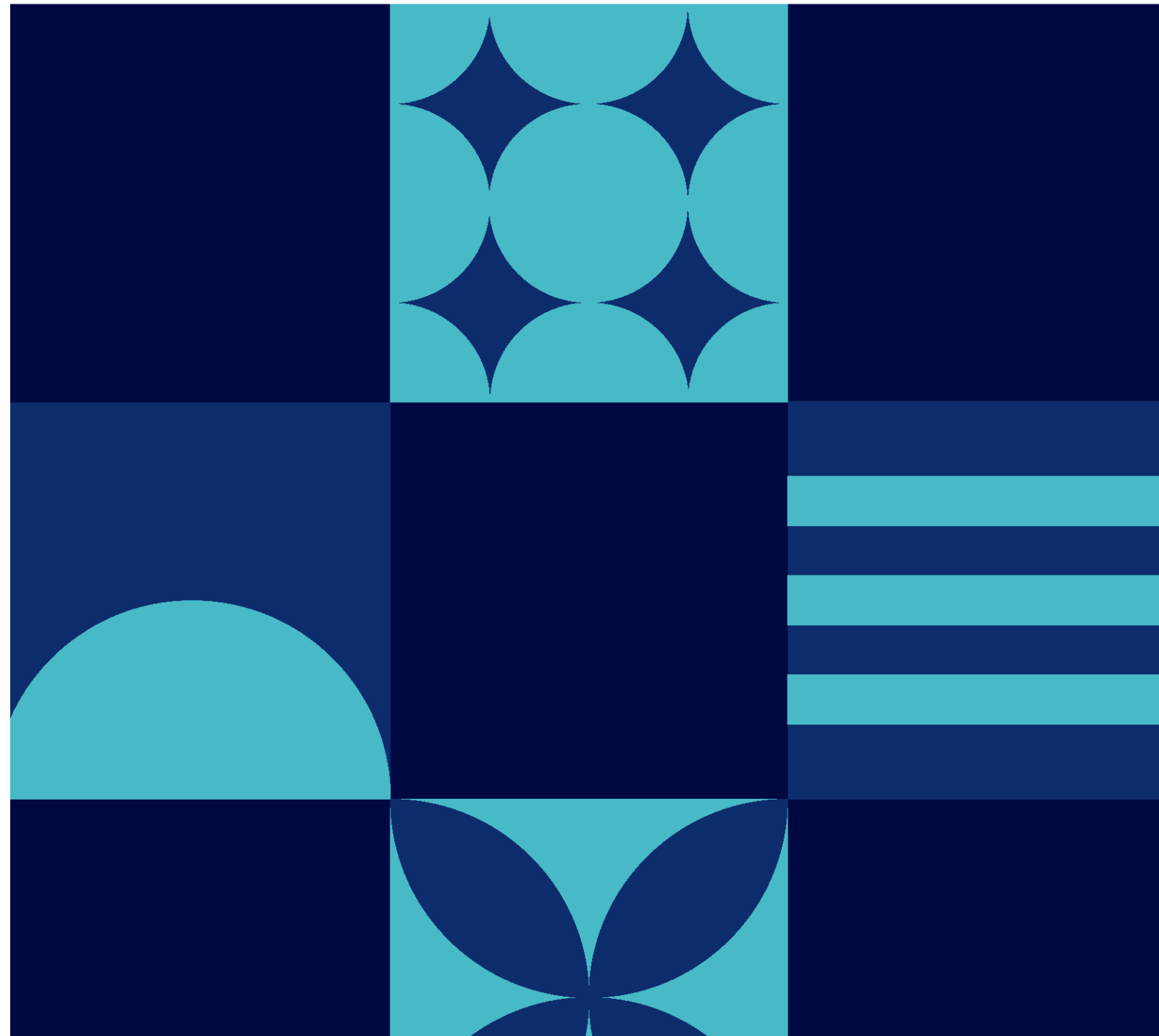
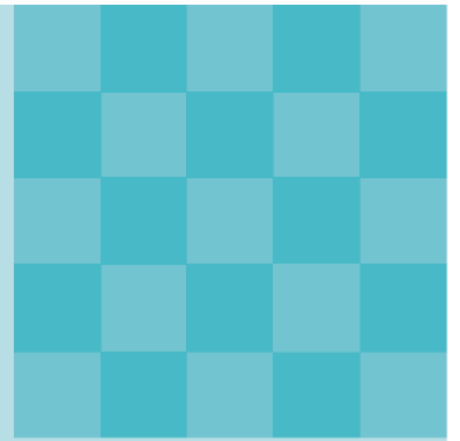




