

# NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

## DISCUSSION PAPER SUBMISSION

*The Australian Government is seeking views from a wide range of people organisations and sectors on the National Cultural Policy especially on the proposed goals and strategies. You can contribute to the development of a new National Cultural Policy by making a submission.*

### HOW SUBMISSIONS WILL BE USED

Submissions will be used to help develop the new National Cultural Policy. If you agree, your submission may be displayed on this website.

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1. Use the template as a guide to completing your submission.
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Your emailed submission must be sent in one attachment, as a word document or pdf which is no bigger than 10megabytes

OR

By post to National Cultural Policy  
Office for the Arts  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
PO Box 6500  
Canberra ACT 2600

3. We will acknowledge the receipt of your submission by email.

If you have questions, please email [culturalpolicy@pmc.gov.au](mailto:culturalpolicy@pmc.gov.au) or call 02 6210 2794

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### SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

Please use this as a guide for your submission.

Name: Susan Timmins (Policy Officer)  
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Do you agree to your submission being made publicly available on the [www.culture.arts.gov.au](http://www.culture.arts.gov.au) website?\*

- Yes  
 No

#### 1. About you or your organisation:

ECCV is the statewide peak advocacy body representing ethno-specific agencies and multicultural organisations. For over 30 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between ethnic communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. ECCV has been a key player in building Victoria as a successful, harmonious and multicultural society. ECCV membership consists of approximately 210 organisations that represent groups with an ethnic or multicultural focus, organisations with an interest in these areas, or individuals who support ECCV. The majority of those members are not-for-profit community service organisations. They provide services in areas such as aged care, migration, discrimination, community harmony, employment, education and training, health and community services, law and justice, as well as the arts and culture.

#### 2. Do you support the development of a National Cultural Policy, and why?

The ECCV support the development of a National Cultural Policy, as we feel that this is a way to recognise the important and unique role that the arts and creative innovations play in the lives of Australians. We agree that the development of a National Cultural Policy will give the arts due import, by acknowledging and enhancing the benefits they can bring to our economy, our society and our international reputation. In addition to this, a National Cultural Policy will ensure that the arts play a central role in the shaping of a positive and progressive Australian identity, as we move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the most part, our support for the proposed National Cultural Policy rests on our view that, as stated in the Discussion Paper, "a creative nation produces a more inclusive society...by encouraging our ability to express, describe and share our diverse experiences – with each other and with the world".<sup>1</sup>

#### 3. What are your views about each of the four goals?

**GOAL 1: To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture.**

ECCV strongly endorse this goal. As an organisation, the ECCV recognise that Australia's First Peoples have a unique status and role in the nation's history and future. We support measures, such as this goal, which seek to protect, support and celebrate Australia's Indigenous culture. We feel that this is of utmost importance to our country and to improved relationships and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

<sup>1</sup> *National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*, 2011, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government: 3

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The ECCV is very pleased that this goal aims to ensure that “more Australians from diverse backgrounds and locations have the opportunity to participate in Australia’s cultural life”<sup>2</sup> and that “the arts and creative activity reflect and respond to our multicultural society”.<sup>3</sup> As the Minister for the Arts has noted, “[s]ince 1945, Australia has welcomed more than 7 million migrants to our shores, significantly broadening our social and cultural profile”.<sup>4</sup> It is essential that this history informs the design of the proposed National Cultural Policy.

ECCV consistently works to ensure that Victoria’s cultural diversity is recognised and celebrated. Goal 1 is closely aligned with our organisational mission. As such, we support the inclusion of this goal and submit that it is a vital addition to the proposed National Cultural Policy.

