DiversityArts Australia

Submission to City of Parramatta: Creative Parramatta 2025-2034

Diversity Arts Australia
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About Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS)

Diversity Arts Australia is the national voice for racial and cultural equity in the arts, screen, and creative sectors. Based in Western Sydney, specifically in the City of Parramatta, we are a peak body led by and for culturally and racially marginalised (CaRM) creatives[1]. Our mission is to transform the creative sector by centring cultural, linguistic and racial diversity through leadership, advocacy, research, training, creative production, and strategic partnerships.

Creative Parramatta: Alignment and Recommendations

We welcome the City's Draft Cultural Strategy (Creative Parramatta) and strongly support its vision of Parramatta as a key centre for Greater Sydney's and the nation's arts and cultural production, participation, and creative economy. As an organisation based, and deeply committed to Parramatta, and one with deep roots and networks in the region, we offer the following in response to the draft strategy:

Priority 1: First Nations First

We share the City of Parramatta's commitment to centring and advocating for Dharug and other First Nations' artists, cultural workers and organisations. We lead our work with an awareness of the history of the land on which we operate, embedding First Nations' knowledge and leadership across our programs and initiatives. This is demonstrated by our current partnerships with First Nations-led organisations, and through projects such as our upcoming *First Nations Knowledge Exchange*.

DARTS encourages the City of Parramatta to continue prioritising the leadership of local First Nations communities and creatives in all aspects of its creative strategy, including cultural programming, infrastructure, leadership, and funding.

[1] Please refer to Appendix A on pages 6-7: 'A Note on Language' for more information about DARTS' language choice.

Building on this priority and aligning with other key initiatives in *Creative Parramatta* —such as promoting Parramatta as a "Film Friendly" City (Priority 4)— the City could introduce a First Nations Filmmaking Initiative in consultation and partnership with Dharug and other First Nations communities, creatives and cultural organisations already leading work in this area (such as Blackfella Films). First Nations filmmakers in Australia are increasingly taking the lead in telling their own stories, bringing First Nations perspectives, cultures and talent to the screen, while earning both critical acclaim and commercial success. Supporting this vibrant movement locally will not only empower emerging filmmakers but also attract leading filmmakers and productions companies to base themselves in Parramatta.

Priority 2: Increase Access to Cultural Practice and Participation

DARTS' work is deeply grounded in increasing access and equity for CaRM creatives, many of whom live, work and produce in Parramatta. Our mentorship initiatives, leadership programs, digital tools (e.g. Creative Equity Toolkit), and creative commissions actively dismantle barriers to participation and support the sustainability of marginalised artists' practices. However, many of our programs are one-off due to limited, project-based funding, a challenge also faced by other organisations in the area. There is a clear need for embedded, ongoing leadership and industry pathways programs that increase access and participation in the creative sectors and foster long-term impact.

We strongly support the City of Parramatta's initiative to identify gaps and opportunities for marginalised artists and communities to engage in cultural programming, entrepreneurship, networking, and access to affordable creative spaces. We also endorse efforts to build and develop new programs—or attract existing ones to the area—through partnership and co-design, ensuring they are adapted to suit Parramatta's unique context.

There is a valuable opportunity to build on and connect with existing local initiatives, with a focus on long-term investment rather than off-project funding. Collaboration with the City's culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) and migrant communities and organisations, already engaged in multiple creative enterprises, presents significant opportunities. For example, festivals like Africultures could be amplified and invested in further to attract larger statewide and national audiences. Likewise, the vibrant work of local Indian communities in maintaining and showcasing India's cultural heritage through festivals and other creative initiatives could be supported to grow and reach broader audiences. Existing programs supporting emerging creatives, such as ACE's *Still Growing* and *Screen Trades*, also play an important role in developing pathways for access and participation, and highlight the potential for further strategic investment.

We firmly believe that it is through meaningful and formalised partnerships with community and cultural organisations, local stakeholders, and broader arts training and industry groups that this priority of increasing access to cultural practice and participation can be successfully achieved. In this light, we recommend that partnerships include a formal mechanism for co-design and consultation with CaRM creatives to ensure that policy implementation is informed by those with lived and creative experience.