Federation of Ethnic Communities'  
Councils of Australia

# Revive -National Cultural Policy Submission 2026





## Who we are

**The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing people from multicultural communities and their organisations across Australia. Through the membership of state, territory, and regional councils, we represent over 1,500 community organisations and their members.**

## What we do

For 45 years, FECCA has proudly worked alongside culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the broader Australian society, and the government to build a successful, productive, and inclusive multicultural Australia where everyone, no matter their background or how long they have lived in this country, has opportunities to reach their full potential and contribute to the Australian nation. FECCA draws on the lived experiences of the people and their descendants who have migrated to Australia and the expertise of its extensive and diverse membership to develop and promote inclusive, innovative and responsible public policy that reflects the needs and perspectives of multicultural Australia. We are committed to building a strong, innovative and inclusive nation that harnesses its greatest strength, the diversity of its people.



## **Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA)-The Role of Arts and Culture in Social Cohesion, Resilience and Belonging**

**Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia** (FECCA) is Australia's peak national body representing culturally and linguistically diverse communities. FECCA has a unique role in advocating for policies that strengthen inclusion, equity, participation and belonging across Australian society representing communities from every cultural, linguistic and migrant background.

### **Executive Summary**

FECCA fully endorses Creative Australia's statement "Arts and culture shape how we see ourselves and how the world sees us. They strengthen our communities, drive innovation, and help us navigate the challenges of a changing world."

We welcome the review of *Revive* as a critical opportunity to reimagine the role of arts and culture in shaping Australia's future at a time of rising racism, increasing anti-migrant rhetoric, global instability, and growing social fragmentation.

Arts and cultural participation have the power to challenge division, humanise communities too often marginalised in public debate, and create shared spaces where people encounter one another beyond fear, prejudice, and political polarisation.

These themes were strongly reinforced through FECCA's recent national social cohesion consultations and National Community Pulse Survey, which highlighted growing community concern around social fragmentation, racism, misinformation, loneliness and declining trust. Participants consistently identified the need for safe and trusted spaces where difficult conversations around identity, belonging and difference can occur constructively. Arts and culture can play a unique role in creating these spaces through storytelling, intercultural dialogue and shared creative practice.

In this context, investment in multiculturalism is not optional, it is fundamental to strengthening social cohesion, democratic participation, and a shared sense of belonging in modern Australia. Through a diversity of cultural expressions, we enable people to feel connected, represented and to learn about others in a creative way that contributes to the identity of Australia as a diverse nation.

Internationally, organisations such as UNESCO have increasingly positioned culture as essential infrastructure for sustainable development, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. UNESCO's work recognises that cultural participation strengthens democratic participation, resilience, and social trust in times of rapid change.

While *Revive* has delivered important structural reforms and laid foundations across the sector, the next phase of national cultural policy presents an enormous opportunity to navigate change and systemically embed multiculturalism, anti-racism, and democratic principles across all areas of Australia's creative and cultural life.

