

# **Creative Cultural Diversity Network Submission to the Review of REVIVE: Australia’s National Cultural Policy**

## **Definitions**

### **Culturally and Racially Marginalised**

Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM) is commonly used as an umbrella term for people and communities who experience marginalisation because of race, culture, ethnicity, language, migration history, refugee experience, religion or perceived difference from dominant Anglo-Celtic norms. This includes, but is not limited to, underrepresented Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities, People of Colour, racialised migrants and refugees, and members of the Global Majority.

Throughout this submission, we also use the term “underrepresented CaLD”. Like CaRM, the term focuses on communities who experience structural barriers due to race, culture, ethnicity, language, migration or refugee background. We also acknowledge that these terms are imperfect and contested, and that individuals and communities have the right to self-identify.

### **Global Majority:**

Global Majority refers to Black, Indigenous and racialised peoples who collectively constitute most of the world’s population, yet have been historically marginalised through colonisation, racism and unequal power structures. Used across international anti-racist, cultural and human rights discourse, the term reframes communities often described as “minorities” by recognising their demographic, cultural and political significance globally.

### **Community Arts and Cultural Development**

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) refers to arts and cultural practice developed with, by and for communities. CACD centres community participation, self-determination, cultural expression, local knowledge and social connection. Its practice supports communities in telling their own stories, strengthening cultural identity, building solidarity, and addressing social, cultural, or systemic issues through creative processes.

### **Social Cohesion**

CCDN understands social cohesion as the conditions that allow communities to participate, tell complex stories, disagree safely, navigate difference, build solidarity, exercise cultural rights and participate in cultural life, rather than assimilation, passive harmony, silence or consensus.

### **Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism**

Cultural diversity and anti-racism are related, but not interchangeable. Supporting cultural diversity is essential to representation, participation and cultural rights. Anti-racism is required to address structural barriers, racial hierarchies and institutional practices that determine whose stories are valued and funded for programming, reviewing, collecting and protecting.

**Equity-tested** means assessing whether a policy, program or funding stream is accessible, fair and effective for communities that experience structural barriers. For CaRM communities, this means considering who can access and benefit from a program, who may be excluded, who holds decision-making power, and whether the program responds to intersectional barriers including class, caste, language, religion, migration pathway, education, visa status, Disability, geography and proximity to institutional power.

### **AI Assessment and Language**

CCDN notes that digital tools may be used to review submissions. This makes clear definitions essential, and also raises concerns about whether such tools may misinterpret or soften community-specific and anti-racist language. CCDN therefore uses explicit terms throughout this submission, including those defined by migrant, refugee, diaspora and forced migration communities

## About the Creative Cultural Diversity Network (CCDN)

This submission is made on behalf of the Creative Cultural Diversity Network (CCDN), a national network facilitated by Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS). CCDN brings together more than 120 creative workers, arts and cultural organisations, advocates, and local government representatives, committed to racial and cultural equity across Australia's arts, screen, and creative sectors. It strengthens connection, solidarity and collective advocacy, and supports structural change for CaRM and underrepresented CaLD creatives and communities.

The network operates through two interrelated streams: Sharing and Solidarity, which centres the lived experience and priorities of CaLD, CaRM, migrant, refugee, People of Colour and Global Majority creative workers; and Advocacy, which brings together organisations and local government representatives working with CaLD and CaRM creatives and communities.

In preparing this submission, CCDN held two member roundtables and also invited written feedback to ensure the recommendations reflect a broad range of perspectives from across the network.

## Introduction

CCDN welcomes this review as an opportunity to strengthen Australia's cultural policy and ensure it reflects contemporary realities in the arts and creative industries. The network acknowledges REVIVE as a significant positive policy that delivered renewed investment, structural reforms and a stronger national framework for Australia's arts, culture and creative industries. Yet structural gaps remain.

Equity is critical to Australia's arts and creative sectors. It determines participation and representation, which contribute to growth, innovation and sustainability. Although REVIVE reflects these principles, the policy does not explicitly recognise CaRM and underrepresented CaLD communities, their central role in Australia's cultural life in building connection, belonging and solidarity, and their ongoing underrepresentation in arts leadership and organisational funding.

This underrepresentation is well documented. Diversity Arts Australia's *Shifting the Balance* found significant CaLD underrepresentation in arts, screen and cultural leadership: only 9% of leaders in not-for-profit organisations were CaLD, and 63% of for-profit organisations had no CaLD leaders. Media Diversity Australia, Creative Australia and Screen Australia have also documented persistent underrepresentation across Australian arts, media and screen sectors.<sup>1</sup>

This omission excludes these communities from processes that determine how and what is measured, funded, prioritised and held accountable. Its consequences are material, both within and beyond the creative sector, particularly amid rising racism, social fragmentation and economic precarity. Without explicit recognition of CaRM and underrepresented CaLD communities, the policy risks reproducing the very exclusions it seeks to address, devaluing their complex and varied stories, and weakening its promise of "a place for every story."

