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Department of the Treasury  
Pre-Budget Submissions  
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(via online portal)

## **INVESTING IN A CREATIVE SECTOR THAT REFLECTS US ALL**

Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) welcomes this opportunity to make a Pre-Budget Submission for the 2025-2026 Federal Budget. Diversity Arts Australia is the peak national organisation promoting racial equity across the arts, screen, and creative sectors. We work to build a creative sector that reflects Australia's cultural diversity and believe creative expression is a fundamental human right, which strengthens and connects communities.

Our submission outlines two key budget proposals and seven recommendations for strengthening policy through focused areas of investment over the forward estimates. Our recommendations are made to ensure that the arts, screen and creative sectors are representative of the *whole* Australian community, and that underrepresented people can access employment in our industries.

This submission is informed by our work with thousands of Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM)<sup>1</sup> creatives and communities through our programs, talks, and events. It is also shaped by years of research and advocacy, including our role in facilitating the Creative Cultural Diversity Network since 2020. Additionally, our submission is guided by our collaboration with various grassroots organisations as well as our collective advocacy with the Consortium of National Peak Arts Organisations<sup>2</sup>, whose submissions we endorse. It is critical that we work together to build a robust, relevant and inclusive creative sector.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this Submission with you further.

Kind regards



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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Appendix A on pages 7-8: 'A Note on Language' for more information about DARTS' language choice.

<sup>2</sup> These organisations are: APRA/AMCOS, Ausdance National, Australian Museum and Galleries Assoc, Australian Music Centre, Australian Writer's Guild, BlakDance, Live Performance Australia, Moogahlin Arts Centre, National Association for the Visual Arts, Performing Arts Connections Australia, Regional Arts Australia, Screen Producers Association, Symphony Services Australia, Theatre Network Australia, Diversity Arts Australia.



## About Diversity Arts Australia

Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) is the national voice for ethno-cultural and migrant racial equity in the arts, screen, and creative 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. We act as a broker between artists, industry, educators and government, and commission content from culturally and racially marginalised (CaRM) creatives that articulates key issues and showcases leading practice. While our focus is on underrepresented cultural and linguistic diversity (CaLD), we work intersectionally and in partnership with other communities to deliver programs, in particular with First Nations, women, gender diverse communities, and people with disability.

## Summary of Budget Proposals and Recommendations

Proposal	Recommendations	Timeframe <sup>3</sup>	All years Investment
<b>1. Addressing exclusions and under-representation of CaRM creatives in our sector</b>	(A) Establish a dedicated CaRM Employment Fund	2025-26 ongoing over the forward estimates	\$4.24 million
	(B) Develop a CaRM Employment and Participation Pathways Strategy	2025-2026	\$530,000
	(C) Implement CaRM Employment and Participation Pathways Strategy	3 years (forward estimates) 2026-27 2027-28 2028-29	\$2.7 million
	(D) Develop an equity-tested funding framework for the creative sector	2025-2026	\$200,000
<b>2. Unlocking the potential of CaRM creatives as agents of change</b>	(E) Establish a National Equity and Inclusion Program	2025-26 ongoing over the forward estimates	\$3.7 million
	(F) Support the creation of CaLD/CaRM Digital Cultural Archives	2025-26 ongoing over the forward estimates	\$4 million
	(G) Support CaRM creatives and organisations in developing anti-racism initiatives through DARTS’ Antiracism and the Arts Program	2025-26 ongoing over the forward estimates	\$2 million

<sup>3</sup> This is our recommended delivery timeframe based on our extensive experience in undertaking similar projects.

## Proposal 1: Addressing exclusions and under-representation of CaRM creatives in our sector

Australia’s cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity is one of its greatest strengths. However, **CaRM creatives remain underrepresented across leadership, workforce participation, and creative production and content.**

A 2024 study published by Creative Australia revealed that while people from non-English speaking backgrounds make up 23% of the general workforce, they account for only 13% of the arts workforce<sup>4</sup> —indicating **a lack of employment and career development pathways**. Similarly, a 2022 study by Media Diversity Australia revealed that more than 78% of television news presenters, commentators, and reporters were from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, while only 5% came from Indigenous or non-European backgrounds<sup>5</sup>. Underrepresentation also impacts the opportunities that CaRM creatives have for career development and progression. As our own research demonstrates, CaLD Australians were underrepresented in every leadership role in every cultural sector, organisation type and jurisdiction<sup>6</sup>.

