Leadership and Governance Program and gain the skills and confidence you need to submit applications for positions on boards/committees in your areas of interest.

“Your cultural perspective and experience will add value to the work on any board or committee you join.”



## Profile—Alumni Member: Tina Tuira-Waldon

Tina Tuira-Waldon is of Maori descent and was born in New Zealand. She migrated to Australia in 2008 and has obtained tertiary qualifications in business management and law, environmental management, community services, education and training, mental health, global health and commercial broadcasting.

Tina has a passion for helping people through teaching, education, youth work, mental health and wellness, and program development. She is active in supporting the WA Maori and Pacific Islander community and has been a member of the Te Urupu Indigenous, Maori and Pacific Island Community Development Committee since 2016.

She joined the OMI Leadership and Governance Program in 2016 to better understand the responsibilities of board membership and to improve her knowledge and skills through the mentoring part of the program. Tina also wanted an opportunity to contribute to public and not-for-profit agency boards and committees that covered her areas of interest: primary and secondary school education, drug and alcohol prevention, adult and youth mental health, women's health, palliative care and aged care.

After completing the program, Tina said the challenge she faced was to find a board position. To achieve this, she updated her board resume, increased her professional networks in her areas of interest and engaged with a good mentor. She also developed a plan for her continued professional development.

Tina has secured positions on several committees and boards since graduating from the program. She is currently a board member of Health Consumers Council; cultural diversity representative on the Metropolitan Community Advisory Council of Perth; South



Primary Health Network and WA Primary Health Alliance; and community representative on the Respiratory Health Network Executive Advisory Group under the Department of Health.

Her experience has been positive. It took her some time to understand objectives and the specific language of a particular industry when she first joined the board/committee, but with the help of other members, she now feels like she “was always there”.

She has grown personally, relying on her strengths and having the chance to reflect on her weaknesses and work on improving herself. She believes that her cultural background helped her board performance.

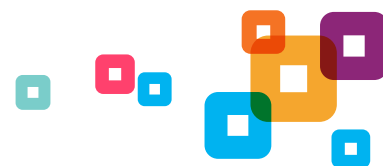
“You add a unique and objective view to any board especially if you have had many life experiences. You need to own this and use it to the best of your ability. Your experiences will make you unique and add different points of view around a board table. Celebrate your uniqueness!”

“Have a ‘can-do’ attitude, use positive self-talk about your abilities, continue to strive forward, and understand systemic challenges but do not allow these to deter you from your objective.”

She also thinks it is good to have a mentor to guide you through your board experience: “... so if possible, find one if you can. Yes, I am available!”



## Section 4—How to make it happen



### Building your profile

If you are serious about being a leader, create opportunities where possible and make the most of every opportunity that comes your way. You can consider taking the following strategies:

- promote your successes
- build your reputation
- develop your networks
- create an online profile
- direct your career
- complete accredited board training
- find a mentor and/or sponsor.

#### Promote your successes

Communicate your successes and the contributions you have made in your

employment and board roles to people who make decisions about board appointments. This will help you be noticed. Emphasise strengths you have that are in high demand and short supply. Draw attention to these in your curriculum vitae (CV).

#### Build your reputation

Your reputation is a vital asset. Build your reputation by delivering beyond expectation, being professional at all times and acting with integrity. Be selective about the roles you accept.

Peer support is a good indication that you have earned a strong reputation. Holding a position as chairperson or deputy chairperson and being re-appointed to positions are examples of this. Include these in your CV.

Ask yourself what sets you apart from your peers and other people seeking board positions. This will give you a clearer understanding of what you have to offer.

Once you are clear about this message, keep it consistent throughout your CV, cover letter, online and personal networks. This is sometimes referred to as your 'personal brand'.

Demonstrating that you understand ethical issues will be a benefit. A clear understanding of the ethical standards required by board members will help you to recognise when potential conflicts of interest or other sensitive issues arise. Board members must also be clear about the boundaries between the strategic responsibilities of the board and the operational responsibilities of the staff and/or volunteers.

#### Develop your networks

Networks are the connections and relationships you have formed with people in your communities or profession. Networking is about both giving and receiving information and assistance. It provides access to useful contacts, perspectives and opportunities.

Benefits of networking include:

- increasing the number of opportunities that you hear about
- keeping up to date with issues affecting the sector in which you operate or are interested
- access to those who make decisions or have an influence over board appointments in the sector that interests you
- benefit from the support and advice of others raising your profile.

Ways to develop your networks include:

- attending training courses, conferences and other events in your field
- registering on databases such as the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's Interested Persons Register
- joining organisations such as the:
  - **Australian Institute of Company Directors**  
<https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/>
  - Business and Professional Women's Association [www.bpw.com.au](http://www.bpw.com.au)
  - Institute of Community Directors Australia  
<https://www.communitydirectors.com.au>

- Lions Club in WA  
<http://lionsclubs.org.au/contact/wa/>
- Rotary Clubs in WA  
<https://rotarydownunder.com.au/>
- Toastmasters WA  
<http://toastmasterswa.net>
- Volunteering WA  
<http://volunteeringwa.org.au> .

## Create an online profile

It is now common practice to search the internet for information about a candidate for any position including a board position. Anyone considering you for a board position may search for information about you on the internet.

Information about you can be stored on a variety of sites. Social networking sites, for example, are used for professional networking and information sharing.

LinkedIn is an online social networking site. Unlike Facebook or Twitter, LinkedIn is used for professional networking. Business professionals create profiles and connect with colleagues.

LinkedIn can be a powerful networking tool, allowing users to build their business networks and stay in touch with professional contacts.

Other sites can contain information about you that does not enhance your personal brand or reputation.

Suggestions for your social media networking profile include:

- creating a LinkedIn profile that includes your education history, work experience, professional affiliations, a picture and current contact information
- strengthening your online profile by contacting people you know in professional contexts such as current and former bosses, co-workers, clients and classmates, along with relevant friends and relatives
- joining the Facebook pages of relevant groups to which you belong (consider alumni groups and professional societies)
- requesting former bosses to write a recommendation highlighting key skills and including specific examples of your successes
- providing information about your board aspirations by sending short messages to selected members of your LinkedIn

- network; ask them to contact you with any board opportunities in their organisations
- helping members of your network when you can by answering questions, providing introductions and writing recommendations
- specifying appropriate privacy settings.