Community-led and CACD practice is vital for providing meaningful ways for people to engage with arts and culture. It must be seen as part of Australia's cultural and social resilience, especially at a time when climate disruption disproportionately affects Pacific Island nations, migrant and diaspora communities, and communities already experiencing structural marginalisation.<sup>2</sup> CCDN recommends that the next phase of REVIVE position anti-racism, cultural safety, accountability, freedom of expression, and equitable participation at the heart of Australia's cultural and creative systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Diversity Arts Australia, *Shifting the Balance: Cultural Diversity in Leadership within the Australian Arts, Screen and Creative Sectors*, 2019, p. 20; Media Diversity Australia, *Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories?*, 2020; Creative Australia, *Towards Equity: A Research Overview of Diversity in Australia's Arts and Cultural Sector*, 2021; Screen Australia, *Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in Australian TV Drama*, 2016; Screen Australia, *Seeing Ourselves 2: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Australian TV Drama*, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> See IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Chapter 15: Small Islands; Australian Red Cross, *Emergency Resilience in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities* (2021); and Akhter and Mupenzi, "Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience," *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2024).

## Recommendations

1. Strengthen First Nations self-determination and protect Indigenous Cultural Authority and Intellectual Property.
2. Explicitly name CaRM, underrepresented CaLD, migrant, refugee, diaspora and forced migration communities and identify direct, measurable actions to address them.
3. Resource a national Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Strategy aligned with REVIVE and other national frameworks.
4. Protect freedom of artistic expression, including independent safe reporting mechanisms for censorship, racism, political targeting, institutional interference and discrimination.
5. Recognise and resource CACD as a distinct, essential sector and provide regional and CaRM cultural infrastructure.
6. Create protected funding streams, including a Creator Fund for CaRM creatives and organisations.
7. Develop career development pathways in leadership, workforce and participation for CaRM, CaLD, migrant and refugee creatives.
8. Embed mandatory anti-racism, equity and cultural safety training, action planning, benchmarking, auditing and public reporting for funded organisations.
9. Reform funding processes, assessment and access pathways to improve equity for CaRM creatives, CACD, community-led and small-to-medium organisations.
10. Regulate AI and emerging technologies across the arts and creative industries.

## Recommendations in Detail

### **Recommendation 1. Strengthen First Nations self-determination and protect Indigenous Cultural Authority and Intellectual Property.**

CCDN strongly supports retaining First Nations First as the foundational pillar of REVIVE, recognising First Nations sovereignty, self-determination and cultural authority as central to Australia's cultural life and identity.

Anti-racism and cultural equity work must foreground First Nations communities and must not conflate their experiences of dispossession and colonisation with those of settler-migrant communities. While these experiences may intersect, they require distinct approaches to policy, governance, and self-determination. This includes continued investment in First Nations-led arts and cultural infrastructure, governance and decision-making across publicly funded cultural institutions and programs, stronger ICIP protections and strengthened truth-telling and language revitalisation processes.

### **Recommendation 2. Explicitly name CaRM, underrepresented CaLD, migrant, refugee, diaspora and forced migration communities and identify direct, measurable actions to address them.**

The revised policy should explicitly name Culturally and Racially Marginalised communities and recognise racism as a structural barrier in the arts and cultural sector.

The language used in policy shapes who is recognised, counted, funded and held accountable to. CCDN recommends using CaRM terminology across policy, funding, evaluation and reporting frameworks, alongside direct engagement with underrepresented CaLD communities, to ensure these communities are visible in decision-making and accountability systems.

Policy must recognise that forced migration, temporary migration, settlement, refugee status, diaspora identity, and intergenerational marginalisation cannot be collapsed into a single category of experience. Funding frameworks must address barriers faced by temporary residents, international students, new migrants, and refugees, including eligibility restrictions, visa precarity, and limited access to training, employment, and funding.

