Unlocking Board for Rural, Regional and Remote Women

Strengthening Leadership

Introduction

The RRR Network is committed to lifting leadership capability within Western Australia's rural, regional and remote (RRR) women. There is significant evidence that increasing the number of women in leadership roles provides several benefits. Such as, being able to contribute to high-level decision-making, offering diverse views where it matters, contributing to community and social impact causes, being positive role models for other women and championing cultural change to support equitable workplaces and safer communities (Stronger Together Plan, 2020).

The RRR Network has always provided an inclusive and accessible platform for Western Australian RRR women to explore leadership.

From 1996 to 2016 the RRR Network was a Reference Group to the WA State Government. During this time, 87 women contributed to the Reference Group providing feedback and advice to government on issues impacting RRR Western Australia.

Since 2016 when the RRR Network was first established as an Incorporation, more than 20 women have been on the RRR Network Board. Many of which have continued their board journey's, even some are now on State and Federal Government Boards, industry representatives, corporate and community leaders, politicians and or Local Government Councillors.

This report explores the board environment and its relationship, opportunity and barriers for RRR women.

UNLOCKING BOARD FOR RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE WOMEN.
OCTOBER, 2023

About this report

Unlocking Board for Rural, Regional and Remote Women was funded by the Department of Communities (DoC) in 2023 under their Grants for Women.

The DoC and the RRR Network continue to work together to shine a light on the RRR woman's experience so we may strengthen her leadership, economic independence, health and well-being, and safety and justice.

This report focuses on leadership.

The agreed outcomes of this project were:

- Understand how many RRR Network women members are on boards.

- Understand how many RRR Network women members are aspiring to be on boards.

- Identify the challenges or barriers for RRR Network women members in obtaining board placements.

- Identify common pathways for RRR Network women members to boards.

The key findings of this report were:

- Almost half of our survey respondents were on a Board (at time of survey).

- 80 per cent said being 'tapped on the shoulder' was how they got to board.

- Strategically networking to achieve board and leadership opportunities for RRR people is challenging and costly.

- RRR women add a unique value to board through their lived experiences.

Key recommendations:

1. The establishment of a 'Sponsorship' program for RRR women for WA State Government Boards and Committees.

A sponsor is a person dedicated to their mentee who actively advocates on their behalf in their absence, such as putting their name forward for a role and directly involves their mentee in experiences that will provide opportunities for career advancement. A sponsorship program allows RRR women's names, skills and impact to be shared in circles that they are unlikely to be present in due to their RRR base.

There are no sponsorship programs available in Western Australia, and therefore would be a first of its kind.

2. Offer women 'Environmental, Social and Governance' education as they are ideally suited to support it's delivery.

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Over a six-month period in 2023, the RRR Network engaged its membership about accessing Board. 86 survey responses were received, and 22 women were consulted with over two, one-hour sessions. In addition, one on one conversations were had with RRR Network members and partners on the subject. A deep understanding of the lived experience of accessing leadership via Board from rural, regional and remote Western Australia was gleaned.

More specifically, we wanted to know how curious RRR women were to gain Board roles. Was the pathway obvious to them? Were there any barriers or unexpected challenges in achieving Board.

Many RRR women we spoke with were motivated and eager because Board delivered on diversity, expanded networks, and allowed women to contribute to something that had meaning and impact.

However, accessing Board isn't easy. It can be complicated, strategic and takes years in the making. For RRR women to access Board there can be additional layers to overcome.

This report unlocks Board for RRR women.

RRR NETWORK

Why Board and RRR women?

To support our goal of increasing RRR women into leadership roles, we identified that Board roles provide an ideal pathway for RRR women. Here is why:

- Geography is the most obvious one. Boards are not a full-time demand requiring you to be within close proximity of the workplace. So you could be living in the RRR and be on a Board that is based in the city, or even on the other side of the country.

- Board positions can short-cut the need to have spent years working your way through a company's management levels to contribute to a leadership opportunity.