Priority 3: Cultural Infrastructure, Precincts and Planning

We commend the City's focus on expanding cultural infrastructure, and strongly advocate that infrastructure planning must be inclusive of the needs of CaRM communities and small-to-medium creative organisations. In particular, infrastructure should include spaces for collaborative working, content creation, hybrid events, and disability access. As the City invests in major projects such as the new art gallery and upgrades to Riverside Theatres, we recommend embedding equity-centred design, programming, and evaluation targets from the outset. This includes embedding diversity targets and ensuring accessible and affordable access to these spaces, so that these world-class resources are shared with the community.

Additionally, DARTS is developing a national CaLD/CaRM cultural archive to be rolled out in 2026. Headquartered in Parramatta, this digital initiative aligns with the City's commitment to promoting Parramatta's rich history and living heritage. The archive will ensure that the historical contributions, creative legacies, and cultural heritage of local migrant artists and creative communities are preserved, valued and made accessible to future generations. We encourage the City of Parramatta to actively support and partner in this initiative.

Priority 4: Education, Employment and Skills Development

DARTS has a strong track record in developing sector-specific training, capacity-building, and professional pathways for CaRM creatives through our programs such as *Fair Play*, *Shifting the Balance Leadership program* (supported by City of Parramatta), and *StoryCasters*, which supports young people into the creative and media industries.

We strongly support the City's aspiration to position Parramatta as a regional hub for creative skills development and welcome further collaboration in this area, particularly with local schools, tertiary institutions and industry partners, including TAFE NSW, the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS).

In addition to the current focus on paid employment and commission opportunities to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) creatives through Council events, venues, and programs, we recommend expanding support to include career advice, mentoring and networking opportunities. These initiatives would strengthen professional pathways, create conditions for sustainable and long-term creative practices by CaRM and other creatives, and support the development of a vibrant, resilient, local creative community.

Priority 5: Cultural and Creative Leadership

DARTS plays a leadership role in building racial and cultural equity frameworks both locally and nationally. Our research initiatives (e.g. Shifting the Balance and Lost Work 2.0) and advocacy projects, such as the recently launched Anti-Racism & The Arts campaign, are driving sector-wide systemic change.

We see a strong synergy between our own advocacy projects and the City's intent to position Parramatta as a national and global leader in creative and cultural practice. In alignment with this goal, we recommend that the City of Parramatta embed racial, linguistic, and cultural equity as core pillars within its creative leadership initiatives. We are also enthusiastic about contributing to the proposed *Creative Parramatta Partnership*, bringing our expertise and networks to support advocacy initiatives.

Summary of DARTS Recommendations

1. Prioritise CaRM and First Nations creatives and communities in creative programming, entrepreneurship opportunities, infrastructure planning, skills development, and employment pathways.

2. Expand support for existing local programs and enterprises led by underrepresented CaLD and migrant communities, fostering ongoing partnerships and long-term impact.

3. Establish a formal mechanism for consultation with CaRM creatives to inform policy implementation.

4. Formalise partnerships with equity-focused organisations such as Diversity Arts Australia in delivering training, sector research, and leadership development.

5. Promote the inclusion of measurable targets and indicators for racial, linguistic, and cultural equity in Council-led and Council-supported events, initiatives, infrastructure, and leadership roles.

6. Support the development of the Creative Cultural Archives, a national project headquartered in Parramatta, to record, celebrate, and elevate the contributions of local culturally diverse artists and creative communities.

7. Embed racial, linguistic, and cultural equity frameworks across all priorities and initiatives, ensuring that diversity, access, inclusion and equity are central pillars of Parramatta's creative future.

Diversity Arts Australia commends the City of Parramatta for its wide-ranging and inclusive draft strategy. We look forward to contributing to and supporting its delivery through partnership, research, programming, and shared leadership.

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DiversityArts Australia

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"[2]. 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[3]. 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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[2] 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

[3] 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.