REVIVE must align with national multicultural, settlement, migration and anti-racism policy, including the Multicultural Framework Review<sup>3</sup>. Recommendations 8, 9 and 10 of the Multicultural Framework Review Roadmap are directly related to arts and cultural policy: Recommendation 8 calls for Creative Australia to undertake a whole-of-government review of investment in community cultural programs; Recommendation 9 calls for Creative Australia to lead the development of a pilot multi-year seed fund for community-driven creative solutions to social challenges; and Recommendation 10 calls for the Office for the Arts to establish a program for multicultural community organisations to apply for funding to embed an arts and cultural worker in their organisation. Many migrant, refugee and forced migration creatives first connect through settlement or community organisations rather than arts institutions. Policy must support creative pathways and artistic development, not just showcase multicultural art: This must include place-based and community-led cultural practices, such as CACD, that position CaRM communities as decision-makers and shapers of cultural narratives.

### **Recommendation 3. Resource a national Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Strategy & Code of Practice aligned with REVIVE and other national frameworks.**

Embed anti-racism in all cultural infrastructure. CCDN recommends a national, industry-led Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Strategy aligned with REVIVE, the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework<sup>4</sup>, and the Multicultural Framework Review Roadmap.<sup>5</sup> The strategy should be co-designed and led with First Nations, CaRM, Disability and other equity-led organisations, and set standards, strengthen accountability, and provide practical tools for workplaces, governance, programming, collections, criticism, commissioning, funding and partnerships. Allocate dedicated funding for research, case studies, best practice exemplars and tools to understand and address racism in the arts and cultural sector, building on resources such as the Creative Equity Toolkit<sup>6</sup> and Anti-Racism & The Arts initiative<sup>7</sup>.

A National Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Code of Practice should set standards and accountability for publicly funded bodies, institutions, festivals, media and independent practice, including culturally safe workplaces, governance, programming, curatorial decisions, complaints handling, reporting, benchmarking and independent assessment. Bodies such as Creative Workplaces and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) are well placed to support this work.

Support independent CaRM artists, freelancers, and sole traders by improving access to advice, advocacy, reporting, training, legal and copyright support, and assistance in cases of racism, political targeting, censorship, or exclusion.

Embed racial literacy across government agencies, funders, panels, boards, risk frameworks, and policies. Ensure decision-makers have cultural knowledge, anti-racism capability, and lived-experience expertise.

Review funding and risk frameworks through an anti-racism and equity lens, including who defines "risk" and how creative work addressing racism, human rights, diaspora politics, and social justice is assessed.

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<sup>3</sup> *Multicultural Framework Review, Towards Fairness: A Multicultural Australia for All*, Australian Government, 2024, pp. 56–57, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/multicultural-framework-review/Documents/report-summary/multicultural-framework-review-report-english.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Anti-Racism Framework: A roadmap for governments, businesses and community organisations to address all forms of racism in Australia*, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024, <https://humanrights.gov.au/resource-hub/race/anti-racism-framework>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Government, *Towards Fairness: A Multicultural Australia for All*, Multicultural Framework Review Panel, 2024, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/multicultural-framework-review/Documents/report-summary/multicultural-framework-review-report-english.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Diversity Arts Australia, *Creative Equity Toolkit*, <https://creativeequitytoolkit.org>. The toolkit provides practical resources, case studies and guidance to support equity, diversity and inclusion across the arts and cultural sector.

<sup>7</sup> Diversity Arts Australia, *Anti-Racism & The Arts*, <https://www.antiracism.art>. The campaign and resource were developed to support the NSW arts and creative industries to build racial literacy and implement anti-racist practice across the arts and creative sector. These resources should be utilised for national roll-out.

**Recommendation 4. Protect freedom of artistic expression, including independent safe reporting mechanisms for censorship, racism, political targeting, institutional interference and discrimination.**

REVIVE must explicitly protect freedom of artistic expression, CACD and anti-racism as interconnected and essential to democracy and a culturally diverse creative sector.

Freedom of expression enables CaRM creatives to challenge racism and dominant narratives, document lived experience, preserve cultural memory, build solidarity and engage public participation. Community-led artistic practice can transform exclusion and harm into collective expression, protest, memory and cultural power.

Racialised and marginalised creatives addressing racism, colonisation, war, displacement or social justice face increased scrutiny, censorship, political targeting and institutional interference<sup>8</sup>. These risks are heightened for freelance and precarious workers. CCDN recommends safe, independent ways for artists and creative workers to raise concerns without retaliation, and protections that equitably address how racialised and faith-based communities experience racism and religious discrimination.

REVIVE must require publicly funded institutions and programs to uphold artistic freedom, transparent arm's length decision-making and peer assessment in sectoral funding, grants governance, complaints, public commissions, contracts and processes for withdrawal, cancellation or alteration of artistic work.

The Australian Human Rights Commission and Creative Workplaces should be resourced to develop creative sector guidance, referral pathways, reporting mechanisms, and accountability standards for artistic freedom, racism, censorship, discrimination, and institutional interference.