## Complete accredited board training

A good way to improve your understanding of the responsibilities of board members and the functions of a board is to complete some accredited board training (also known as governance training). Board training is preferred but, of course, is not compulsory, however, it will demonstrate to a board that you are serious about quality governance. There are a range of providers available, for example, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS).

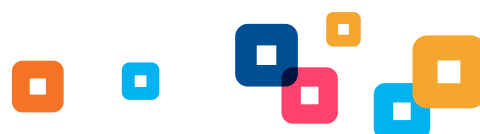
## Direct your career

Work experience can be a key consideration in a board's selection decision. For example:

- the size and complexity of the organisations with which you have been involved affects how your board capability is perceived— you are more likely to be perceived as suitable for leadership roles in similarly sized organisations
- a business background is usually necessary for positions on business boards, and experience in the business sector is often sought after in other sectors
- law and accountancy are valuable board skills since an understanding of regulatory compliance and financial literacy are both important.

Your job can provide an avenue to increase your board readiness. For example:

- include an objective of taking on leadership and board roles in your performance development plan as a way of informing management of your goals and seeking their support
- apply for relevant training courses
- seek out challenging projects that will stretch your abilities, allow you to learn, and attract the attention of senior managers and board members.



## Profile building checklist

<p>Do you have a clear idea of the public image you wish to project to complement your aspirations as a board member? If not, think about the types of photographs and information, both professional and personal, that would reinforce your profile.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are your presentation, business card design and speaking style consistent with the profile you wish to promote?</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Use reliable search engines to find out what is publically available about you. Does it complement the board member image you wish to project? If not, seek advice on what you can change or ameliorate.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If you have a Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking account, are the security settings appropriate to protect your privacy? If not, adjust accordingly.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Would a LinkedIn account be useful to build your professional profile? If you have an account, review what is publically available to make sure that it is consistent with your desired public image.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are you always careful with any communications (including email, tweets and internet forums) to use appropriate language and respectful opinions? If not, remember that a person making a recommendation for a board position may see or hear about this.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

## Find a mentor and/or sponsor

### Mentors

A mentor is an experienced person who acts as your role model and guide and who

assists you in carrying out your role effectively. Mentors can be particularly helpful when it comes to managing more complex challenges.

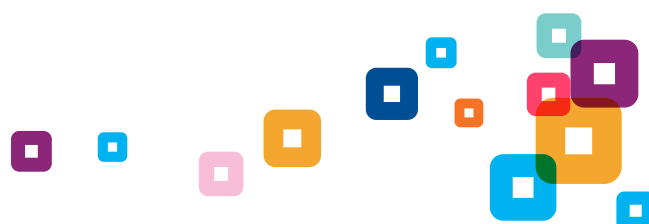
A mentor:

- acts as a sounding board to test your ideas
- helps you to identify and maximise your strengths and aptitudes for a board role

- discusses your performance and helps you address areas where you require development.

It is important that a mentor:

- has an appropriate level of skill and experience
- is committed to your development
- is trustworthy—you need to have confidence in your mentor's discretion
- has sufficient time available for your requirements.



When choosing a mentor, consider people who have served on similar boards as they are likely to understand challenges you may face. If a suitable person cannot easily be identified in your area, you could consider a telephone or electronic mentoring relationship.

Mentoring schemes operate through a number of organisations, such as:

- Australian Institute of Company Directors  
<https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/advocacy/chairs-mentoring-program>
- Business and Professional Women's Association  
[www.bpw.com.au/mentoringWomen on Boards](http://www.bpw.com.au/mentoringWomen on Boards) [www.womenonboards.net/en-au/services/mentoring](http://www.womenonboards.net/en-au/services/mentoring)
- Women and Leadership Australia  
[www.wla.edu.au/](http://www.wla.edu.au/).

Many organisations have set up formal or structured mentoring programs. Your organisation may have a mentoring program that you could consider joining. Once you are on a board, there may be a formal mentoring system in place for your board. If not, search for a person or people who could serve in this capacity.

## Sponsors

A sponsor is different from a mentor. A sponsor can proactively help you to advance your career. A sponsor is an experienced person who may connect you to senior leaders within or external to the organisation, or advocate on your behalf.

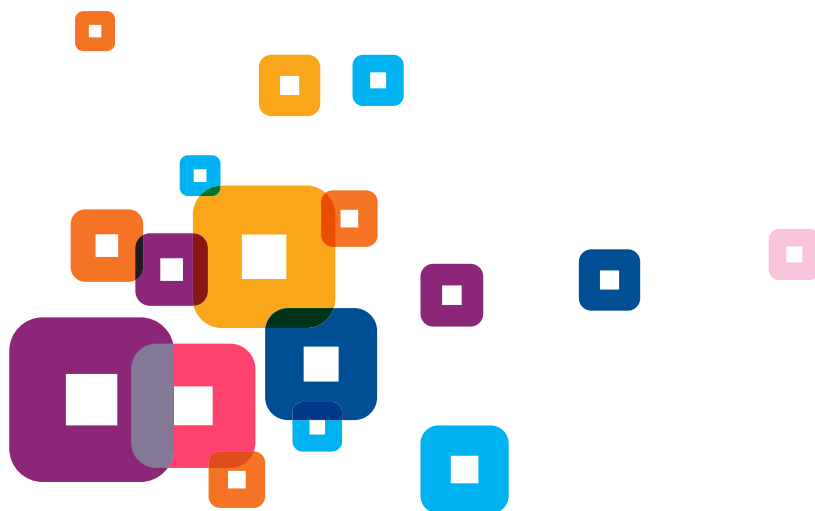
The sponsor can promote your visibility, give advice on career moves and actively help you to find career opportunities either within or outside your organisation. At different stages of your board career you may benefit from either a mentor or a sponsor, or perhaps both.