The exclusion of CaRM creatives from Australia’s cultural landscape extends beyond demographic underrepresentation—it **directly impacts the kind of stories Australians can create and experience**. For example, Screen Australia’s 2023 research found that nearly half of all Australian TV dramas featured no more than one main character from a non-Anglo-Celtic background<sup>7</sup>. This lack of representation reinforces a narrow cultural identity and limits our creative perspectives.

Addressing the exclusion and under-representation of CaRM creatives requires **targeted investment in representation, career pathways, and leadership opportunities**. To that end, Diversity Arts makes four recommendations under this proposal, outlined in page 4. Through this proposal, we align with *Revive*, Australia’s National Cultural Policy, particularly with the government’s commitment to ensuring that our cultural sectors reflect the full diversity of Australia’s creators and storytellers, as outlined in the policy’s pillar ‘A Place for Every Story’. Our approach also aligns with *Revive*’s emphasis on the ‘Centrality of the Artist,’ which recognises the artist’s role in shaping cultural narratives and driving systemic change toward inclusive creative leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> Thorsby, D and Petetskaya, K, Artists as workers: an economic study of professional artists in Australia. Creative Australia. (2024)

<https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/artists-as-workers-an-economic-study-of-professional-artists-in-australia/>

<sup>5</sup> Media Diversity Australia, Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories? 2.0 (2022)

[https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Who-Gets-to-Tell-Australian-Stories\\_2.0\\_FINAL\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Who-Gets-to-Tell-Australian-Stories_2.0_FINAL_pdf.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Diversity Arts Australia, Shifting the Balance Report (2019)

<http://diversityarts.org.au/app/uploads/Shifting-the-Balance-DARTS-small.pdf>.

DARTS is currently undertaking a second-phase research on leadership in creative sectors to be published mid-2025.

<sup>7</sup> Screen Australia, Seeing Ourselves 2

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/seeing-ourselves-2>

## **Proposal 1: Addressing exclusions and under-representation of CaRM creatives in our sector**

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Recommendation (A): Establish a CaRM Creator Fund.**

A CaRM Creator Fund is established and administered by Diversity Arts Australia with support from Creative Australia and Screen Australia, to provide targeted **investment** and tailored support to CaRM groups and individuals, helping them establish themselves in the sector and sustain long-term creative practices. This investment would create additional work and employment opportunities for CaRM creatives through seed funding, incubators, residencies and commissions, **ensuring underrepresented CaLD creatives enter and participate fully in Australia's cultural workforce.**

#### **Recommendations (B) and (C): Develop and Implement a CaRM Employment and Participation Pathways Strategy**

Support for Diversity Arts Australia and its partners to develop a 10-year national strategy and framework to increase CaRM employment across the creative sectors, with a focus on increasing historically excluded people's access to leadership and key creative roles. This would incorporate mentoring and career advice, networking, professional development, and intergenerational knowledge exchange, recognising the critical role of young people and emerging creatives in shaping a creative sector empowered by cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity. **This recommendation supports the Multicultural Framework Review's proposal to address employment barriers faced particularly by multicultural youth and newcomer migrants<sup>8</sup>.**

#### **Recommendation (D): Develop an equity-tested funding framework for the creative sector**

The Federal Government should have an expectation that the work of the arts, screen, and cultural organisations and companies they fund, particularly those that receive the majority of financial support, reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia. Implementing equity-tested funding means requiring organisations to demonstrate equity and diversity standards in boards, leadership, workforce, programming, and audience engagement. Diversity Arts would welcome the opportunity to work with funding and peak bodies to design and introduce conditional funding focusing on equity and diversity, similar to *Revive's* proposal requiring government-funded organisations to meet minimum workplace safety and employment standards<sup>9</sup>. **This recommendation also aligns with the National Anti-Racism Framework, which recommends content targets and audits to media and arts organisations<sup>10</sup>.**

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<sup>8</sup> Multicultural Framework Review. *Towards fairness: A multicultural Australia for all* (2024), pp. 92-24.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Government, Office for the Arts, *Revive: A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place – Australia's National Cultural Policy* (2023), p.110.

<https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/national-cultural-policy-revive-place-every-story-story-every-place>.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *The National Anti-Racism Framework* (2024), p.21.