FECCA strongly recommends these principles must underpin all five pillars of the policy as core cultural infrastructure. This includes aligning the National Cultural Policy with broader national frameworks, including:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Anti-Racism Framework;
- The Multicultural Framework Review; Towards Fairness: A Multicultural Australia for All;
- The Measuring What Matters Wellbeing Framework;

*International Frameworks including*

- UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are intended to support a more inclusive, participatory and socially cohesive national cultural framework that reflects the realities of contemporary multicultural Australia. While each recommendation aligns with specific Revive pillars, together they recognise that cultural participation, representation, intercultural dialogue and equitable access must be embedded across all areas of Australia’s cultural policy architecture. FECCA’s recommendations position arts and culture not simply as creative or economic activity, but as essential democratic and social infrastructure that strengthens belonging, resilience, participation and community trust in an increasingly diverse and rapidly changing society.

**1. Recognising, respecting and celebrating the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.**

**2 Strengthen Revive by explicitly recognising culturally diverse arts and cultural participation as essential infrastructure for building a productive, resilient and socially cohesive Australia.**

**3. Strengthening the interconnection between Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and National Cultural Policy**

**4. Recognise the special role of artists and their creative collaborators in fostering intercultural empathy**

**5. Develop a National Cultural Equity and Inclusion Framework, to strengthen representation, cultural capability, equitable participation and social cohesion**

**6. Fund cultural truth-telling with targeted investment in First Nations, multicultural and community led arts to ensure democratic participation**

**7. Embedding audience diversity and cultural inclusion across Australia’s arts and cultural sector to strengthen inclusion.**

## **RECOMMENDATION ONE**

***Recognising, respecting and celebrating the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.***

**(Revive Pillar 1 - First Nations First)**

**“Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways we build understanding between people and communities.” Linda Burney, former Minister for Indigenous Australians.**

FECCA acknowledges that we live, work and celebrate on unceded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and pays respect to Elders past and present. FECCA strongly supports the First Nations First pillar of *Revive* and affirms that First Nations cultures, languages, storytelling and creative practices are foundational to Australia’s identity, history and future.

Australia’s First Nations cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures in the world and are a source of profound cultural, social, diplomatic and economic strength for the nation. The growing global recognition of First Nations arts and cultural practices has enriched Australia’s international reputation and deepened understanding of the richness and complexity of this continent’s histories and living cultures.

FECCA recognises that a strong and confident multicultural Australia must be grounded in truth-telling, respect for First Nations sovereignty, and the protection of First Nations cultural authority. In a time of global uncertainty and growing division, and a failed YES campaign we stand at an important crossroads.

Embracing the oldest continuing culture on earth, we can nurture a sense of belonging for all peoples through an approach that is grounded in First Nations’ solidarity and recognises the diversity of all stories.

The choices we make now will shape not only our national identity, but the strength and direction of our future.

*FECCA recommends:*

- recognising First Nations cultures, languages, storytelling and creative practices as foundational to Australia’s national identity, cultural life and future;
- embedding truth-telling, respect for First Nations sovereignty and protection of First Nations cultural authority across all areas of national cultural policy;
- strengthening long-term investment in First Nations-led arts, cultural initiatives and language revitalisation as essential cultural and democratic infrastructure;

- supporting intercultural approaches that foster understanding, solidarity and shared belonging through respectful engagement with First Nations histories, cultures and perspectives;
- ensuring First Nations leadership, decision-making and cultural authority are embedded across Australia’s arts and cultural institutions, funding bodies and policy frameworks;
- recognising First Nations arts and cultural practice as central to Australia’s international cultural identity, social cohesion and collective national story.

## **RECOMMENDATION TWO**

***Strengthen Revive by explicitly recognising culturally diverse arts and cultural participation as essential infrastructure for building a productive, resilient and socially cohesive Australia.***

### **(Revive Pillar 2 - A Place for Every Story)**

*A Place for Every Story* must embrace and privilege non-western ways of doing, knowing and being, to tell stories that illuminate our humanity and improve intercultural understanding, given our increasing diversity. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world, with 32.0% of the population born overseas and 51.5% of residents being first- or second-generation migrants.

Despite principles of access and representation throughout *Revive*, significant gaps remain particularly through *A Place for Every Story*. CALD communities and artists who are vastly underrepresented and face disadvantage are not explicitly recognised in the policy, despite their central role in shaping the nation’s cultural life.