- Some Boards offer remuneration for service or at least the cost to participate is, such as travel and accommodation. So the pursuit of leadership is valued and offers income to strengthen economic independence.

- Board allows for bite size leadership participation which a RRR woman can achieve when taking into consideration long distance travel, primary caring responsibilities, limited childcare options, and other work commitments.

- To achieve Board, the work primarily involves meeting preparation and attendance, and then contributing to discussion to help guide decision making. All of which typically can be achieved in conjunction with other commitments and from home. Board is one place that allows you to engage in leadership and as just discussed, where you live is generally not a factor.

- Today, in the post-pandemic era there is greater flexibility in the workplace such as options to work from home and online participation. What was once a systemic barrier (in-person attendance) to Board and work has been reduced, thereby increasing opportunity for RRR women to participate and contribute.

Board roles for RRR women makes sense because they offer leadership opportunities, deliver meaningful and challenging participation, and a diverse experience which can otherwise be limiting across rural, regional and remote locations.

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RRR Women and Boards and Committees

There is no data set available to determine exactly how many WA RRR women are on Boards. Overall, it is much easier to reveal the number of *women* on Boards and Committees, although not all sectors. To better understand the extent to which RRR women are on Boards and Committees, we've had to explore various data points to generate some insights. We hope this discussion will assist RRR women and their Board aspirations in WA.

To start, as of June 2022, women had a 52.5 per cent representation on all State Government Boards and Committees in WA. Unfortunately, the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet was unable to provide postcode and gender data that identified how many of these women are based in a RRR location.

Our survey showed that 45 per cent were on a Board and 27 per cent were on a State Government Board or Committee. Noting that 85 per cent of total responses were from WA's regions (15 per cent from Perth). See chart below.
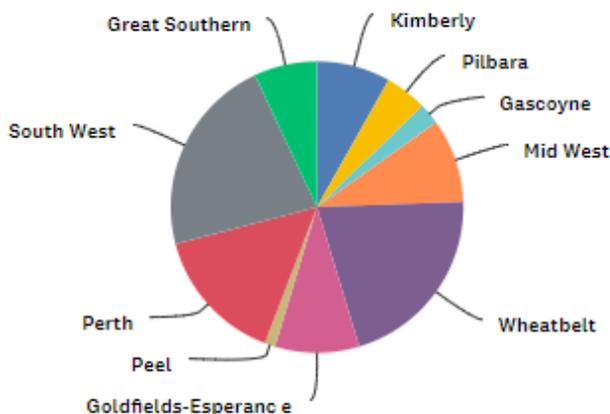
Data collected from 11 Boards and Committees plus two subgroups facilitated by the Department of Communities indicate:

- 134 people are members of Department of Communities led boards.
- 92 are women or 68 per cent.
- 10 of these are from a RRR location or 11 per cent.
- seven women hold the Chair or co-chair position of these boards.
- of these seven Chair positions, two are from a RRR location.

Data collected from 14 Boards and Committees under the Minister for Regional Development's portfolio (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), indicate a total of 93 members of which 34 of them are RRR women, or 36 per cent.

On a further 19 Boards under the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry and Small Business portfolio there is a current total of 61 women and 57 men – 52 and 48 per cent respectively. As many of these Boards are RRR in nature they are more likely to engage RRR people and a simple desktop search supports this. Additionally, some RRR women on these Boards are also in Chair positions.

"State Government Boards are a great entry to Board".

Vanessa Jolly, Directors Australia.

The top three industry Boards that RRR women felt most suited RRR people were Regional Development, Agricultural and Business. Followed closely by Volunteering and Local Government. However, 51 per cent or survey respondents did say that RRR people were suited to 'any' industry.

According to several articles, women are ideally suited to support delivery of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) outcomes, considering gender equality is a central issue.

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ESG measurables are critical in today's corporate environment, so we encourage women to learn more in this space and use it to their advantage when seeking Board positions.