### **GOAL 2: To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture.**

As advocates for the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities of Victoria, the ECCV is very supportive of this goal, which seeks to improve access to and participation in Australian cultural life. Arts Victoria data indicates that CALD artists and communities are vastly underrepresented in terms of participation in the Arts.<sup>5</sup> Data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicates that Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) are 50 per cent less likely than other Australians to attend mainstream cultural venues and arts activities.<sup>6</sup> This participatory underrepresentation and lack of visibility on behalf of CALD artists and audiences can be linked to many factors, including the lack of access to emerging technologies, industry knowledge, and artistic networks and services. Geographic location and socio-economic issues can serve to create further barriers.<sup>7</sup> The ECCV are concerned by these findings and we submit that this speaks to the need for the National Cultural Policy to include strong provisions to ensure improved CALD access and participation in Australian cultural life, as artists and as audience members. Such provisions are essential to the proposed National Cultural Policy, which aims to ensure that “diversity is nurtured, supported and encouraged”<sup>8</sup>. We need to support and promote the artistic endeavours and innovation of CALD artists by providing them, and their potential audiences, with access to industry networks and knowledge, as well as information and communications technology.

### **GOAL 3: To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas.**

<sup>2</sup> *National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*, 2011: 14

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> The Hon Simon Crean, as cited in , *Multicultural Australians to comment on draft cultural policy* [press release], 11 August 2011, SC100/2011, Retrieved from: [http://www.minister.regional.gov.au/sc/releases/2011/august/sc100\\_2011.aspx](http://www.minister.regional.gov.au/sc/releases/2011/august/sc100_2011.aspx) , Accessed 29/09/2011.

<sup>5</sup> Multicultural Arts Victorian & The Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2005, *The Way Forward: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Community Needs Analysis in the Arts*, Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV), Melbourne: 20

<sup>6</sup> *op cit*: 3

<sup>7</sup> *op cit*: 23

<sup>8</sup> *National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*, 2011: 15

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The ECCV support this goal. We feel that Australian stories need to be shared, and their diversity noted, in order to promote better understanding and harmony. The ECCV strongly support improved recognition of “the central role of Indigenous arts, languages and culture”<sup>9</sup> and encourage continued and increased support and investment in projects of vital cultural maintenance and exploration in this area.

The ECCV are hopeful that this goal will assist Australians, and those overseas, to see how Australian stories have changed over the years, how our culture and identity has been enriched by our changing relationship with our indigenous population, by waves of immigration, and by our successful management of diversity and our embrace of multiculturalism.

In order that we may better embrace and understand the diversity and complexity of Australian stories, the ECCV join with Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) in “encouraging funding bodies to have a wider definition of art and creativity and to support living heritage as a part of ‘art’”.<sup>10</sup> The ECCV recently worked alongside Arts Victoria, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Heritage Victoria, the Immigration Museum and Museums Australia, in order to support a scoping study into the number and scale of community based multicultural heritage collections in Victoria. It was found that many of the 200 different ethnic groups in Victoria still hold collections of materials, which immigrants have valued enough to bring with them on their, sometimes perilous, journeys to this country. The material includes items related to their country of origin, their journey from their homeland and their settlement in Australia. These are very much Australian Stories and are also part of the Australian meta-narrative. This living heritage should be considered part of the identity of a culturally diverse Australia.

As Carrillo Ganter has noted, the arts provide us with “a universal language that enables us to understand and empathise with each other at a time when there is so much conflict and division between cultures and people”<sup>11</sup>. In order to fully harness this potential, we need to be always mindful of the way we use this language. The way we tell Australian stories is extremely important. In May 2011, the ECCV held a media forum entitled *Spotlight on Stereotypes*, in order to discuss issues of fairness with regard to the representation of certain CALD communities in the media. Forum participants noted several areas of concern, including a lack of diversity in the media, in terms of presenters and actors and the lack of young media graduates from diverse backgrounds. The ECCV feel that a National Cultural Policy which seeks to truly reflect the diversity of Australian stories, will need to address this underrepresentation.

### **GOAL 4: To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy**

The ECCV support MAV in their view that “the arts are most powerful mediums through which to foster a more socially cohesive and harmonious community”.<sup>12</sup> As such, we are pleased to support any policy that seeks to enlarge the role and capacity of arts in Australia, as a way of fostering social inclusion and cross-cultural good-will. Given the underrepresentation of artists from non-English speaking backgrounds, we are also pleased that that this goal focuses strongly on creating more opportunities to access and

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> Multicultural Arts Victorian & The Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2005: 9

<sup>11</sup> Clarkson, P., 2011, *Giving Voice: A History of Multicultural Arts Victoria*, Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne: XI

<sup>12</sup> *op cit*: 121

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participate in the arts and in associated industries. The ECCV hope that, with renewed recognition of the importance of the arts (which can be supported by increased opportunities to engage with the arts through primary and secondary school education), as well as increased promotion of and support for careers in the arts, CALD artists will become more visible in Australian cultural life.

