

Commissioner Chin Tan
The Race Discrimination Team
Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Commissioner Tan,

Diversity Arts Australia is pleased to present this submission into the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework. We congratulate the Commission on this critical and timely initiative.

We write this submission against the backdrop of over two-years of a global pandemic that has been racialised, and resulted in significant anti-Asian racism nationally and internationally. This has been documented in the **COVID-19 Coronavirus Incident Report**¹, led by the Asian Australian Alliance and which Diversity Arts has supported.

We also write this in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement's global impact, manifesting in more awareness of First Nations deaths in police custody in Australia. BLM has =also further highlighted and sparked public conversations about issues of racism in the Australian arts, screen and creative sectors.

In our submission, we draw on this knowledge and our work on the **I am Not a Virus**² project, which commissioned 68 artists to respond to COVID racism. We also draw on the findings of the three "Lost Work for Creatives of Colour" surveys, and Diversity Arts' *Shifting the Balance* and *Voice, Agency and Integrity* reports.

Importantly, this submission has been informed by work with thousands of culturally and linguistically diverse, migrant and refugee artists and creative workers each year via our programs, talks, research and events.

We have also consulted on this submission with members of the newly formed national Creative Cultural Diversity Network to ensure the priorities we present are in line with community members who we represent and who are directly impacted by racism³.

Kind regards,

¹Asian Australian Alliance, *Coronavirus Racism Incident Report*, <https://asianaustalianalliance.net/covid-19-coronavirus-racism-incident-report/covid-19-racism-incident-report-preliminary-report/>

² <https://iamnotavirusaustralia.org.au/>

³ These included: Bigoa Chuol (Creatives of Colour collective), Cessalee Stovall (Stage A Change), Suzanne Pereira and Priyanka Martin (Contemporary Asian Australian Performance), Kim Bowers, Tiffany Lee-Shoy (Penrith City Council) and others.



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About Diversity Arts Australia

Diversity Arts Australia is the peak national organisation promoting racial equity across the arts, cultural and screen sectors. Diversity Arts works to build a creative sector that reflects Australia's true cultural diversity and believes creative expression is a fundamental human right, which strengthens and connects communities. While our focus is on cultural and linguistic diversity (CaLD), we work in partnership with other communities to deliver programs.

We are committed to working for ethno-cultural and migrant cultural equity and our work is underpinned by principles of human rights and the belief that a truly diverse creative sector is fundamental to a democratic, inclusive, sustainable society.

Diversity Arts combines service provision — resources, events, research, training — with creative production. We act as a broker between artists, industry, educators and government, and commission content from artists that articulates key issues and showcases best practice.

The Context: Australian arts and creative sectors

Following Article 27 of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, "Everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of community", however, in Australia this right is severely limited by structural exclusions faced by historically marginalised communities. State and Federal arts and creative sector funding bodies should have an expectation that the work that they fund, particularly those who receive the majority of funding and support, reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary Australia.

- We know that Australia is a culturally diverse nation. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Reserve Bank data, 39% of Australians are from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) background, with over 28% of Australians born overseas.⁴
- CaLD Australians are more likely to attend live performances, and creatively participate in the arts, than the national average.⁵

⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission (2018). The Australian Human Rights Commission data is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data 2011 and 2016, and the Reserve Bank of Australia's Race and Cultural Identity Employee Resource Group analysis: Australian Human Rights Commission (2018), op. cit., 7 and 33.

⁵ Australia Council for the Arts, *Creating Our Future: Results from the National Arts Participation Survey* (2020) <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/creating-our-future>