Some organisations may include sponsorship as part of their human resources capability development or career progression strategy. As part of your personal development plan you may wish to discuss this further with your manager.

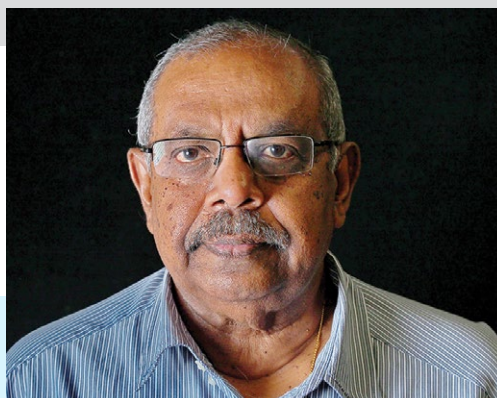
## Be persistent

There is strong competition for board roles. The first board role is often the hardest to get, but as your experience and reputation grow, more opportunities are likely to come your way. To succeed, you need to be persistent.

If you do not have immediate success, do not take it personally—keep developing your talents and building your experience.



## ▣ Profile—Rasa Subramaniam



Rasa Subramaniam is currently the Chairperson of the Consumer Advisory Council – Fiona Stanley Hospital, a member of the Board of Australian Centre for Quantitative Imaging, and the President of Lions Club, Bull Creek.

Previous board memberships include the Health Consumers Council of WA, WA State Trauma Education Committee, Governing Council of Challenger TAFE, the Safety and Quality Health Care Council, KULCHA, Celebrate WA, the Medical Radiation Technologist Registration Board and the Surgical Mortality Committee of the Royal College of Surgeons of WA. He was previously a Councillor for the City of Melville— the first Asian to be elected to Local Government in Western Australia. He was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Council from 1992 to 1994 under Hon Judith Watson and Hon Graham Kierath. Rasa retired as Senior Medical Imaging Technologist at Fremantle Hospital in 2015.

A member of the Institute of Radiography, Rasa was born in Malaysia to Sri Lankan parents. Rasa obtained qualifications in India and Australia. He came to Australia in 1968 and remained following completion of his university studies. His first language is Tamil and he also speaks Malay.

He became attracted to the idea of joining a board from his interest in diversity and health issues and in how policy can impact on delivery of best practice in organisations.

His first board opportunity arose from his involvement in multicultural interests when he was invited by the Office of Multicultural Interests to join the board of the WA Week Council (now Celebrate WA). Rasa says that his profile gained from working in the field of multicultural policy was an asset in obtaining his first board position and that his knowledge of contemporary issues, communication skills and networking led the way to future positions.

Rasa says that the challenges he has experienced as a board member have been in promoting change in organisations:

“Organisations consider boards as part of their structure and may consider them to be intrusive. They would like to carry on doing what they want—business as usual”, he says. “Suggesting change is not always welcome.”

He says that a key to addressing this is to understand the culture of the organisation, to listen to the issues that management and staff may have, and helping to problem-solve.

“Change is not embraced quickly”, he observes. “Patience and communication are the key.”

Rasa says that board membership has provided him with insights into board duties and responsibilities and what it means to be an effective organisation. He believes his experience as a local government councillor, his understanding of multicultural issues, and involvement with his professional association have assisted him in his board roles.

Experience and training undertaken in his local government position also provided him with knowledge regarding record keeping, debating and media liaison.

Rasa advises potential board members to reflect on their motivations before seeking a board position:

“It is important to be honest and have a good knowledge of the organisation that you want to serve”, he says. “It is vital that your primary motivation is not to gain personal advantage or gain but to contribute to the realisation of the organisation and its mandate.”



## ▣ Profile—Maria Saraceni



Maria Saraceni has held many board and committee positions. Born in Australia to Italian born parents, she credits the different experiences and understandings that come with her cultural background as being a valuable asset to her board appointments.

Maria is currently Director of the board of management of the Industrial Foundation for Accident Prevention, Director (non-executive) of Law Access Limited, Director of Lost and Found Opera Company Inc and an Adjunct Professor at Murdoch University School of Law.

She has been Chairperson of the Women's Advisory Council, member of SBS Community Advisory Council, member of the management committee of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia Inc (FECCA), President of the Ethnic Communities Council of WA, committee member of the WA chapter of Australian Human Resources Institute, President of the Law Society of Western Australia and Director of the Law Council of Australia.

In 2012, she was appointed a People of Australia Ambassador by the Commonwealth Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

A barrister specialising in the areas of workplace relations/employment law and occupational health and safety, Maria completed a number of qualifications in law and education at the University of Western Australia. Before becoming a lawyer, she was a teacher in the Western Australian education system.

Maria says she was interested in joining a board to actively participate in and contribute to organisations to which she was committed and whose values corresponded with her own.

She recalls challenges gaining appointment to a board:

“Having the confidence to apply, and inadequate networks to guide me in my decision making were some of my early challenges”, Maria says. “Initially, I had too low a profile and I was therefore an ‘unknown’ quantity.”

She says that becoming President of the Law Society of WA gave her profile a large ‘boost’ and it became easier thereafter.

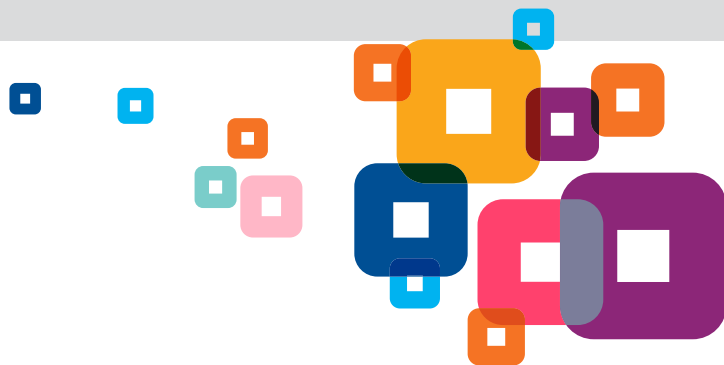
She highlights the importance of researching the requirements of board or committee membership and undertaking due diligence before sitting on a board:

“It is important to understand the legal frameworks creating obligations and liabilities for directors of boards or persons on a committee of management”, she says. “Then you need to investigate what insurance arrangements are in place and whether they provide adequate protection for the individual director.”