Strong investment in the arts improves not only our cultural life, and the dynamism and strength of our communities; it also presents us with the opportunity to strengthen our economy and to position Australia as a world class arts-tourism destination.

In light of all of this, the ECCV support this goal and feel that it is important that the capacity of the arts, artists and the creative industries be strengthened, in terms of resourcing, recognition and promotion.

#### 4. What strategies do you think we could use to achieve each of the four goals?

##### Strategies and Recommendations:

**GOAL 1: To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture.**

##### **Recommendations:**

- 1.1: That a dedicated stream of Government funding, one commensurate with the diversity of our population, be allocated specifically to multicultural arts.**

Victoria is one of the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities in the world<sup>13</sup>. Despite this, a recent Needs Analysis, conducted by MAV found that many CALD artists and communities felt that multicultural art “remains a peripheral area in terms of policy, funding and resourcing”<sup>14</sup>. If the diversity of 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia is to be truly represented, multicultural arts need to be specifically resourced and promoted. This includes targeted support for emerging artists and community projects. Improved resourcing to the multicultural arts sector will not only improve access and participation on behalf of CALD artists and communities, it will improve the cultural life of the broader community by permitting a more representative, diverse and interesting array of cultural events and art forms. It would appear that this is something keenly sought by Australians, according to the recent *Australians and the Arts* report, “67% of Australians would feel more positive about the arts if there were more multicultural events and activities”<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Multicultural Arts Victorian & The Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2005: 2

<sup>14</sup> op cit: iii

<sup>15</sup> As cited in Multicultural Arts Victorian & The Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2005: 3

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**GOAL 2: To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture.**

**Recommendations:**

- 2.1 That the arts and associated industries be made more accessible to CALD artists, so that they may better engage with the industry and develop and promote their artworks.**
- 2.2 The creation of a centralised, online multicultural arts network and register.**
- 2.3 That resources be made available to open new arts orientated venues and to upgrade and maintain existing venues, so that they may be more accessible to emerging and CALD communities.**
- 2.4 That strategies be put in place in order that the arts may be made more accessible and be better promoted to CALD audiences.**

It would appear that many opportunities for CALD participation in mainstream cultural life are missed due to problems of lacking knowledge and inaccessibility. According to sector experts, this is due to a lack of industry communication and involvement with culturally diverse communities and artists. It has been observed that there is a “lack of communication, marketing and promotion strategies targeted to the multicultural arts sector”<sup>16</sup> and that, as a result, “the creative potential of cultural diversity has not been maximised”.<sup>17</sup> Communications and engagement with CALD artists and communities would be greatly assisted by the implementation of cultural awareness training programs in arts organisations, agencies and councils, as well as the improved availability, promotion and usage of language services. Also of assistance would be the hosting of regular (language accessible) information sessions, in order to familiarise emerging artists regarding available resources, training, employment and funding opportunities. This would be further complimented by language accessible grant writing and portfolio development workshops and in-language industry guides.

Community consultations have revealed that CALD artists struggle to gain access to local arts networks and, in turn, those who seek to gain access to emerging CALD artists (local governments, arts organisations, businesses etc.) also face considerable challenges.<sup>18</sup> It would stand to reason that communications technology could be put to good use in the creation of a centralised, online multicultural arts network and register. With appropriate funding the site could be promoted through ECCV, MAV, Migrant Resource Centres, community groups and multicultural organisations. With adequate resourcing, these organisations could also assist CALD artists to use the register, through one-on-one training and group skills workshops.

During consultations with MAV, CALD artists have consistently observed that gaining access to venues is a particular challenge to them in their work. In order that CALD artists can contribute to cultural life and develop new artworks, venue access needs to be improved. This can partly be achieved by the establishment of a fund dedicated to the creation of new arts spaces and the refurbishment and maintenance of those that already exist. In addition to this, the creation of arts venues that specifically showcase multicultural art and artists would be of great benefit to CALD communities and to the diversity of artistic experiences available to everyone.