Looking further afield, the latest Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Gender Diversity Report shows 35.7 per cent of directors on ASX 200 Boards are women. In addition, women accounted for almost 45 per cent of new director appointments to ASX 200 Boards in 2022.

A 2013 study showed that Perth had the greatest number of ASX listed companies headquartered there, with 752 firms— nearly as many as Sydney and Melbourne combined (824). Assuming Perth remains a clear leader in 2023/24, we can surmise that WA has the greatest number of women on ASX listed company Boards. Although, The Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia did report that women made up only 17.6 per cent of Board positions in the resource sector (CMEWA, 2017).

National studies shows that women comprise approximately 40 per cent of not-for-profit (NFP) Boards. In WA there are nearly 20,000 NFP groups registered as incorporated associations. For argument's sake, let's assume all these NFP's are governed by a Board of at least eight members and apply the national figure as a guide. This equates to around 64,000 WA

women being on boards in this sector. But what of the RRR woman representation?

To address that question, we should first consider what the barriers to Board are for RRR women as this may expose the extent of their participation.

In our survey, RRR women raised, that time away from family and work was their biggest barrier to Board participation at 51 per cent, and travel commitments at 26 per cent. This suggests that the Boards they were aware of, were not close by, or required some face to face participation and other responsibilities took precedent, impacting their ability to participate. Therefore, we could gain some insight of a RRR woman's Board participation by understanding the geographical location of NFP's and charities. According to Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission, there are only 8.8 per cent of charities based in outer regional Australia, 1.9 per cent in remote and 1.3 per cent in very remote locations. Considering nearly all of WA, excluding the Perth, Peel and Southwest regions are classified as remote (RA 4) and very remote (RA 5), it is expected that most of WA's charities are headquartered in Perth or close to.

Physically accessing the Board environment was the standout issue for RRR women. Although, RRR women did discuss at length online meeting access, and how since the pandemic this had become more acceptable. In saying that, the experience of those currently a Board member was that regular face to face meetings were still an expectation, but not always. With face-to-face expectations being the standard for medium to large organisations – RRR women are more likely to look within their region for Board and Committee opportunities that are accessible. Such as local sporting associations and Parents & Citizens (P&C).

The WA Department of Education report that there are more than 800 public schools with an expectation that each has its own P&C. Looking at a small sample of only five RRR public schools', women were the most represented and, in some cases, women were the only represented.

Overall, the data suggests that RRR women are not highly represented on the medium to large company Board's in WA. This may be related to long distance travel to access Boards and engage in their professional networks. RRR women are therefore more likely to be active in leadership opportunities that are within proximity to where they live.

Tip: Identify Board and Committee opportunities where more women are represented, and or located in your region to start your Board experience.

Get on your Local Committees!

When speaking with the Western Australian representative for Women on Boards – Kylah Morrison, she said –

"don't underestimate the opportunity Committees provide in the regions to support your Board career".

Kylah is currently a ASX Board member and on more than one Board. Kylah's Board journey began in the regions where she was very active on local Committees. These Committee roles offered Kylah invaluable experience in collaborative decision making, governance and leadership. Kylah noticed years later when sitting on professional Boards how much these Committee experiences best positioned her compared to some of her ASX Board colleagues. Kylah could see how years of RRR committee experience in some instances outweighed expensive governance training. In saying that, she fully supported regular governance professional development. Kylah also mentioned that there are plenty of training options available, including free courses.

"Committees are an excellent place to build Board confidence…. You don't need a qualification before you start on a Board, you need *experience*".
Julie Freeman.

Julie also valued the local Committee opportunity and the experience it provided in governance and effective decision making. She said you cannot expect to hit the ground running with Rio Tinto – that you should look at your Committee opportunities as stages (and years) of increased growth

and skill development to best position you for Boards.

Discussion on the value of local and regional Committees ensued and it was quickly termed as an "apprenticeship". A regional Committee apprenticeship expected to deliver on several learnings that would strengthen your skill set for future Board positions. It was thought that there is no better place to learn this than from the regions. This is because problem solving in the regions can be a daily given, due to a lack of resources and services. Regional people are regularly forced to be innovative and not to sweat the small stuff when it comes to achieving their tasks. This is a unique skill developed in the regions that you should not underestimate when applying for leadership positions.