Maria also stresses the importance of self-assessment:

“You need to be able to articulate what skills and relevant background knowledge you would bring to a particular board. What is your brand? How can you value-add to the board composition?”

“Having a mentor or supporter will also prove invaluable.”



She notes that she has experienced challenges as a board member:

“After the initial appointment, having the confidence to

speak up and express my opinion was a challenge”, she says. “Some board

members can be resistant to change and this can also be a challenge.”

Maria says that having a mentor to whom she could talk openly about issues was also helpful.

Benefits she has gained as a board member have included developing a greater depth of understanding of various organisations and their areas of influence, gaining an understanding of ‘due diligence’ as it applies in a practical sense to an organisation, improved team building skills, experience in negotiating and dealing with State and Commonwealth Government agencies and gaining a diversity of acquaintances.

She believes that her cultural background has helped her bring a different set of understandings to the boards in which she has been involved and also ensure that, in their decision making, board members they do not forget the particular needs of CaLD persons, and women in particular.

Maria considers that specific interests that have made her a valuable board member include being a legal practitioner, having a love of people and different cultures and having wide and eclectic interests that have allowed for a more rounded person.

## How to prepare a CV for a board position

A curriculum vitae (CV) is required as a part of the appointing agency selection process to assess your experience and achievements.

A governance CV is a marketing document above all else, and should be tailored to the requirements of the board and its industry.

You need a well-thought out and constructed governance CV to make sure it gives you the best chance to be considered for a board role. It should be more focused, concise and at a more strategic level than a standard resume or management CV.

Your board CV should be strongly targeted to highlight your leadership and/or management skills, your knowledge of, networks in and commitment to the community or industry in which the board is involved, and your related work experiences and achievements. It should ideally be no longer than two to three pages.

Research the organisation, and its industry, to show your expertise in those areas.

### What you need to include

Your board CV should include:

- personal information such as contact details. It is optional to include date of birth,
- residency status and languages
- professional memberships, awards or recognition
- a statement of your personal strengths (what you can offer to the board)
- a summary of your board experience

- board appointments with details of role held and dates in reverse chronological order (most recent first)
- employment history, including a short description of the roles, responsibilities and achievements for each position, and dates in reverse chronological order
- community and volunteer service
- educational qualifications and accreditations (name of institution and dates)
- professional training and development (name of institution and dates)
- optional information (LinkedIn address, awards received, interests, hobbies and projects undertaken).

### Tips for a great board CV

Include context where relevant—include your achievements the size of your organisation, if it is an international or national company, the scale of projects for which you have been responsible, risks involved, the size of the company's workforce, its budget, turnover, savings achieved, change management involved and timelines met.

Customise your CV—highlight the information most relevant to the role that you are seeking. If you have worked in a profession different from the board or have expertise in other areas such as human resources, marketing, information technology, and risk or change management, emphasise your general management experience while also pointing out the added value you can bring from your specialty.

Be brief—include only the information that best describes your skills, experience and achievements that are of relevance in a governance role.

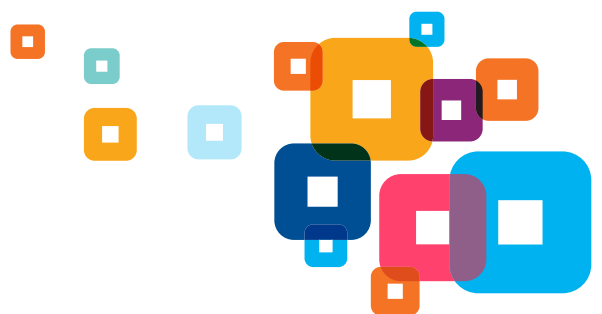
Be honest but not unnecessarily modest— your CV should be an accurate reflection of your skills and experience. Always be truthful. Do not exaggerate. Clearly describe your leadership and influence in a particular role, project or team. Use action verbs such as 'I created' or 'I coordinated'.

Reflect your professionalism, not your personality—a CV is a professional document designed to summarise and reflect your professional skills, experience and attributes. It is not an opportunity to display your personality or character traits. Keep it simple, straightforward and professional. This includes formatting. Use an easy-to-read font like Arial 12 point. Carefully check spelling and grammar, and do not use coloured paper or clip art.

The following resources from Australian Institute of Company Directors have tips that may be useful in assisting you in the preparation of your board CV:

<https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/membership/company-director-magazine/2017-back-editions/april/emerging-directors>

<https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/membership/the-boardroom-report/volume-17-issue-5/7-ways-to-make-your-director-cv-stand-out>



## Board CV template—not-for-profit sector

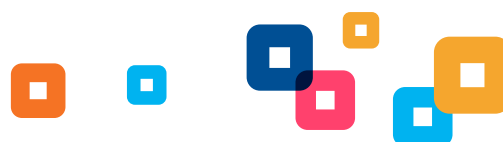
Curriculum vitae of	Your name
Personal details	Name Addresses (physical and/or postal) Telephone number/s Email
Memberships	Include current community and professional memberships. Add previous memberships if relevant to the position.
Summary of what you can offer to the board	Use short, clear sentences to describe what you offer to the position. Summarise the qualities and experience that you believe will make you a valuable member of the board.
Governance experience	Governance experience in the community sector.
Current directorships	List position and start date (month and year) in reverse chronological order, the most recent first. Indicate if you are chair or a member of a committee.
Previous directorships	Use the same format but include relevant community directorships.
Aspiring board member	If you have not yet been a director on a community sector board, list your experience on either private or public sector boards. You can also include other governance experience, such as working on committees and reporting to a board.
Employment history	Same as above unless relevant to the board position you are seeking. For each position, include a brief sentence about your principal responsibilities in the position, your achievements, emphasising the relevant information.
Community and voluntary service	List all current community and volunteer service, and past service if relevant.
Qualifications	List your qualifications, year completed and institutions from which they were obtained. You may choose to highlight relevant aspects of a course (for example, BA, including a unit in governance in the not-for-profit sector).
Optional	Other relevant information, such as interests, hobbies and projects undertaken.