**Recommendation 5. Recognise and resource CACD as a distinct, essential sector and provide regional and CaRM cultural infrastructure.**

CCDN recommends that REVIVE formally recognise CACD as a distinct, skilled and essential practice area, and provide dedicated investment, coordination and support for regional, Western Sydney, outer-suburban and remote CaRM and underrepresented CaLD community-led cultural infrastructure.

CACD is community-led, place-based and participatory cultural practice. It requires skill, time, trust, cultural knowledge and long-term relationships. It enables communities, particularly those historically excluded, to express and document lived experience, build local cultural knowledge, develop creative leadership, participate in public dialogue and shape the stories told about their lives and places. It must not be treated as informal outreach, unpaid community engagement or a secondary pathway into "real" arts practice.

REVIVE must support CACD work through capacity-building infrastructure, grant-writing assistance, touring support and stronger investment in CaRM-led organisations, Regional Arts Development Organisations, disability arts organisations and intermediaries working with CaRM and underrepresented CaLD communities.

**Recommendation 6. Create protected funding streams, including a Creator Fund for CaRM creatives and organisations.**

CCDN recommends protected funding streams and a dedicated CaRM Creator Fund to support CaRM, underrepresented CaLD, migrant, refugee and diaspora artists, creatives, organisations and community-led projects.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Creative Australia's initial withdrawal of artist Khaled Sabsabi and curator Michael Dagostino as Australia's 2026 Venice Biennale artistic team was an act of censorship following a political and media campaign targeting Sabsabi's work.

Funding systems remain difficult to navigate for many small, independent and community-led organisations. Existing models favour established organisations, institutional networks and applicants with the time, language, confidence and grant-writing resources to compete. Protected funding streams, including devolved funding models, are needed to reduce mainstream institutional gatekeeping and provide direct support for CaRM-led organisations and initiatives. The Regional Arts Fund's devolved delivery model offers a useful precedent.

CCDN recommends that REVIVE publish clear and transparent investment targets, budgets and data to support equitable funding outcomes, leadership opportunities, workforce participation and sector programs for CaRM and underrepresented CaLD creatives. Funding reform must include capacity-building support, grant-writing assistance, organisational development, accessible information, longer lead times, language support and guidance for newly arrived, refugee-background and temporary resident creatives whose first language is not English.

Funding reform must also recognise equity, anti-racism and cultural safety planning as necessary funded activities, including staff time, facilitation, community consultation, implementation and evaluation.

## **Recommendation 7. Develop career development pathways in leadership, workforce and participation for CaRM, CaLD, migrant and refugee creatives.**

Representation without leadership pathways, governance participation, curatorial authority, funding access, institutional employment and long-term career progression inhibits systemic change. CCDN recommends a national leadership, workforce, and participation pathways strategy supporting CaRM, underrepresented CaLD, migrant, and refugee creatives across all career stages.

The strategy must include sustained leadership and mentoring programs, paid internships and traineeships, mid-career development, governance and board development, curatorial and producing pathways, representation on peer assessment panels and decision-making bodies, and organisational support to ensure culturally safe workplaces capable of retaining and supporting diverse leadership. This must recognise that unpaid roles and pathways can exclude CaRM, working-class, Disabled, regional, and early-career practitioners, and that marginalised people often contribute lived experience and governance labour without remuneration.

Institutions must be supported to recruit, retain and advance CaRM staff, leaders, curators, producers and decision-makers, and to share power with them. Organisational diversity targets and accountability measures must address leadership, governance, programming, commissioning, curatorial decision-making, collections and acquisitions, recognising that decisions about what is collected, conserved, exhibited and interpreted shape Australia's cultural memory. This must be accompanied by investment in pathways, organisational capacity-building and culturally safe structures that enable CaRM creatives to build sustainable careers and hold decision-making power across the sector.

## **Recommendation 8. Embed mandatory anti-racism, equity and cultural safety training, action planning, benchmarking, auditing and public reporting for funded organisations.**

Public investment must be accompanied by measurable commitments to equity, participation, cultural safety, and anti-racism. CCDN recommends that publicly funded arts organisations be required to develop, resource and implement Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Action Plans.

Plans must include commitments to workforce and leadership targets, programming and commissioning, curatorial and collections, cultural safety and anti-racism policies, complaints pathways, reporting and evaluation frameworks, and must ensure clear timelines, accountability, measurable benchmarks, and public reporting.

Accountability must build independent auditing, benchmarking and public reporting into funding and evaluation frameworks, rather than rely solely on self-assessment. Arts, screen and media organisations must conduct regular, independent audits of programming, collections, criticism, content and workplace representation, and publicly report on targets, progress and gaps.