On your Committee apprenticeship you would also hope to learn about governance, adhering to systems, process, and ethics. In addition, a Committee is typically a safe space to learn as it has no overarching financial responsibility allowing mistakes and key learnings to be made with very little impact.

Finally, on your apprenticeship you would expect to improve stakeholder engagement. This is because, when you're working within a resource constrained environment, you must get involved with all aspects of the job. The interesting part about stakeholder engagement in the regions is that all levels of community play an important role and can influence personal and professional lives. From the regions, you also are expected to build relationships with corporates or business networks connected to the city. So, Committee experience from the regions can be diverse, making your stakeholder skills grow exponentially compared to those living in the city.

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Tip: Consider the regions your best masterclass in effective stakeholder engagement for Board.

Local Committees are critical to regional communities and their ability to affect change directly where it is needed. However, sometimes, a local Committee is not governed well and this can limit members development. In this situation, your experience becomes ineffective and potentially tainted with incorrect advice and bad habits develop. Sometimes, new Board and Committee members are not aware and the status-quo is maintained. This can increase personal litigation risk and the organisation they represent ultimately struggles to achieve its goals as it is not being managed correctly.

A poorly managed Board or Committee is not always an intended outcome of its members, but a result of its members being volunteers. RRR volunteers are typically spread thin across community and multiple organisations.

Tip: If you've identified that the committee you're on, is not governed well, and you've been unable to influence or make the change required, perhaps it is time to leave and find another that will deliver the experience you need.

Almost 60 per cent of our survey participants were not paid for their Board service. The unfortunate reality is that the absence of remuneration can reduce the time offered by its member to achieve effective governance and increase impact.

Good news is that positive change can happen with governance training. It only takes one committee member to exercise some leadership and make a personal investment to undertake governance training. After that, you can educate, influence and empower your colleagues and improve your experience along the way. There are a range of resources available to assist governance. Such as:

- Australian Institute of Company Directors.
- Governance Institute of Australia.
- Institute of Community Directors Australia.
- WA Local Government Association.
- Western Australian Government – Governance e-learning.

Tip: If your Committee is time poor but you've identified that you need governance training, discuss it as a group to see who can achieve the essential training on behalf of the Committee.

We asked in our survey - Did you obtain any education directly related to Board before you started working on boards?

There was a mixed response. Almost half referenced AICD and other governance training but the rest said, that once they got to Board, they then undertook some form of training. So, it was not a prerequisite to obtaining their Board position.

"I joined Women on Boards after my first 'official' board appointment to Karratha & Districts Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KDCCI) in 2014. In 2019 I did the AICD International Company Directors Course. In 2021 I got my first paid board role on an ASX listed board, Province Resources Ltd. (ASX:PRL). Later in 2021 I did the Governance Institute ASX Listing Rules certificate". *Survey comment.*

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Committees and their networks

In addition to the experience Committee roles offer, they also build networks that you can leverage years later. Strategic networking was considered one of the most important factors to accessing a Board.

Companies and Boards who are actively seeking a director tend to ask each other – who do you know that can fill our skills gap? There is security and comfort in referrals for Board. Unfortunately, this can reinforce the 'boys club' or group think. Board recruitment is less transparent than jobs. Several women in our survey raised that accessing Board in their experience was not a formal application as such, but more a 'tap on the shoulder'.

It therefore makes sense to maintain relationships with all of your Committee colleagues, as they too may have continued their professional careers or Board journey's.

So get on the phone, send some emails or touch base via LinkedIn and see what your past colleagues have been up to and if they know of any Board positions coming up.

> **Tip: Your fellow Committee members years later may now be on Boards and are actively looking to fill places. Value your local Committee experiences and the relationships you develop whilst there.**

RRR NETWORK

RRR Diversity - a Unique Value Proposition

Living in RRR areas can develop certain characteristic traits. Such as resilience, determination, innovation and sacrifice. An Australian Psychological Society journal described rural people as being self-sufficient, self-reliant and stoic and as a result were less inclined to seek help with their health.

