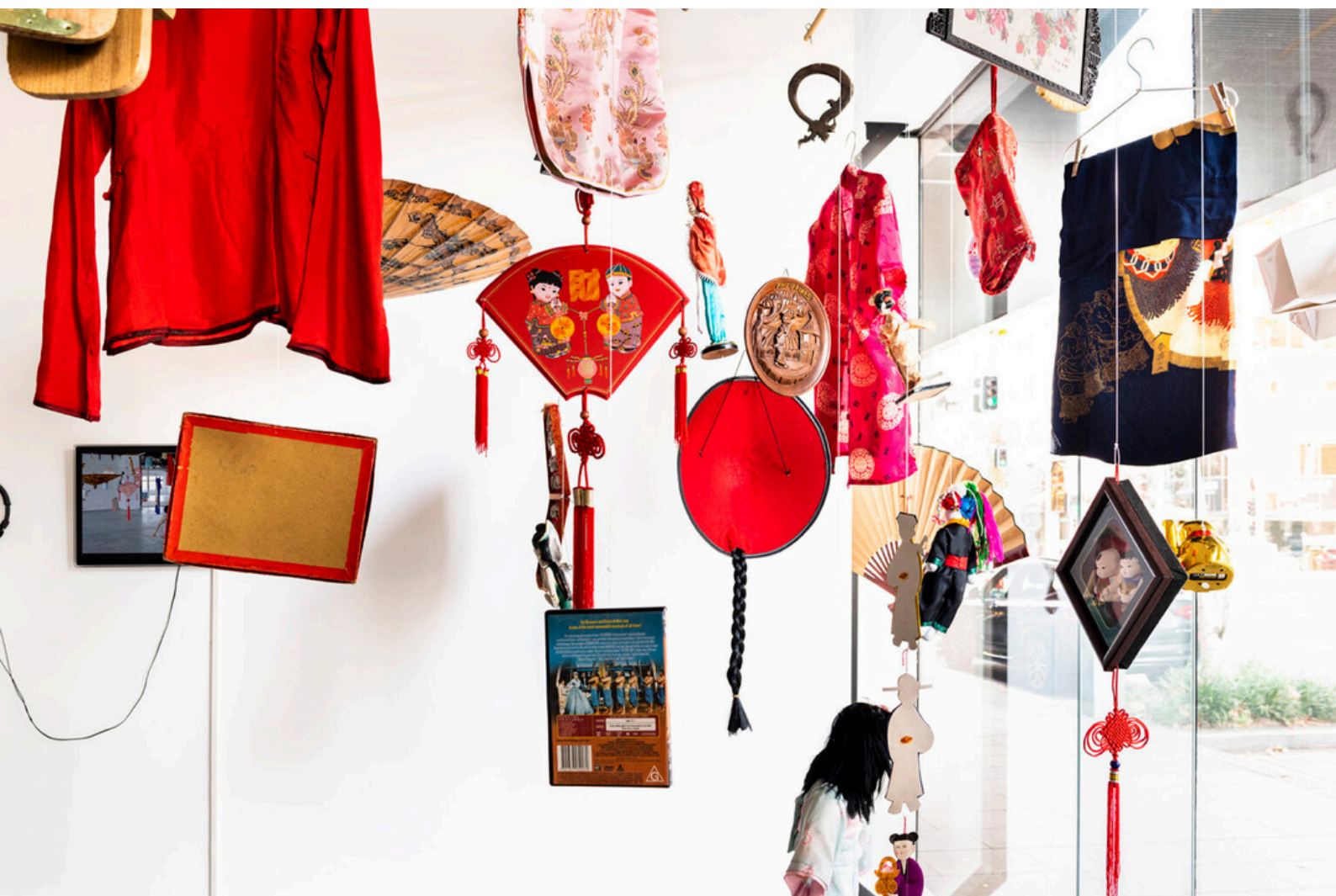


Creative Cultural Diversity Network



**DiversityArts
Australia**

Executive Summary
Review Report
May 2025



Acute Actions: Responses To I Am Not A Virus Exhibition by
DARTS x 4A Centre of Contemporary Asian Art.
Photo credit: Kai Wasikowski



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Acknowledgement of Country

Diversity Arts Australia acknowledges the First Peoples of these lands. We pay respects to Elders past and present, and recognise that sovereignty has never been ceded. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters and their ongoing custodianship. We cannot address migration and race in Australia without contextualising it within the colonisation and dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We seek to be guided in all our work by First Peoples' leadership, recognising the immense value that First Nations artists and cultural workers create within the arts and cultural landscape.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Overview

Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) is the national voice for ethno-cultural and migrant racial equity in the arts, screen, and cultural sectors. Our vision is clear: A creative sector empowered by Australia's cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity. Guided by principles of self-determination, autonomy, and social justice, Diversity Arts combines service provision — resources, events, research, training, advocacy — with creative production. A cornerstone of our efforts is the convening of the Creative Cultural Diversity Network (CCDN) — a vibrant national collective of creative workers and organisations united in their pursuit of racial and cultural equity. Five years after its inception, DARTS initiated an internal review to strengthen and consolidate the CCDN. The review, conducted between September and December 2024, was led by Carolina Triana-Cuéllar, Research and Policy Associate at DARTS, and overseen by Lena Nahlous, CEO. This summary presents the main findings and recommendations emerging from this process.

Thank you

Diversity Arts Australia would like to thank the creative workers who generously took part in our survey, and those who shared their experiences through the interviews and focus groups.