As discussed earlier in this submission, ABS findings suggest that Australian’s from non-English speaking backgrounds are 50 per cent less likely than other Australians to attend mainstream cultural venues and events.<sup>19</sup> There are several strategies that can be put in place in order to improve access and to encourage CALD participation. Firstly, promotional material needs to be made more accessible. Promotional material should be made available in community languages and should include clear information regarding the location of

<sup>16</sup> op cit: 11

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> As cited in Multicultural Arts Victorian & The Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2005: 3

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venues, alongside a visual map. Public transport options also need to be made clear and in some cases additional transportation, such as coaches, could be made available to larger or more remote community groups. CALD audiences would be more confident in attending venues where visual and in language guides are made readily available. The availability of in-language community tours of major venues and arts precincts would be of particular benefit in attracting more diverse and representative audiences.

**GOAL 3: To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas.**

### Recommendations:

- 3.1 That Australia's complexity and diversity be recognised when Australian stories are told at home or abroad**
- 3.2 That CALD community members be encouraged to play a bigger role in the framing, production and telling of Australian stories.**
- 3.3 That a centralised database be created to document the living heritage art collections that have been brought to Australia by CALD community members**

Unfortunately, much of the Australian storytelling that occurs today still fails to properly capture the cultural and linguistic diversity of our society. Much of the television and film drama that is presented to audiences, here and overseas, does not represent the diversity of our population, or Australian lives. Defining and presenting the concept of "Australian" is a complex task and, all too often, we seem to fall back on tried and tested, overly simplistic representations of our country and country-folk. This is why it is important that we strengthen the role that multicultural arts plays in the telling of Australian stories, both here and overseas. By increasing the visibility of CALD artists, as actors, writers, directors, broadcasters and storytellers, Australian stories can become more representative. The ECCV encourages the development of scholarship, training and mentoring opportunities for CALD Australians in areas of under-representation. With this aim in mind, the ECCV has recently partnered with SBS, RMIT and Macquarie University in order to create a professional mentorship program for young people from refugee backgrounds, who are seeking a career in the media. We would encourage the government to create and resource similar programs, as well as opportunities to redress imbalances via scholarships and grants to members of underrepresented groups seeking to study or train in the arts.

The ethnic media sector is an important site of representative storytelling, skill procurement and cultural education. Platforms such as these play an important role in maintaining language, culture and identity. They also work to combat racism and stereotypes, by allowing the self-representation of minority communities. The communicative, independent and creative nature of ethnic media fosters innovation and embraces cultural diversity, as too should any National Cultural Policy. The eccv submit that this a valuable creative industry, one which requires increased and continued government support and resourcing.

The ECCV works to encourage people to look at Australian stories as encompassing the stories of the many people who have travelled to live in Australia, including the reasons for their journey. There are many degrees of complexity here, as those who have left their country of origin seek to carve out a place for themselves in this country. These stories take place amid different phases of government policy and fluctuations in public perception, in a country that is itself experiencing identity changes and debates. These are very much Australian stories and often those involved have kept and passed down important and emotive artefacts from their journey. These are artefacts that are important to all Australians and need to be properly regarded and recorded. Rather than continue to exist in unknown garages, cupboards and storage units, these collections need to be documented and safeguarded, so that all Australians may benefit from access to this rich heritage. Professional support is required by those who possess these collections, as the artefacts need to be identified and documented. Community members will need to have a great deal of confidence in those to whom they are entrusting their collections and it is important that those assigned this role be culturally sensitive and linguistically

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capable of engendering this trust and that this project is undertaken in partnership with the communities concerned. It is important that a centralised database of these cultural collections be established, so that this heritage and these Australian stories can be accessed and explored, in the interests of better understanding between cultural groups and a better understanding of Australia.