## Board CV template—public sector

Curriculum vitae of	Your name
Personal details	Name Addresses (physical and/or postal) Telephone number/s Email
Memberships	Include current professional memberships. Add previous memberships if relevant to the position.
Summary of what you can offer to the board	Use short, clear sentences to describe what you offer to the position. Summarise the qualities and experience that you believe will make you a valuable member of the board.
Governance experience	Governance experience in government.
Current directorships	List position and start date (month and year) in reverse chronological order, the most recent first. Indicate if you are chair or a member of a committee.
Previous directorships	Use the same format as above but include relevant public sector directorships only for the last 10 years.
Aspiring board member	If you have not yet been a director on a government board, list your experience on either not-for-profit or private sector boards. You can also include other governance experience, such as working on committees and reporting to a board.
Employment history	For each position, include a brief sentence about your principal responsibilities and your achievements, emphasising the relevant information.
Community and voluntary service	If relevant
Qualifications	List your qualifications, year completed, and institutions from which they were obtained. You may choose to highlight relevant aspects of a course (for example, Certificate IV, Public Policy, including a unit in adding value to the public sector).
Optional	Other relevant information, such as interests, hobbies and projects undertaken.

## Board CV template—private sector

Curriculum vitae of	Your name
Personal details	Name Addresses (physical and/or postal) Telephone number/s Email
Memberships	Include current business and professional memberships. Add previous memberships if relevant to the position.
Summary of what you can offer to the board	Use short, clear sentences to describe what you offer to the position. Summarise the qualities and experience that make you a great fit for the board.
Governance experience	Governance experience in business.
Current directorships	List position and start date (month and year) in reverse chronological order, the most recent first. Indicate if you are chair or a member of a committee.
Previous directorships	Use the same format but include relevant business directorships.
Aspiring board member	If you have not yet been a director on a business board, list your experience on not-for-profit or public sector boards. You can also include other governance experience, such as working on committees and reporting to a board.
Employment history	For each position, include a brief sentence about your principal responsibilities and your achievements, emphasising the relevant information.
Community and voluntary service	If relevant
Qualifications	List your qualifications, year completed, and institutions from which they were obtained. You may choose to highlight relevant aspects of a course (for example, BSc, including a unit in renewable energy generation).
Optional	Other relevant information, such as interests, hobbies and projects undertaken.



## ▣ Profile—Dr Bernadette Wright



Dr Bernadette Wright is a board member of Helping Minds and the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC). She has previously been board member of the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS), the Northern Suburbs Migrant Resource Centre (now the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre) and Special Olympics Australia.

Born in Indonesia, Bernadette arrived in Australia in 1993. While English is her preferred language, she also speaks Bahasa Indonesian and French. She obtained her qualifications, including a degree in psychology and French, in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. Bernadette is a Clinical Psychologist with a special interest in transcultural mental health issues.

Bernadette says that she sought board membership to use her personal and professional experiences and knowledge to enhance service delivery to vulnerable groups so that it is culturally responsive to their needs.

She says that gaining a board membership initially was a challenge.

“It was like having to learn a new complicated game”, she says. ‘The process of needing to submit my CV, and to prove that I could be a worthy board member, and then to be ‘elected’ by the membership based on my personal and professional history were all processes I had not anticipated. I often considered abandoning the idea as it seemed to be all too difficult at the outset to ‘get votes.’”

She says that understanding why these requirements exist helped her overcome these difficulties.

Bernadette notes that one of the challenges in first joining a board was to understand board processes and ‘board speak’. She says that other board members were patient with her and took time to assist her.

“Comprehending governance and operational issues, and discerning where the respective boundaries lie were new areas of learning for me”, she says. “Initially, I was embarrassed about this as everyone else seemed so knowledgeable and confident about their role. However, the supportive environment generated by other board members made me realise that a board is organic and that I was not the only one who is on a learning curve but so is every other board member as well as the agency that it governs.”

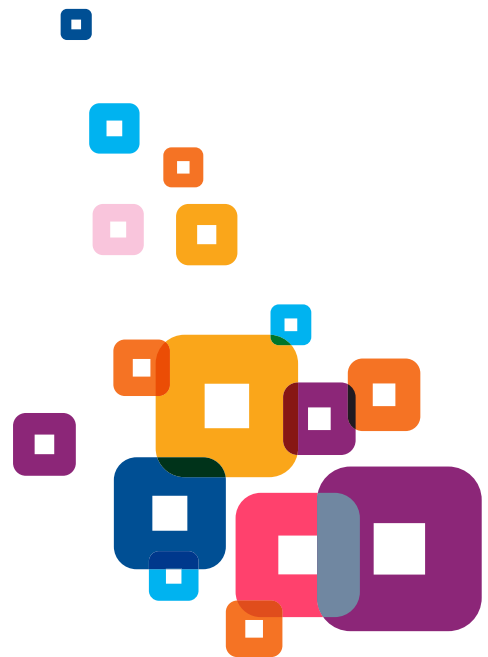
Bernadette noted that having a different cultural background and having resettled in a ‘host country’ that has now become her homeland enable her to contribute effectively as a board member. She said that all the experiences that are associated with being in a host society that is so culturally different in terms of norms and values allowed her to provide insight into what the board or the agency may not otherwise consider as hurdles for some of the people they may have been funded to service.

She considers her interests in mental health and culture, and how these two elements interact to potentially create a problem for an individual or family who has language and cultural barriers as they settle in a new country, have been of value as a board member.

Bernadette also observes that, where the board membership profile is not multicultural, vocalising the issues and concerns of ethnic community groups could sometimes be challenging. These issues/ concerns may not be regarded as a priority by other board members as they may not relate to these experiences.