Australian rural communities have declining populations. This has led to a corresponding reduced government investment and in turn increased living challenges of our RRR people. Whilst this makes living in RRR difficult and frustrating, it can also be a powerful motivator to achieve, overcome and succeed.

When you live with limited access to essential services and in small communities, you have to learn to solve your own problems. This is because if you don't - it is unlikely that someone else will.

When speaking with RRR women about what they could bring to a Board, they shared several invaluable skills. From financial management, marketing, stakeholder relations, project management, business development and more. All skills they had to learn over time because they had to fill their own gaps.

Katina Law - inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame in 2023, was the first First Nations woman to get on an ASX Board. Katina grew up in Derby, Western Australia and credits her rural upbringing to shaping her global finance, accounting and Board career. When she first left university and was looking for a job, she was offered a role in Indonesia. Katina shared that travelling and leaving home to access education, employment, health and so on was normalised and therefore going to Indonesia to work at such a young age was no concern.

A public sector employee in a senior management role based in the North West shared how her work is the full gamut compared to her metro colleagues who are at the same level. She knew that her level of responsibility was much greater because she was often the one negotiating with various stakeholders and her team had to be self-sufficient.

When it comes to the Board environment, this complex lived experience and problem solving capability is a RRR woman's superpower and should be leveraged when seeking Board opportunities.

AICD's "Improving board effectiveness" director tool shares key themes to improve Board performance. These include, bold, decisive leadership, opportunity mind-set, ecosystems (relationships), be match-fit (agile and open), have an effective organisational culture, crack the diversity code, and be curious.

Based on the above, value your RRR experience, use it to your advantage and complement a Board with your unique set of skills.

> **Tip:** Living in the RRR parts of Western Australia provides you with a unique perspective that can strengthen key decision making. Identify skills developed and values formed because of living regionally.

RRR NETWORK

Strategic networking masterclass

"Strategic networking is plugging yourself into a set of relationships and information sources that collectively embody the power and influence to achieve personal and business goals".

Dee Roche

When speaking with RRR Network member Dee Roche who is also a UWA MBA Teaching Fellow on transformational leadership, she shared that there are three types of networks – operational, personal, and strategic. Dee provided a high-level summary about networking.

	OPERATIONAL	PERSONAL	STRATEGIC
PURPOSE	Get things done.	Develop yourself.	Build the future, get support.
SPACE & TIME	Mostly internal; present.	Mostly external; present and future.	Links, adversaries, allies; future.
WHO BELONGS?	Key contracts prescribed by task and organisation; very clear who is relevant.	Key contacts are discretionary; not always clear who is relevant.	Key contacts are defined by the context and environment; not always clear who is relevant.
NETWORK ATTRIBUTES & KEY BEHAVIOURS	Depth: Building strong working relationships.	Breadth: Reaching out to contacts who can make referrals.	Leverage: Shaping networks and links.

Strategic networks lead to:
- More business and job opportunities.
- Broader and deeper knowledge.
- Improved capacity to innovate.
- Faster advancement.
- Greater status and authority.
- Improves the quality of work and increases job satisfaction.

Some common strategies for building strategic networks are:
- Mind your mindset...reframe your thinking about networking.
- Reallocate your time, go beyond your industry or current circle of connections.
- Establish connections and leverage professional organisations.
- Give and take continually; share information.

RRR NETWORK

Networking strategies...

80 per cent of our survey respondents said that 'strategic networks' and being 'tapped on the shoulder' was most important when achieving a Board position.

This overwhelming response can be looked at in two ways.

First, if you can crack the network, your geography and Board qualifications are less of a factor and resolvable. That is, if you're willing to travel and commit to Board training.

However, even with Board qualifications and experience, an impressive resume and the skills that will clearly strengthen a Board – if they do not know you, this could be your glass ceiling.