At a time of rising racism, increasing anti-migrant rhetoric, global instability, and growing social fragmentation, the role of arts and culture in fostering empathy, dialogue, and shared belonging has become even more important. Research by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute indicates increasing experiences of racism and discrimination in Australia, placing growing pressure on social cohesion and public trust.

The Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. (2024) report *Towards Fairness – A Multicultural Australia for all: Multicultural Framework Review* recognises arts and culture as critical social infrastructure for participation, belonging, inclusion, and social cohesion. It highlights the importance of sustained investment in community cultural programs, community-led initiatives, and embedded arts workers within multicultural organisations to strengthen connection and participation across diverse communities.

These findings reinforce the urgent need to invest in inclusive cultural participation, intercultural dialogue, and community-led creative initiatives that foster belonging, trust, and connection across communities.

This investment is particularly important in regional and rural Australia, where communities often experience reduced cultural infrastructure, social isolation and fewer opportunities for intercultural engagement. Community-led arts initiatives can play a critical role in strengthening local participation, resilience and social cohesion across regional communities.

To genuinely achieve the vision of A Place for Every Story, Australia's national cultural policy must explicitly embrace and reflect multicultural Australia as a central part of the national narrative. While *Revive* acknowledges diversity broadly, multicultural Australia is not visible within the framing of the pillar, despite culturally and linguistically diverse communities representing an increasing and vital part of contemporary Australia.

A strong multicultural Australia requires more than economic participation alone. It requires opportunities for people to connect, create, participate, share stories and see themselves reflected in the nation's cultural life. This aligns closely with the Australian Government's *Measuring What Matters Wellbeing Framework*, which recognises social cohesion, inclusion, cultural participation and belonging as core components of national wellbeing and a thriving democracy.

It also requires recognising and valuing the significant artistic, cultural and artisanal skills many migrants bring with them to Australia. Across communities there are highly skilled artists, craftspeople, musicians, storytellers and cultural practitioners whose knowledge and creative capacities are often underutilised or disconnected from Australia's cultural institutions and creative industries. Strengthening pathways that recognise and activate these skills would enrich Australia's cultural life while supporting participation, employment pathways, intergenerational exchange and community connection.

Change necessitates that we also have a conversation about leadership. Currently there are few leaders, managers and producers employed that hold the cultural knowledge necessary to drive this change.

Diversity Arts Australia's (DARTS) '*Shifting the Balance*' Report outlines discrepancies between the high population of Australians who are from a CALD background, the high rates of CALD participation in the creative sector, and the low levels of representation of CALD people in the Australian creative sector, including decision-makers. This would overall strengthen the creative sector and our community. The report is highly relevant to social cohesion because it argues that cultural participation alone is not enough, diversity must also exist where decisions are made.

Arts leadership shapes:

- whose stories are funded;
- whose voices are visible;
- what narratives become “mainstream”;
- who feels they belong; and
- how institutions reflect contemporary Australia.

*FECCA recommends:*

- develop a creator’s fund that responds to themes of migration, settlement, colonisation and belonging to support intercultural dialogue, truth-telling and social cohesion;
- strengthen support for non-western, refugee and culturally diverse storytelling through long-term investment in multicultural, community-led and culturally specific arts organisations and practice;
- strengthen pathways for culturally diverse leadership, participation and decision-making across Australia’s arts and cultural institutions;
- integrate arts and cultural policy with broader multicultural, anti-racism, human rights and social cohesion frameworks;
- recognise arts and cultural participation as essential preventative social infrastructure that strengthens belonging, trust, democratic participation and community resilience;
- targeted investment in regional, rural and community-led intercultural arts initiatives that strengthen participation, belonging and local resilience;
- youth-led and intergenerational creative initiatives that connect younger and older Australians through storytelling, digital media, music, crafts and shared cultural practice;
- initiatives that support migrant artists, artisans and cultural practitioners to utilise and share under-recognised creative skills and cultural knowledge within Australia’s cultural and creative sector;
- recognising multicultural arts and cultural practice as central to Australia’s identity, social cohesion, resilience, and collective national story.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE**

#### ***Strengthening the interconnection between Multicultural Affairs of Citizenship and National Cultural Policy***

##### **(Revive Pillar 4 -Strong Cultural Infrastructure)**

Australia's multicultural and cultural policy frameworks are deeply interconnected and should not operate in isolation. Revive must support the creation of new work that interrogates and elevates intercultural, intersectional and intergenerational practices.