She urges people from diverse backgrounds to consider becoming board members:

“It is an opportunity to help others who are undergoing some of the experiences you may have experienced in your own life’s journey. Your personal insights and lived experience are so invaluable and can only strengthen the board”, she says. “If you find it daunting at first, rest assured that in all probability, you are not the only one feeling this way around the board room table. The first time is always going to provoke anxiety. However, camaraderie develops amongst the members—give it time and you will enjoy the experience. Do not allow your different cultural values or beliefs become a deterrent from joining. Consider it always as a strength, not a weakness. It can only add value to the board membership.”



## Profile—Alumni Member: Pramod Kapoor



Pramod Kapoor works in the disability sector and is a board member of Hepatitis WA. A not-for-profit community-based organisation assisting people affected by hepatitis, Hepatitis WA works to reduce stigma attached to viral hepatitis, as well as educating and raising awareness.

This is Pramod's first role on a board since migrating to Australia in 2013; he has held the position since 2018.

Born in India, Pramod's first language is Hindi and he also speaks Punjabi. He holds a master's degree in technology (communication engineering) from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur. He worked as a commanding officer in defence before moving to the corporate sector where he held various senior management positions.

Pramod enrolled in the OMI Leadership and Governance Program in 2017. After completing the program, he was keen to join a board where he could use his work experience in the corporate sector as well as his perspective as a person of culturally and linguistically diverse background. As a member of the Alumni, Pramod received information about the board vacancy through OMI and was successful in his application.

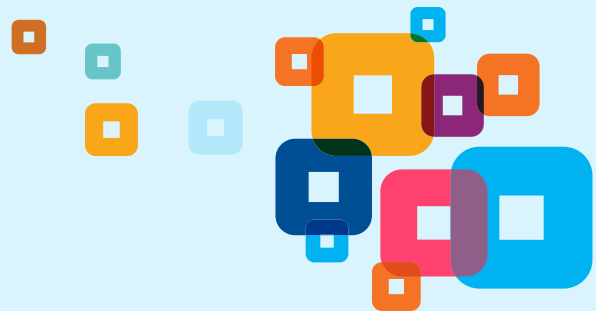
Pramod's main challenges at the start of his experience as a board member related

to building confidence to participate and contribute. As part of overcoming this, he took time to get a better understanding of hepatitis-related issues and welcomed support offered by the chairperson and other more-experienced members of the board. He now feels more confident and able to contribute in a significant way.

"It's important to have an open mind and not to shy away from putting your point across, even if your communication style may appear to be different from others in the room.

"Every culture has its own unique way of communicating and your colleagues on the board will want to hear what you have to say. They'll seek clarification if needed.

"Most importantly, always be willing to learn."



## Planning your board career

There are two main ways to plan your board career:

- a stepping-stone approach—progressing from board roles in smaller or less complex organisations to roles in larger or more complex organisations
- developing your executive experience—building a successful professional career that can be applied to board roles.

You can follow either or both depending on your circumstances.

### Stepping-stone approach

If you are looking for your first board role, target 'entry-level' roles—for example, boards attached to small organisations that operate at a local or regional level, or a not-for-profit organisation.

Taking a leadership role in your professional association or a role on the registration/disciplinary bodies for your profession (such as the Australian Society of Social Workers) is another way to get onto boards. These boards can serve as an entry point. For

example, an accountant with little or no board experience may be able to serve on the Institute of Public Accountants.

Once you have held board or committee roles you can use this experience to target the boards of larger or more complex organisations.

### Executive experience approach

Success in the following areas will give you useful expertise to apply as a board director:

- proven experience and successes in chief executive or second-tier management roles
- work experience in areas where you have financial management responsibilities for the organisation.

### Finding board opportunities

There are a number of ways to become involved in boards. Knowledge about positions becomes available through:

- advertisements
- organisations' Annual General Meetings

- word of mouth
- networks
- direct appointment.

You may need to use either a direct or indirect approach to show your interest.

### Direct (or elected) approach

The direct approach involves either:

- nominating yourself for election as a board member
- replying to a publicly advertised position
- contacting a board or organisation directly to ask for a role.

### Indirect approach

The indirect approach includes:

- introducing yourself to colleagues as a skilled director who is interested in board roles (this approach is only recommended if you have built a solid reputation as a person with sound qualifications and experience)
- registering your interest on databases such as OnBoardWA—see: <https://onboardwa.jobs.wa.gov.au/onboardwa.php/home>

connecting with relevant individuals and groups through social networking sites.

In some cases, current members nominate future board members. They identify trusted and respected associates from within their networks. They may also use board databases. Being nominated is therefore very dependent on your reputation and networks.

### Where to look?

There are a number of sites that provide information about board vacancies.

### Public Sector

The Western Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) has a list of State Government boards.

See: <https://media.dpc.wa.gov.au/BoardsDocuments/Boards.pdf>

You can register your interest on OnBoardWA.

See: <https://onboardwa.jobs.wa.gov.au/onboardwa.php/home>

## Not-for-profit sector

The Institute of Community Directors Australia provides a board position matching service.

See: [www.communitydirectors.com.au/](http://www.communitydirectors.com.au/)

## Private sector

The Australian Institute of Company Directors lists vacancies on its website.

See: <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/membership/directorship-opportunities>

## Choosing a board

It is important to gather important business information about a company or organisation whose board you are interested in joining.

This process is called due diligence.

It means examining the current and potential health of the organisation. This will help identify whether the board is likely to succeed or if there are any potential threats such as financial or legal issues that could impact on the board. Information can be sourced by asking questions of office holders and researching documentation including annual reports, budgets, strategic plans and media reports.

Once you are satisfied that you have sufficient information about the board you can make an informed decision as to whether you wish to join the board and assume the responsibilities of a board member.

Some questions to ask are below.

### Questions about the board:

#### How much time is required of a board member?

Find out how often the board meets, where it meets and how long the meetings normally last.