A Note on Terms

We use the term 'creative workers' to refer to practitioners working in the arts, screen, and cultural sectors. We use 'CaLD' as an umbrella term to refer to individuals who identify with any of the following groups: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD), Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM), People of Colour (PoC), people with migrant, refugee, asylum-seeker, or humanitarian-entrant backgrounds or experiences, and members of the Global Majority. We acknowledge the limitations of these terms and respect individuals' right to self-identification. For the purposes of this review, we use CaLD throughout the report, as this is the term most commonly used by CCDN and consultation participants.

Creative Cultural Diversity Network

Creative workers & organisations working together for racial and cultural equity.



Executive Summary

Since its inception in 2020, the Creative Cultural Diversity Network (CCDN) has fostered dialogue and collaboration among CaLD creative workers across Australia. Over the past four years, Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) has hosted **24 CCDN online roundtables**, providing a dedicated platform for **107 creative workers** to engage in discussions on **racial and cultural equity** in Australia's creative sectors.

CCDN participants represent a broad spectrum of creative practices and join in from all Australian states and territories, though there is a notable concentration in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria (VIC), comprising 56% of total participants. This engagement spans independent workers as well as representatives from small, medium, and large cultural organisations and bodies.

A key element of the CCDN has been **centring the voices of those with lived experiences of racial and cultural inequity**. To this end, 11 out of the 24 roundtables were specifically designed as spaces for self-identified CaLD creative workers to connect, reflect, and shape the agenda for the broader 'All-in' roundtables, which are open to all those working towards racial and cultural equity in the creative sectors. To date, Diversity Arts has hosted 13 'All-in' roundtables.

While attendance has varied over the years, we observed **peak engagement between 2020 and 2021** — a period that coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic — which may have driven increased participation due to heightened digital connectivity and industry-wide challenges faced during this period. However, since 2023, attendance has declined, prompting us to undertake this review to better understand the role of the CCDN moving forward.

Despite fluctuations in attendance, **CCDN roundtables have led to tangible outcomes**, including policy submissions, development of terms of reference, and defining terms of engagement. These outputs highlight the value of CCDN as a national peer network and the potential for continued sector-wide impact.

Between October and December 2024, DARTS undertook a review of the CCDN to gain deeper insights into the motivations, experiences, and aspirations of past, current, and potential participants. The review included desktop research, an online survey, 11 one-on-one interviews, and two focus groups. **In total, 50 creative workers across Australia participated in this review.**

Feedback from CCDN past and current members indicates that while many saw the CCDN as an important and much-needed safe space for peer-to-peer discussion and collaboration, there was also some confusion about its overall purpose. Specifically, some members were unclear about CCDN's advocacy role and felt that not enough tangible advocacy outcomes had emerged from the network's activities. However, they still valued the networking and information-sharing opportunities, which aligned with their initial motivations for joining the CCDN: gaining a deeper understanding of the CaLD creative sector, and connecting with other CaLD creatives through networking and safe spaces.

Additionally, while the online format enabled national participation, some participants noted its limitations. Time constraints and the absence of structured follow-up opportunities meant that peer engagement between roundtables was often difficult to sustain. This highlights a need to explore ways to enhance ongoing engagement and continuity between sessions, ensuring that connections made during roundtables can be nurtured beyond the meetings themselves.

When asked about their vision for CCDN's future, creative workers emphasised the need for:

- A stronger focus on tangible action and outcomes, alongside maintaining a safe space for sharing and solidarity;
- Greater clarity on the purpose of CCDN as a network, as well as more defined goals and agendas for each roundtable meeting;
- Increased reach and engagement, with a particular focus on strengthening geographical, cultural, and inter-generational representation;
- More in-person meetings, recognising that face-to-face engagement can deepen connections and facilitate stronger collaborations.

These aspirations align with DARTS' vision of maintaining the CCDN as a safe space while also strengthening its advocacy role. Given the diversity of CCDN's participants — spanning independent creatives, organisational representatives, multiple art forms and regions across the country — the network is uniquely positioned to advocate on sector-wide issues while continuing to provide critical peer support.

The findings emerging from this review highlight the need for a **dual-purpose** network that not only drives sectoral change but also provides a safe and supportive space for CaLD creative workers. Although the CCDN has already been operating with this dual function, we aim to define its structure more clearly and intentionally. To that end, we propose a **dual-stream structure for the CCDN**: the Advocacy Stream and the Sharing and Solidarity Stream.

The Advocacy Stream will focus on advancing policy and industry engagement, research dissemination, and collective action. **The Sharing and Solidarity Stream**, on the other hand, will provide a peer-led space for creative workers with lived experience of racial and cultural inequity to share insights, build solidarity, and inform advocacy efforts. Together, these streams will strengthen CCDN's role as both a strategic advocacy network and safe space, fostering meaningful sectoral change and deeper connections among members.

To build a more connected and inclusive network, DARTS will implement a comprehensive **engagement strategy aimed at strengthening participation, facilitating peer connection, and broadening representation.** Key initiatives include developing strategic partnerships to raise awareness about the CCDN's purpose and value. A bi-monthly e-newsletter will be launched to connect members across streams, share updates, and activate the network between roundtables. DARTS will also support self-organised working groups and introduce a member directory to strengthen peer-to-peer connection. To ensure diverse geographical and intersectional experiences are represented in the CCDN, DARTS will pilot the CCDN Roadshows in underrepresented regions and will develop strategic partnerships with arts and community organisations.

One key insight demonstrated by this review process is the need for ongoing evaluation of programs and initiatives to ensure their continued relevance for the communities that DARTS supports. In light of this, the development of a robust **evaluation framework** will be essential for monitoring the progress and impact of the CCDN. This framework, prioritising member feedback, will provide valuable insights to ensure the CCDN remains responsive to the motivations, experiences and aspirations of its membership.