Creative Australia would strongly benefit from cross portfolio connection with the Multicultural Affairs to embed multiculturalism, social cohesion and culturally diverse creative leadership across national cultural policy.

Historically, multicultural policy has been seen as periphery to the arts and only focused on social policy outcomes, settlement and service delivery while cultural policy has operated in isolation through arts and creative sector frameworks.

In an increasingly diverse Australia, this separation no longer reflects the lived reality of communities. Arts and cultural participation are among the most powerful ways multiculturalism is experienced in everyday life. This includes creating opportunities for communities not simply to coexist, but to actively engage with one another through intercultural dialogue, collaborative creative practice and shared cultural experiences that strengthen trust, participation and democratic resilience.

The landmark Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia report, *An Anti-Racism Framework: Experiences and Perspectives of Multicultural Australia*, was commissioned by the [Australian Human Rights Commission \(AHRC\)](http://ahrc.gov.au/) to serve as the evidence-based foundation for the national anti-racism strategy. The FECCA report details the lived experiences of over 1,200 individuals across Australia. It confirms that racism is not casual or isolated, but widespread throughout the country and entrenched in society.

Government policy should recognise cultural diversity as a nation-building asset that strengthens Australia socially, culturally and economically. The arts play a critical role in realising this potential. FECCA recommends stronger collaboration between multicultural affairs and national cultural policy. In an increasingly fragmented and uncertain environment marked by rising racism, misinformation, social isolation and declining trust in institutions, arts and cultural participation can play a critical role in strengthening social cohesion and democratic resilience.

Revive should support the creation of new work that interrogates and elevates intercultural, intersectional and intergenerational practices to:

- strengthen intercultural understanding,
- support anti-racism objectives,
- increase culturally diverse participation and leadership,
- foster stronger intercultural community connections,
- contribute to a more resilient and cohesive society.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR**

***Recognising the special role of artists and their creative collaborators, in fostering intercultural empathy***

**(Revive Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)**

***“Art is not a luxury. Art is at the centre of how we express ourselves as a society, how we tell the truth about our past, and how we imagine our future.”***

***Tony Burke, Australian Minister for the Arts, speaking in relation to the National Cultural Policy Revive.***

Artists do more than produce creative work, they are storytellers, bridge-builders, truth-tellers and community connectors who help societies make sense of complexity, change and identity. Through collaboration across cultures, generations and communities, artists create spaces for dialogue, empathy and shared understanding that strengthen democratic participation and social cohesion. Recognising the special role of artists and their creative collaborators is essential to building a socially cohesive, inclusive and culturally confident Australia. We therefore need to make sure that all artists are at the table. *Revive* must support art that draws attention to the work that is still needed to future proof our identity as a society that deeply values its diversity.

CALD artists must not be peripheral contributors to the Creative Industries, but essential contributors who can build intercultural understanding and social resilience. Supporting diverse artistic practice is an investment in national wellbeing, social cohesion, belonging and the democratic health of Australia.

Data from *Creative Australia's National Arts Participation Survey* reveals that 60% of Australians explicitly agree that the arts help us understand other people, viewpoints, and cultures. Investment in culturally diverse artists and arts practice through *Revive* is critical at this point in time to strengthen inclusion, counter division and build social cohesion that governments now must recognise as essential national infrastructure and critical for the well-being of our community.

Creative practice creates shared spaces where communities encounter one another, tell stories, build empathy, and strengthen democratic participation. This is particularly critical in a period marked by rising polarisation, racism, loneliness, economic insecurity and declining trust.