When assessing how much time a board role is likely to demand, keep in mind that you will also need to read the meeting papers before meetings and that you may be required to attend other functions and carry out other tasks between meetings.

#### What can I contribute to this board and organisation?

Ask what skills or experience you can offer and what new skills you will have the opportunity

to develop. Knowing the board's needs and expectations will help you to assess whether you can capably fulfil the role asked of you. It is also important to find out what new skills and experiences you can expect to gain by serving on this particular board. It can also be helpful to ask why a board vacancy exists.

#### Why does the board want my involvement?

If you were approached to become a board member, it can be useful to ask why. The response may also help to confirm your strengths and talents. However, if a response is superficial (for example, only that your name was mentioned without an explanation of what knowledge or skills you might bring to the board), it may indicate that the board is not careful when thinking about its composition and future direction.

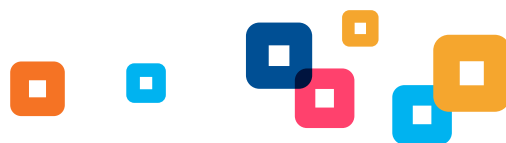
#### What payments are provided?

Board remuneration varies widely across sectors and organisations. It can range from unpaid volunteer work where out-of-pocket expenses (such as travel) are covered, to substantial payments (for some large companies). It is best to check with each individual board about these arrangements.

#### Who else is on the board? What are their backgrounds?

A properly functioning board requires a good mix of skills and experiences. Consider how you will add value to the group. Check the credentials of the other board members.

Avoid boards with a lot of conflict.



### **What are the organisation's roles, mission and direction?**

It is important to have a good understanding of what the board's organisation does, why it does it and what it plans to do in the future. This will help you decide if it is the right board for you and what contribution you can make to achieving the mission. Clear and realistic goals are important.

### **What legislation does the board need to adhere to?**

Find out what legislation governs the board and the obligations. There may be Commonwealth and/or State legislation to consider.

### **At what stage is the board?**

A recently formed board may be more time-consuming and challenging than one that has been operating for some time. There may be policies to write and strategies to develop.

An established board that is refocusing or restructuring can also be challenging.

### **Does the board review its performance?**

Some boards may have key performance indicators that are reviewed regularly to measure progress. Find out what these are and how often reviews are conducted and by whom. This can indicate the board's priorities and true achievements.

### **What will my responsibilities be?**

Is there a role description for board members?

Ask if there is a detailed role description that explains a board member's role and tasks.

If there isn't one, ask a current member to describe what they do during an average year.

### **Can I review board documents such as minutes?**

If possible, ask to see the minutes over several years. Some experienced board members suggest going back as far as five years. Reading the minutes will give you an idea of the type of issues and decisions that the board has considered.

### **Has there been any litigation or complaints about the board?**

Ask about the organisation's history. A poor public image may be considered either a reason not to choose a board or an opportunity to improve it.

### **Is this a supportive board?**

Does the board atmosphere lead you to feel that board members are open and accepting?

If you have special circumstances, such as a physical disability, it is important that you feel comfortable with the organisation and its board. For example, are meetings held at accessible venues?

### **What do I want from this experience?**

People join boards for many reasons. Understanding your own motivations will help you assess whether or not your expectations are likely to be fulfilled.

### **Can I hold this position with integrity?**

Examine the functions and past decisions of the board to assess whether there are situations that could impact your business or personal interests, or those of your family and friends. Be sure you can manage any conflicts of interest.

## **When you leave a board**

**When you leave a board, consider the ways in which you could assist and promote an aspiring CaLD board member. From your networks, you may know a suitable candidate for the board. You could offer your services to the board to find a potential replacement, and approach the candidate to determine whether they would welcome you as a mentor or sponsor.**

## Profile—Alumni Member: Raihanaty (Rai) Abdul-Jalil

Rai works at Apple and Ascora as a specialist and trainer, respectively. Born in Malaysia to Indonesian parents, she holds a bachelor's degree in education and science from the University of Western Australia.

Rai has worked as a high school teacher, youth worker, career coach, trainer, speaker, poet and business owner, and has a passion for writing. She also served as a member of the CaLD Reference Group for the Public Sector Commission (2016) and a committee member for Crescent Institute (2016-17).

She joined the OMI Leadership and Governance Program in 2015 to improve her ability to make a lasting, positive impact on the community using her skills in developing innovative strategies.

After completing the program, Rai was keen to find an organisation that aligned with her passions. She attended relevant events to expand her networks and this resulted in Centre for Stories approaching her directly to offer her a position on their board.

Centre for Stories is a literary art and cultural organisation that uses storytelling to inspire social cohesion and improve understanding of culturally diverse communities. Rai has been a member of its board since July 2019.

Rai has sometimes found challenges in balancing personal commitments with the time needed to prepare for a board meeting or provide input on urgent matters. She occasionally had difficulty understanding some legal content at meetings. Her way of resolving these challenges has been to research and find answers, be open with other board members in seeking advice and asking questions. It helps that the board



members and the organisation itself have created an environment that strives to be inclusive and provides a safe and open space for all members to contribute.

Rai has enjoyed her experience in her current board role.

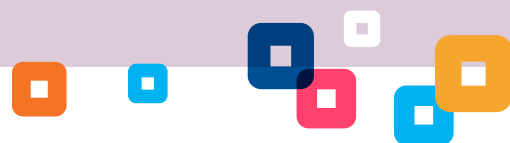
“It gives me the opportunity to look at the big picture and the business side of a story-telling organisation and take part in discussions on strategy and solving challenges.

“I believe that my background as an Indonesian/Malay Muslim female writer has added value to the board in terms of the perspective that I can bring to discussions, as well as through the community networks I have.”

Rai's advice to people of CaLD background considering joining public, private or not-for-profit sector boards and committees:

“Start from within, listen to your inner passions and interests, and be active in those spaces.

“Trust that the right opportunity will come and when it does, give yourself permission to make mistakes and grow from the experience—there is no growth without some discomfort.”