Many women shared with us that their pathway to Board was not finding an advert and then making application – it was being tapped on the shoulder. Additionally, many professional Board positions were filled by company executives and not made public. So, how does one get an 'in'?

Forbes (2016) suggests that mastering the art of networking can be achieved by:

- Once you get a business card, send them a simple email that you enjoyed meeting them. Try to reflect on a point from your conversation and perhaps invite another time to catch-up and continue that conversation.

- Connect on LinkedIn.

- Create 'reconnect files'. After you have a follow-up meeting or phone conversation with someone you've met, set up reminders in your calendar to reconnect, and add notes about your engagements to assist your conversations.

- Remember birthdays, and the small stuff. Even if you don't remember your contact's birthday, social media can assist here. Small gestures will go a long way.

- Give first. Expect nothing in return. During your initial meeting, did your new contact mention a need overtly or in passing? Identify opportunities in which you can help someone with a need they have. Take the lead and expect nothing in return.

- Use the power of one connection to open many doors. Any contact with whom you interact knows hundreds, if not thousands, of other people. This makes the power of your conversation exponential. Remember: When you're talking to someone, you're actually speaking to their entire network. The same goes for them with you.

RRR NETWORK

We acknowledge that living in RRR areas does makes strategic networking that much more difficult. This is because the most critical relationships and networks formed that will support professional development are typically based in Perth and/or connected to WA's most influential industries which is not always an easy go-to.

For RRR women to strategically network, this generally means regular travel to Perth and/or attending events where key individuals are going to be at. A great place to start is attending RRR Network events.

The next critical factor to strategic networking is finding opportunities to directly engage key individuals, and unfortunately, this doesn't always work out. It could mean many trips and conversations to edge closer to your desired networks.

It may also mean *more work* to get noticed.

- Nearly 50 per cent of our surveyed Board women were on more than one Board.

- 70 per cent of them were also on Committees.

- 34 per cent were on more than three Committees.

- 61 per cent said that previous Board experience was important and supported strategic networking.

RRR women that *are* making in-roads to Boards and strengthening strategic networks are those that are very active in community, business, and local government. They also are committed to time away from family and work, but this can be costly in various ways and needs to be taken into consideration when pursuing Board roles.

To support RRR women and networking, the concept of sponsorship was discussed by our members. Sponsorship is different to mentorship.

Harvard Business Review (2021) explains –

Mentorship is a relationship between someone sharing knowledge and providing guidance (the mentor) and someone learning from that person's experience and example (the mentee).

Whereas, **Sponsorship** stems from a strong and successful mentorship. The mentor becomes an advocate for their mentee. The sponsor expands the mentee's visibility within an organisation or network, and directly involves the mentee in experiences that will provide opportunities for career advancement. For instance, a sponsor may put their mentee's name on the table for a promotion, or have the power to advocate for their work when they are not in the room.

"RRR women are not the problem, targeting Boards that don't have great diversity and having them understand that there is a pool of wealth out in the regions they could tap into".

And

"How to best engage women? Boards need to be better at inviting diversity".

Elizabeth Brennan

RRR NETWORK

Diversity on Boards

As we make inroads in gender equality, other important diversities in the leadership space are coming to the surface, such as ethnicity and age. The immigrant RRR woman experience was raised by our members.

The 2023 Board Diversity Index reported that 90 per cent of ASX 300 Directors are Anglo-Celtic and their average age is 60.15 years old.

The value of diversity and inclusion is an increasing narrative in today's social and working environments. For instance, the 2021 Workforce Happiness Index found that 78 per cent of workers want to work for employers that value diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Also, the Institute of Community Directors Australia said:

If your community group Board consists mainly of middle-aged, middle-class men from a business or legal background, it is probably time that you thought about putting in place a diversity strategy – particularly if the work you do has little or nothing to do with middle-aged, middle-class lawyers and businessmen!