- However, this is not reflected on our screens, main stages or at the Board and executive levels of the country's leading companies, universities and government departments.
- As of 2018, CaLD Australians were under-represented across every leadership role in every cultural sector, organisational type and jurisdiction.⁶
- People from a non-English speaking background account for only 10 percent of the arts workforce, compared to 18 percent of the general workforce.⁷ This suggests there are not enough employment and professional pathways for CALD artists and creative workers.
- In 2016 Screen Australia found that only 18% of main characters on Australian TV were from non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds.⁸
- In 2017, performer and writer Kim Ho independently undertook research looking at cultural diversity in Australia's 10 major theatre companies. He found that 70 out of 95 productions were both written and directed by artists with an Anglo-Celtic background.⁹
- In 2021, Media Diversity Australia released the first comprehensive picture of who tells, frames and produces stories in Australian television news and current affairs. It found more than 75% of presenters, commentators and reporters have an Anglo-Celtic background while only 6% have an Indigenous or non-European background.¹⁰
- In 2021, the Australia Council released research demonstrating that Australia's arts and culture does not yet reflect the diversity of our people.¹¹
- Many of the communities who are most engaged with Australia's arts and culture are also underrepresented, under-resourced or under-compensated for their work. For example, while core to the energy of the sector, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse Australians are still often unable to access or shape its resources and decision-making.
- The pandemic has further exposed and heightened this precarity, as our forthcoming research on lost work during the pandemic shows.¹² CaLD and First Nations creatives

⁶ Diversity Arts Australia, *Shifting the Balance Report* (2019)
<http://diversityarts.org.au/app/uploads/Shifting-the-Balance-DARTS-small.pdf>

⁷ Australia Council for the Arts, *Making Art Work Report* (2017)
<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/making-art-work/>

⁸ Screen Australia, *Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in Australian TV Drama* (2016),
<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/seeing-ourselves>

⁹ Kim Ho, *Cultural Diversity in Australian Theatre* (2017)

¹⁰ Media Diversity Australia, *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?* (2021)
https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf

¹¹ 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>

¹² Diversity Arts Australia, *Lost Work 2.0 Survey Report* (February 2022)



been more likely to lose more work during the pandemic, due to precarious employment and underrepresentation in key, ongoing roles.

Recommendations

In line with the context of inequity in Australia's creative, media and screen sectors, Diversity Arts Australia makes the following recommendations to the AHRC National Anti-Racism Framework. Our vision is for Australian cultural life to reflect the diversity of the nation. Our recommendations are focused on underrepresented CaLD people working in the arts and creative sectors, including migrants and refugees, and does not explicitly cover First Nations artists and creative workers. Diversity Arts Australia asserts that any anti-racist efforts must put the rights and sovereignty of First Nations people first.

Research repeatedly shows the importance of the arts, screen and media sectors in shaping our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. While narratives that stereotype and erase can cause harm, the arts can also provide powerful, engaging and fresh conduits/ platforms for promoting anti-racism, social change and connect. A National Anti-Racism Framework must provide sector specific strategies to support diverse storytelling and cultural production. This has become particularly evident over the last two years as problematic and offensive representations of people of colour have consistently been called out publicly in the creative sector.

The creation and safeguarding of equitable access to arts and culture requires policy makers, funding bodies, and civil society representatives to share in the duty of creating the material conditions for artists and creative workers from marginalised, historically excluded backgrounds, to take up their right to participate in cultural life. Diversity Arts Australia makes recommendations towards guaranteeing the right of all to participate in arts and cultural life.

Employment and material support

The Australian arts and creative sectors need policy and accountability mechanisms that ensure people who experience structural exclusions can have opportunities to meaningfully participate in this economy. An Anti-Racism Framework should therefore facilitate extra supports and opportunities to historically excluded people (including First Nations communities and CaLD communities) including:

- **Equity tested funding** opportunities, including a minimum 39% of funding earmarked for underrepresented CaLD communities and artists to be representative of the Australian population.