[https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-11/NARF\\_Full\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_DIGITAL\\_ACCESSIBLE.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-11/NARF_Full_Report_FINAL_DIGITAL_ACCESSIBLE.pdf)

## Proposal 2: Unlocking the Potential of CaRM Creatives as Agents of Change

We acknowledge the Australian Government's commitment to multiculturalism and anti-racism, as demonstrated in initiatives such as the Multicultural Framework Review *Towards Fairness: A Multicultural Australia for All*, and the investment of \$7.5 million in the Australian Human Rights *National Anti-Racism Framework: A roadmap to eliminating racism in Australia*. These frameworks outline pathways to promote equity and inclusion for all Australians, while highlighting that **systemic and structural racism remain deeply embedded within our communities**, requiring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response, including the creative industries.

There are also recent developments in our communities affecting the wellbeing of CaRM communities and creatives. We are witnessing a troubling rise in hate crimes and incidents targeting Arab, Jewish, Muslim, and Palestinian communities in Australia. These racist attacks hinder artists and communities from freely expressing their cultural identities and exercising their fundamental human rights. This creates an environment that reinforces exclusion instead of amplifying diverse creative voices that are essential in helping society navigate and understand broader contemporary issues.

Australia's evolving political, social and cultural landscape underscore the urgent need for government support in fostering conditions that allow CaRM creatives to thrive, ensuring their ability to contribute meaningfully to national conversations and drive positive social change. Building on the recommendations in the Multicultural Framework Review and the National Anti-Racism Framework, which foreground the role the arts and media can play in combating racism and fostering social justice and understanding, we highlight the **critical contributions of CaRM creatives make as active drivers of change**.

In this context, we propose targeted investments through three recommendations to empower CaRM creatives —and the broader creative sector— to unlock their full potential in enacting meaningful change.

## Proposal 2:

# Unlocking the Potential of CaRM Creatives as Agents of Change

## Recommendations:

### **Recommendation (E): Establish a National Equity and Inclusion Program**

Support for a national equity capacity-building program delivered to key arts and creative organisations to strengthen and future-proof the sector. This program would focus on **building equity and inclusion capacities among organisations**, aiming to overcome participation barriers faced by CaRM creatives in the cultural workforce. A Victorian-based program, *Fair Play: Equity and Inclusion in the Creative Industries*, has been successfully trialed with 39 organisations by Diversity Arts to date.

### **Recommendation (F): Support the creation of the CaLD/CaRM Digital Cultural Archives.**

Development of a national CaLD/CaRM cultural archive to be rolled out by Diversity Arts Australia and its partner organisations. This initiative ensures that the historical contributions, creative legacies, and cultural heritage of culturally and linguistically diverse and migrant communities are preserved, valued and made accessible to future generations. The archive will be a powerful tool for learning and reflection, empowering future generations to bring about change. In 2025, Diversity Arts CEO Lena Nahlous will undertake a Churchill Fellowship to research the establishment of the Archive. **This initiative aligns with the Australian Government's commitment to strengthen the nation's infrastructure that preserves and celebrates cultural memory and heritage** as outlined in the National Cultural Policy *Revive*<sup>11</sup>.

### **Recommendation (G): Support CaRM creatives and organisations in developing anti-racism initiatives through DARTS' Antiracism and the Arts Program**

In line with Diversity Arts Australia's ongoing work to combat racism and empower CaRM workers and practitioners as community advocates<sup>12</sup>, a national Antiracism and the Arts Program would be established and administered by Diversity Arts Australia to implement a pilot national strategy **supporting CaRM creatives whose work focuses on racial equity in the arts**. This recommendation directly aligns with the Multicultural Review Framework<sup>13</sup> which calls for Creative Australia to lead the development of a pilot multi-year seed fund community-driven creative solutions to social challenges. The initiatives could complement each other, with Diversity Arts leveraging its expertise and community connections in the racial equity space to enhance impact. **DARTS' Antiracism and the Arts Program also adds value to the roadmap proposed by the National Anti-Racism Framework, whose key areas include the arts and media, by introducing a tailored national program focused on the creative sector.**

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Government, Office for the Arts, *Revive: A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place – Australia's National Cultural Policy* (2023), p. 11, 19

<sup>12</sup> For an overview, please see: <https://diversityarts.org.au/project/anti-racism-the-arts>

<sup>13</sup> Multicultural Framework Review. *Towards fairness: A multicultural Australia for all* (2024), p. 57.