When you increase the variety of people who serve on your Board you can tap into a pool of talented candidates, bring new voices, experiences, and approaches to the decision-making process, add depth to existing skills and ideas and, perhaps most importantly, bring the Board closer to properly representing its stakeholders.

RRR immigrant women shared with us, how difficult it was to engage local networks to start their Board and Committee experience.

When researching the subject of immigrants and networking there was several articles, resources and organisations dedicated to assisting immigrants in their search for work and forming networks. **Research indicated that ethnic minorities have less diverse social capital, an important resource for securing opportunities and getting ahead.**

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the Goldfields, 66 per cent of people were born in Australia. The most common countries of birth were New Zealand 7.7 per cent, England 2.4 per cent, Philippines 2 per cent, South Africa 1.7 per cent and India 1 per cent. Being a woman of colour in this region is likely to make it more challenging to enter new networks and leverage relationships to assist career progression.

"As an immigrant, I don't have the same networks as those who went to schools in WA. Also, my age (over 55) might be an issue too". *Survey comment.*

Perhaps some lessons could be gleaned from the immigration experience to strengthen RRR women's social and professional capability.

Migration Expert Australia (2023) offered the below advice:

- Understand the importance of networking.
- Utilise online networking platforms.
- Attend networking events and workshops.
- Join professional associations.
- Volunteer and participate in community activities.
- Consider a mentorship or professional development program.
- Stay connected and nurture your network.

RRR NETWORK

Snapshot of our women survyed

Out of Western Australia's 11 regions, only one region – the North West did not receive a survey response from. Perth and Peel made up 16.28% of overall responses.
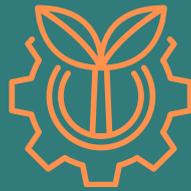
The dominant industry of our survey responses at 43% was 'Agricultural, Fishing and Forestry', followed by 'Other Services' at 23% and then 'Health Care and Social Assistance' at 12%.

We had women in all age brackets represented from 18 to 80+ but women from 35 to 64 made up the majority 81%. More specifically, women from 45 to 54 were the highest respondents at 32%.

Out of the 86 responses – 45.35% said YES to currently being a Board director and 54.65% said NO. We should note that the RRR Network is likely to attract women in leadership roles to its research and/or those who are specifically interested in Boards. Therefore, the nearly 50/50 does not tell us a great deal about RRR women's capability and representation on Boards in Western Australia. Rather, it offers a balanced view around pathways to Board, challenges and opportunities.

27%

Are on a WA State Government Board or Committee.

40%

Are paid for their board work and cost to participate.

11%

Considered being registered with OnBoard WA as important to achieving a Board position
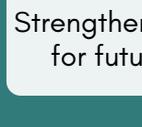
Age started working on Boards?

40% started at the age of 31-40, followed by 20 to 31, and 51 to 60 both at 24% each. Only 8% started at 51 to 60.

What attracts you to being on a Board or Committee?
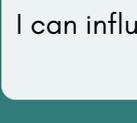
Opportunity to have a leadership role & develop strategic networks across WA (73%).