- Funding that is earmarked for CaLD artists and creatives should be prioritised for initiatives that are organised and led by artists and creative workers from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- **Employment quotas** to ensure the professional development of CaLD artists and creative workers, particularly in leadership roles.
- **Diversity standards** across all arts and screen practice areas, which require a minimum of 3 diversity standards to be met. Funding from local, state, federal bodies should be contingent on such standards. See below for Best Practice examples.
- Importantly, beyond recruitment, structural interventions must also focus on **retention, promotion, tenure and compensation** among underrepresented artists and creative workers. Beyond diversity in the creative industries, **work conditions must be made culturally safe** and so cultural safety must be embedded into policies, practices and governance. Cultural safety must be embedded in the sector as CaLD people require spaces for safe discussion of key issues related to race and racism in the sector. This has become particularly evident to us as we consulted with members of our communities.
- **Meaningful collaboration and consultation between business, government and small community-led organisations.** Larger creative industries bodies, businesses, organisations and government departments need to work with and support the small to medium sector. Small to medium organisations provide greater support and pathways for culturally diverse creatives and communities into the arts, screen and creative sectors.
- **Ongoing education and training in anti-racism and cultural safety** in a creative sector context is critical and must be supported. Such training should be compulsory for all, but specifically for those in leadership roles who tend to be less culturally diverse.¹³
- While we know from our decades of experience and practice in the creative sector that there are major inequities in access to the creative sector, there is a need for more data. **Research must be supported** that quantitatively and qualitatively evidences the experiences of First Nations and CaLD artists and creatives and their positions in the sectors.
- Resourcing must also be provided to **evaluate diversity and inclusion initiatives**, prioritising how First Nations and CaLD creatives experience the initiative or program. Outcomes must thus be measured in terms of impact to communities (including the stories told, elders supported and arts practices elevated), in addition to diversity metrics.
- Crucially, **research and data collection must be led by communities of colour.**

¹³ See Diversity Arts Australia, *Shifting the Balance Report* (2019)
<http://diversityarts.org.au/app/uploads/Shifting-the-Balance-DARTS-small.pdf>

Best practice examples

- Diversity Arts Australia has a strong track record of practice and advocacy for cultural and racial equity in the Australian creative sectors, which has necessitated models of engaging businesses and organisations in the work of addressing systemic and interpersonal racism in these sectors. This has partially been through the important work of **embedding anti-racism into workplace education**. We have demonstrated particularly strong outcomes from our *Fair Play* training program, since 2019. We have so far engaged 28 organisations and businesses in Victoria, as well as national organisations such as The Australian Ballet and Australian Performing Rights Association. The evaluation of this program is due in February 2022, and we would be very happy to discuss the program with the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Diversity Arts also **commissions works by and for artists and creatives of colour that address key issues of race and racism**. The artists are provided with funding and support to create artistic works, from films to music and poetry, responding to critical issues. For example, our *I Am Not A Virus* exhibition project commissioned 68 Asian artists' work in response to COVID-19 racism¹⁴ We recommend that this model is adopted by the AHRC's Framework.
- Diversity Arts Australia endeavours to **connect with large arts institutions/ companies to facilitate organisational change**. For example, Diversity Arts Australia has developed Audit Tools, Equity Action Frameworks and Checklists for larger arts companies/ institutions as well as businesses as part of our Fair Play initiative.
- Australia's arts and creative sectors require a systematic initiative to support artists and creatives of colour to be **employed, retained and promoted, in culturally safe workplaces**. The work of Creative Access in the UK provides an example of best practice in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the creative economy.¹⁵ Australia requires the establishment of a body like Creative Access UK.¹⁶
- Diversity Arts advocates for **Diversity Standards** and targets for underrepresented CaLD people's participation across Australia's arts, creative, screen and media organisations. Government must work with organisations, institutions and business by advocating for such standards and tying funding to these standards. They could follow, for example, the British Film Institute's (BFI) approach to this issue, whereby content that receives funding from BFI must adhere to Diversity Standards.¹⁷

¹⁴ <https://diversityarts.org.au/project/i-am-not-a-virus/>

¹⁵ <https://creativeaccess.org.uk/>

¹⁶ See also the inclusive employment processes outlined by The Centre for Community Organisations in Canada: <https://coco-net.org/18-ways-weve-improved-our-hiring-process/>

¹⁷ For more information on the BFI's approach see: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/bfi-diversity-standards>



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- Diversity Arts also wishes to point the AHRC to our new **Creative Equity Toolkit**¹⁸ which could help guide the Commission's work in the creative sectors. We would be happy to provide further guidance on appropriate resources and initiatives in any further consultation. We consider the Toolkit to be an example of leading practice, providing practical and actionable tools and resources, alongside education, to support companies in their racial equity objectives.

¹⁸ <https://creativeequitytoolkit.org/>