Publicly funded organisations must embed training as a core workforce capability, including for executives and board members. This should include anti-racism education, organisational capacity-building, practical implementation resources, and ongoing mentoring and support.

Institutional equity and inclusion roles must be properly resourced, appropriately recruited, culturally competent, empowered and accountable. They must not be treated as symbolic evidence of progress while racialised and marginalised staff have limited authority, increased isolation, or no pathway to act on identified structural issues<sup>9</sup>.

## **Recommendation 9. Reform funding systems, assessment processes, access pathways and definitions of excellence.**

CCDN recommends reform that embeds intersectionality, racial equity and cultural safety in funding systems, programs and assessment processes, access pathways, and Creative Australia and Office for the Arts governance. This includes improving equity for CaRM creatives, CACD, socially engaged and community-led practice, and small-to-medium organisations, and requires genuine co-leadership and equitable remuneration where projects involve CaRM communities.

Public funding processes must limit box-ticking practices that name CaRM individuals or organisations as partners without genuine input, ownership, decision-making power or equitable remuneration. Projects involving CaRM communities must require formal partnership agreements for co-leadership, decision-making authority, intellectual property, cultural rights, and fair payment.

Funding systems must interrogate how “excellence” is defined. Dominant measures of artistic excellence often privilege Western, Eurocentric and institutionally validated art forms, training pathways, and cultural hierarchies. Assessment processes must value diverse cultural practices, community-based expertise, oral traditions, multilingual practice, traditional and contemporary forms, and creative work developed outside dominant institutions.

Equity initiatives must not operate in isolation. All Creative Australia programs, initiatives and funding streams should be diversity- and equity-tested to ensure intersectionality is embedded across workforce development, funding, governance, audience engagement, digital policy, Disability access and community participation. An intersectional approach recognises differences within CaRM communities, including class, caste, Disability, language, religion, migration pathway, education, visa status and proximity to institutional power. Cultural equity policy must not treat CaRM communities as homogenous and must support those most structurally excluded within and beyond these communities.

CCDN also recommends equitable tax and social security reform to address the precarious conditions of creative work, particularly for freelance, contract and project-based artists and small-to-medium organisations.

## **Recommendation 10. Regulate AI and emerging technologies across the arts and creative industries.**

CCDN recommends that REVIVE incorporate a robust regulatory and ethical framework for the use of AI, data extraction and emerging technologies, grounded in artist consent, remuneration, copyright, ICIP, cultural rights and equity. These technologies raise urgent concerns about artists’ work being scraped, extracted, reproduced or reused without consent or remuneration. Most at risk are First Nations cultural material, CaRM artists, community-held knowledge, language, archives, storytelling and works grounded in cultural identity or collective memory.

Artists, including CaRM artists, must have control over where their work is seen, how it is used and payment for use. Policy settings must protect cultural sovereignty, copyright, moral rights, attribution, consent and community-held cultural rights.

Policy responses to emerging technologies must regulate harm and support community-led experimentation with digital participation, gaming, online storytelling and cross-sector models that expand cultural engagement for diverse communities.

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<sup>9</sup> See Creative Workplaces, *What we do*; Service and Creative Skills Australia and Creative Australia, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study* (2025); British Film Institute, *BFI Diversity Standards*; Arts Council England, *Diversity Data and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Review 2018–23*.

## Conclusion

The next iteration of REVIVE presents an important opportunity to build on recent reforms and strengthen Australia's cultural policy amid national and global uncertainty. It can play a crucial role in building community, expanding employment and participation pathways for CaRM creatives, and fostering strong, diverse audiences.

Anti-racism, cultural safety, freedom of expression, participation, workforce sustainability, community-led practice and accountability are interconnected elements of cultural infrastructure and democratic participation. For REVIVE to realise its vision of "A Place for Every Story", "Centrality of the Artist" and "Strong Cultural Infrastructure", CaRM and underrepresented CaLD creatives and communities must be named, resourced, protected, represented and empowered to shape the sector's future.

This requires explicit recognition, sustained investment, meaningful accountability, independent oversight and a long-term commitment to cultural equity across the creative ecosystem. Community-engaged and participatory cultural practices are essential to achieving these outcomes, especially amid social fragmentation, climate instability, economic precarity, censorship and rising inequality.

CCDN welcomes the opportunity to continue contributing to this work and to support a national cultural policy that reflects the full complexity and diversity of contemporary Australia.

This submission is endorsed by the Creative Cultural Diversity Network, a national network of more than 120 members working across the arts, screen and creative sectors, alongside the CCDN members, partners and supporters listed below.

Kind regards,

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