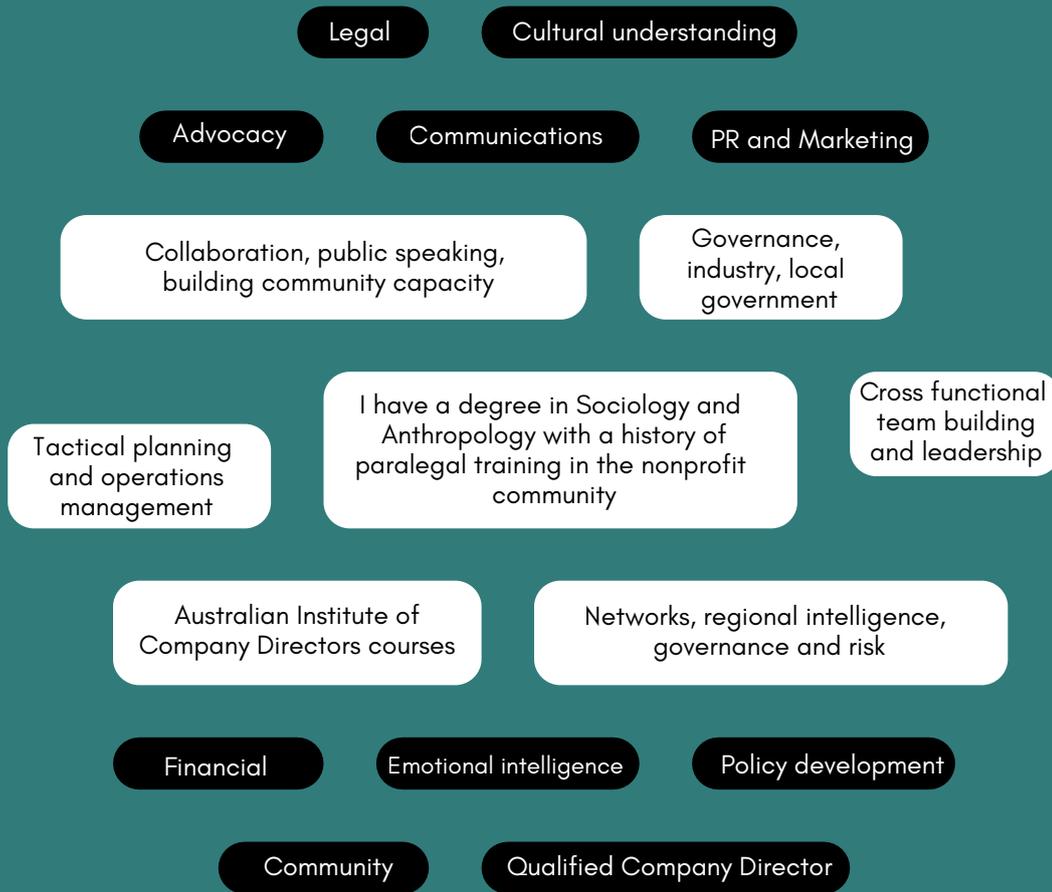Strengthen professional reputation for future employment (65%).

It facilitates the ability to leave the farm and business for an interesting and valued reason.

I can influence decision making in my industry.

RRR NETWORK

RRR women's skills!

Legal

Cultural understanding

Advocacy

Communications

PR and Marketing

Collaboration, public speaking, building community capacity

Governance, industry, local government

Tactical planning and operations management

I have a degree in Sociology and Anthropology with a history of paralegal training in the nonprofit community

Cross functional team building and leadership

Australian Institute of Company Directors courses

Networks, regional intelligence, governance and risk

Financial

Emotional intelligence

Policy development

Community

Qualified Company Director

RRR women not on Board

20 women from this study said they are actively looking for a Board role.

10% Actively applying for Board positions.

15% Obtaining governance/board qualifications to get to Board.

26% Strategically networking to get to Board.

What are you currently doing to increase your success of being on a Board or Committee?

Active in community incorporated bodies in key roles.

Getting what skills and knowledge I can that are not paid qualifications.

What is preventing you from applying for Board?

awareness of positions available

anxiety

self-belief

lack of confidence to what I can bring

age

loss of income

imposter syndrome

Conclusion

RRR women continue to demonstrate a thirst for leadership, meaningful engagement and diversity. Other than creating or securing work from home employment options which opens up their market, participating in boards and committees seems to be the most direct path to reaching leadership positions.

RRR women have incredible skills to offer to Boards. Not only are many of them highly educated and running businesses, but they inherently have a unique 'RRR' diversity that any Board would benefit from. However, professional/corporate industries are yet to recognise this diversity and are not actively seeking candidates from the regions.

Cracking the 'Board network' is RRR women's biggest challenge in getting to Board and this is where they need help.

RRR women will continue to be active and deliver impact where they live and if they wish to further their skills in Western Australia and obtain leadership, they must look beyond the regions to the city – *and*, *the city needs to look back*!

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