## Profile—Aesen Thambiran

Aesen Thambiran is a general practitioner with an interest in refugee health and is currently on the board of Hepatitis WA. Born in South Africa of Indian descent, he arrived in Australia in 1977. While his first language is English, he grew up in a household where Tamil and Zulu were also spoken.

Aesen became attracted to board membership through a professional interest in the treatment of viral hepatitis infection:

“I wanted to make a contribution to the community beyond my paid employment, specifically to assist people living with hepatitis B and C to access treatment”, he says. “Therapies for these infections have improved dramatically over the last few years. Hepatitis C is now a potentially curable infection. People living with these conditions are often from marginalised groups in our society including from CaLD communities. I also have an interest in health administration and governance. So joining a board of an NGO with a health focus seemed like an ideal opportunity.”

Aesen says that he found out about the board opportunity through an email communication. While he did not have any difficulty gaining the appointment, he says that understanding the roles and responsibilities of a director was daunting at first—particularly those related to understanding financial reporting.

Hepatitis WA organised training for board members on corporate governance and understanding financial reports. The training was delivered by the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) and Aesen says that this was invaluable.

Aesen says that he has benefited from his experience on the board of Hepatitis WA in a number of ways:

“I have gained a better understanding of board director responsibilities and the operation of an NGO. Being a member of the board requires you to analyse and interpret reports and think about the strategic direction of the organisation. It also requires good communication skills to discuss and debate issues at board meetings. I think my skills in these areas have improved since joining the board.”

Aesen notes that being a board member also requires teamwork and he has enjoyed the spirit of collaboration and sense of common purpose he has experienced on the board:



“The board of Hepatitis WA are a great team”, he says. “All the members are passionate about reducing the transmission of viral hepatitis and in improving health outcomes for people living with hepatitis B and C in WA. It is very rewarding to be part of this team!”

He believes his cultural background has been an asset to the board, bringing an alternative view of the issues. As a doctor who works with people from refugee backgrounds on a daily basis, he also believes he is in a position to advocate for improving access to treatment for viral hepatitis.

“Health, wellbeing and recovery are all viewed through our personal cultural lens”, he says. “Western explanatory models of health tend to be very biomechanical. Whereas non-western explanatory models, in my experience, are more holistic and include spiritual beliefs. There are also important cultural issues around status and shame when it comes to viral hepatitis infection in some

CaLD communities and this can be a barrier to accessing health care. I believe that I bring this viewpoint to the board of Hepatitis WA.”

Invited to offer advice to a person from a culturally diverse background considering joining a board, Aesen says:

“Go for it! It is a little bit daunting to start with but there are plenty of training opportunities and the rewards are immeasurable. Being a board member does require a lot of reading of reports and documents, so you do need to be fairly proficient in English.

“As the boards of Australia become more culturally diverse I hope that organisations and companies will become more culturally competent in service delivery and the barriers that people from CaLD backgrounds experience will fade. For me, being a member of an NGO board is also a great way to give back to the Australian community which has provided me with so much.”

## Section 5—Useful links and references

### Useful links

Links to some organisations that provide information and resources to support your professional learning for governance roles are listed below.

Australian Institute of Company Directors:

<http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/>

Better Boards: [betterboards.net/about/](http://betterboards.net/about/)

Governance Institute of Australia:

[www.governanceinstitute.com.au/](http://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/)

The Institute of Community Directors:

[www.communitydirectors.com.au/](http://www.communitydirectors.com.au/)

Western Australian Council of Social Services:

[www.wacoss.org.au/home.aspx](http://www.wacoss.org.au/home.aspx)

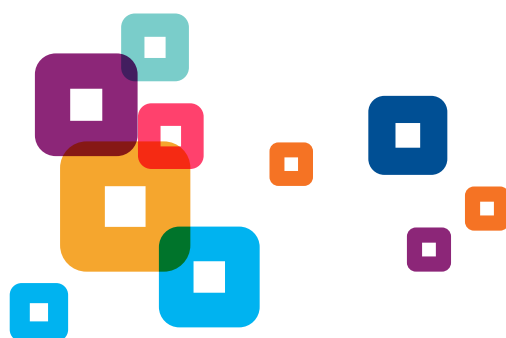
Women on Boards:

[www.womenonboards.net/en-au/home](http://www.womenonboards.net/en-au/home)

Leadership WA: <https://leadershipwa.org.au/>

Australian Institute of Management (AIM) WA:

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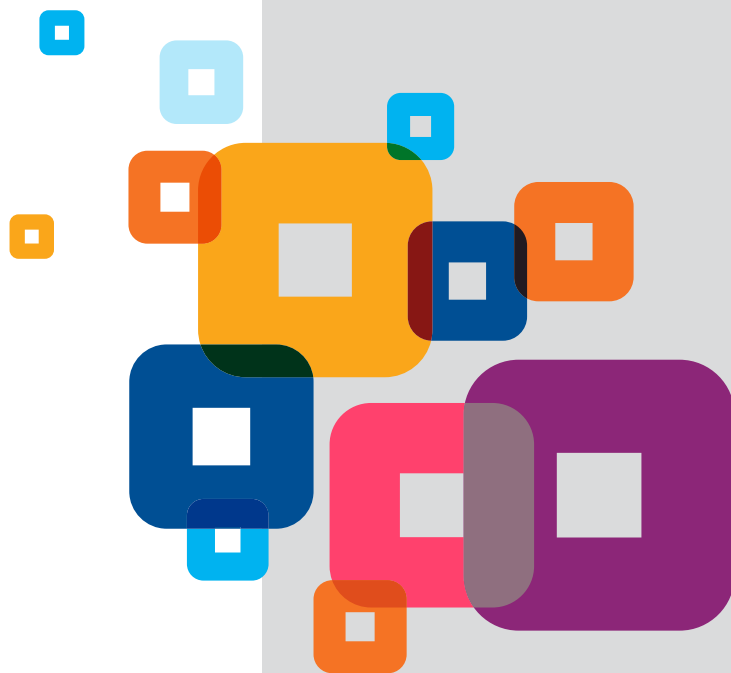
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