## Appendix 1: A Note on Language

We have a quick note to share about our increasing use of the term ‘culturally and racially marginalised’. Since the late 1990s, the communities we represent have been categorised as “culturally and linguistically diverse” (CaLD), replacing the previous terminology of “non-English speaking background” and intended to be a broader, more flexible, and inclusive term. However, as Creative Australia’s *Towards Equity* report states that “while there is no widely used standardised definition of the term CaLD, and it is considered no longer fit for purpose, it is still used as a measurement of diversity across many policy areas including arts and cultural engagement”<sup>14</sup>. At DARTS, we have found CaLD to be wholly insufficient in supporting our work for antiracism and racial equity in the creative industries; it does not allow our work to support the most racially marginalised people in our creative communities. CaLD does not indicate experiences of race and racism, which have huge implications for individual and community outcomes. For example, CaLD encompasses middle-class Europeans living in affluent areas, and it encompasses people of colour seeking asylum. It is too broad a category to make meaningful, targeted interventions, and it is too broad a category to advocate on behalf of, with clarity.

Self-determined language is at all times preferred when referring to people’s identities. DARTS therefore aims to honour and respect the way communities and individuals prefer to be identified. However, the reality of Australian multiculturalism is that our demographics are so varied — with people identifying along nation-state lines, as ethnic and religious minorities, in specific language groups, and with several different ethnic and cultural identities — that it is helpful to utilise a category which can allow fundamental transformative change for negatively racialised people<sup>15</sup>. DARTS is compelled by the potential of the term ‘culturally and racially marginalised’ (CaRM). This terminology encourages a reckoning with the ongoing marginalisation of people who are not white, focusing on the systems of power and privilege which lead non-white communities to have less access to opportunities and resources.

Relatedly, DARTS also acknowledges the significance of the term ‘culturally and linguistically marginalised’ (CaLM). This term is emerging in the academic sphere (Soldatic, 2023) to recognise the marginalisation of people who are not Anglo-Celtic and do not speak English as their first language. Therefore, the term CaLM focuses on the power and privilege structures that restrict opportunities and resources for culturally and linguistically disadvantaged groups.

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<sup>14</sup> Australia Council for the Arts, *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia’s arts and cultural sector* (2021), <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Towards-Equity-Report.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See the Australian Human Rights Commission definition of “racialisation” and “negatively racialised”, <https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/commit-to-learning/key-terms>

The terminology we use to talk about race is always in flux and thus the term ‘People/persons of colour’ (POC) is often used colloquially to refer to/include diverse groups of non-white populations. We acknowledge that when addressing or referring to a particular race of individuals, POC should not be used synonymously. Therefore, it is crucial to take into consideration time and historical context, as well as the contemporary cultural mood to be inclusive of racial nuances. In this light, terms such as Bla(c)k, migrant and refugee are also used to recognise the vastly varying ways, degrees, and rates of racism experienced by these unique populations. In this way, we therefore focus our efforts towards ‘underrepresented’ CaLD communities and arts professionals to address CaLD communities that have experienced deeper historical and systematic exclusion through their racialisation as Other, based on perceptions of their race, culture, language, religion, and more. The CaRM category includes Australian-born people who may self-identify or engage with the languages, customs or cultural specificities of ancestral heritages that differ from those of white people. In our work we also refer to people, communities and creatives of colour to further emphasise that non-white communities experience the sector through the framework of race and as negatively racialised people. It is important to be able to gather data on ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and so until there is a more self-determined approach to such measurement, **DARTS uses ‘CaRM’ and ‘underrepresented CaLD’ to denote the above-named groups.**

Overall, DARTS uses this terminology while acknowledging that neither ‘CaRM’ or ‘underrepresented CaLD’ can capture the nuance and lived experience of people based on culture, ethnicity, residential status, language, class, gender and sexuality. Where possible, it is important to acknowledge and respect the different experiences and exclusions associated with the complex, intersectional realities of peoples’ identities. We recognise that language is always necessarily changing and shifting with the realities of our social world. DARTS welcomes the opportunity to continue learning from our creative communities and thought leaders on the most appropriate language to guide our research and advocacy.