**GOAL 4: To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy.**

### Recommendations

**4.1 That the multicultural arts sector be better supported and promoted in order that Australia may come to be seen as a multicultural arts-tourism destination.**

**4.2 That CALD artists and communities be better encouraged to participate in the arts, as a means of strengthening social cohesion and adding to the diversity of artistic expressions.**

As already discussed, there is much to suggest that the potential of Australian multicultural arts has not been maximised. This is due to several factors including under-resourcing, a lack of mainstream promotion and a lack of industry knowledge within CALD communities. This submission has already recommended enhanced resourcing and promotion of the multicultural arts sector, however the importance of this cannot be overstated, in terms of achieving the goals that have been identified by the proposed National Cultural Policy. In light of this, the ECCV join MAV in their recommendation that increased investment in this sector, from all three levels of government, is required in order to redress the historical underrepresentation of CALD arts and artists. To this end, the growth of multicultural arts peak bodies should be better supported, with a view to the establishment of one in each state and territory.

In order to support emerging arts and innovation, it is also important that small and community arts groups are better promoted and resourced, so that they too may make their own unique contribution to our cultural life and to our diverse society.

Although the ECCV advocates for dedicated funding and support for the multicultural arts, this is with a view to creating representative balance and it is not our intention that multicultural arts be considered as separate niche area of arts and culture in Australia. We feel that it is extremely important that artists from all backgrounds are given the opportunity to collaborate, network and create uniquely Australian art together. This can be encouraged by government support for intercultural and cross-cultural artistic partnerships, programs and events, which will contribute to social inclusion and cohesion.

In order to enhance the capacity of multicultural arts to contribute to our society and economy, CALD artists need to be presented with improved access and pathways to careers in the arts. In order to do this, the ECCV submit that that the new National Curriculum should include several opportunities for Australian students to explore and experience multicultural arts. This would encourage more CALD artists to take up careers in the arts, especially when accompanied by scholarship and special grant opportunities (recommended above) for diverse artists.

The *Australians and the Arts* report revealed that “there is a potential interest in and unmet commercial demand for arts which truly reflect the diversity of national origins of Australians”<sup>20</sup>. Australia has the artistic potential to meet this demand, however many opportunities are being missed and undervalued. The ECCV submit that, the taking up of the recommendations made here would benefit our country, economically and socially, by creating the conditions for Australia to position itself as an multicultural arts-tourism

<sup>20</sup> ibid

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destination abroad, while at home the multicultural arts will be enlivened and better able to promote understanding, acceptance and cohesion within our society.

### **5. How can you, your organisation or sector contribute to the goals and strategies of the National Cultural Policy?**

The ECCV will strongly promote the implementation of the National Cultural Policy if the final product is consistent with our submission and addresses the main points we have made. As part of this process we will also work closely with key arts organisations in Victoria in order to implement the policy. ECCV will also advocate, on behalf of the sector, with mainstream arts organisations and encourage them to meet the goals of the National Cultural Policy. We will promote the National Cultural Policy through our membership and in collaboration with MAV, we would be prepared to deliver workshops as part of this process.

We are contemplating making Arts & Culture a key element in our 2012 state conference and if the new National Cultural Policy is finalised in time, it will be a key component on our agenda.

### **6 Are there any other goals you would like to see included in the National Cultural Policy?**

The ECCV wish to take this opportunity to express our support for amending the Australian Constitution to include a recognition of Australian Indigenous people and Torres Strait Islanders. We submit that, if cultural diversity is to be genuinely valued, this should be taken on as an additional goal of the proposed National Cultural Policy. If the National Cultural Policy is to achieve Goal 1, this is particularly important, as it will go some way towards better protection and support for Indigenous culture, by acknowledging the important contribution our First People have made to Australian culture, today and in the past. The National Cultural Policy must make this a particular priority, without this vital recognition the culture of our first people will not be duly valued and will remain neglected by the Australian Government's supreme and most defining document. Due recognition will also require a targeted education campaign, to teach all Australians about the depth and importance of his rich cultural heritage. The ECCV submit that this objective must be included in the National Curriculum and the proposed National Arts Policy. It is also very important that an education campaign be designed to specifically target CALD communities. Many CALD groups will not have received any education on the history and culture of Australian Indigenous people and Torres Strait Islanders, or may have experienced difficulty comprehending its significance due to language barriers.

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