Importantly, these spaces also create opportunities for difficult but necessary conversations around racism, exclusion, identity, migration and belonging to occur in constructive and culturally safe ways. Social cohesion does not emerge through silence or avoidance of difference, but through meaningful participation, dialogue and mutual recognition.

International initiatives such as FeelBeit in Jerusalem demonstrate the unique role arts and culture can play in building social cohesion in divided societies. By bringing together communities across cultural, religious, and political differences through shared artistic experiences, FeelBeit creates spaces for dialogue, empathy, and human connection. Its work shows that arts participation is not simply cultural expression it is vital social infrastructure that strengthens belonging, trust, and coexistence.

FeelBeit describes itself as a “culture without borders” initiative that brings together Jewish, Arab, Israeli, Palestinian, and international artists and audiences through music, performance, dialogue, food, and shared cultural experiences in Jerusalem. The project explicitly positions art as a tool for encounter, empathy, and coexistence.

What makes FeelBeit particularly relevant to discussions of social cohesion is that it does not avoid complexity or difference. Instead, it uses creative practice as a neutral and culturally safe accessible space where difficult conversations, mutual recognition and human connection can occur.

This approach strongly resonates with themes emerging through FECCA’s national social cohesion consultations, where participants consistently identified the need for trusted community spaces capable of facilitating respectful dialogue, intercultural encounter and shared experiences across difference.

Research underpinning the *Measuring What Matters* agenda demonstrates that cultural participation contributes directly to wellbeing outcomes including social connection, mental health, belonging, resilience and community trust.

For multicultural Australia, the arts are one of the few spaces where diverse communities can actively shape the national story.

With more than 50% of Australians either born overseas, or having at least one parent born overseas, the fact of our diversity is incontestable, how we live together is the challenge of our times. Increasingly, we reside in a country divided, along lines of ideology, race and class. These struggles are the frame in which we must work, bringing creators, communities and audiences into powerful, discomforting but enriching dialogues, about the kind of society we seek to become.

*FECCA recommends:*

- recognising artists and creative collaborators as essential contributors to social cohesion, democratic participation and community resilience;
- supporting creative practice that creates culturally safe spaces for dialogue, encounter and difficult conversations around identity, racism, migration, belonging and social change;
- investing in community-based and participatory arts initiatives that strengthen intercultural understanding, trust and shared belonging across diverse communities;
- supporting intergenerational and collaborative creative practice that connects communities through storytelling, shared cultural experiences and artistic exchange;
- recognising arts and cultural participation as a contributor to wellbeing, mental health, social connection and democratic resilience within broader national wellbeing frameworks;
- strengthening support for artists and creative practitioners working across communities to foster participation, inclusion and intercultural engagement, particularly in times of increasing social fragmentation and polarisation.

## **RECOMMENDATION FIVE**

***Develop a National Cultural Equity and Inclusion Framework for the arts sector, to strengthen representation, cultural capability, equitable participation and social cohesion***

### **(Revive Pillar 4 – Strong Cultural infrastructure)**

As Australia confronts increasing social fragmentation, investment in multicultural arts and diverse cultural expression should be understood not as discretionary spending, but as a strategic nation-building response aligned with the Government's own wellbeing framework.

Australia's arts and cultural sector has a unique opportunity to strengthen social cohesion, democratic participation and cultural confidence by embedding equity, inclusion and anti-racism strategies and initiatives across creative and cultural systems.

FECCA recommends the development of a national, industry-led Cultural Equity and Inclusion Framework aligned with Creative Australia's *Revive National Cultural Policy*, the Australian Human Rights Commission's *National Anti-Racism Framework*, the *Multicultural Framework Review* and the Government's broader wellbeing agenda.

This framework should position multiculturalism as a cultural nation-building and leadership opportunity, ensuring Australia's cultural institutions, workplaces and creative industries reflect the diversity, creativity and lived experiences of contemporary Australia as well as encourage the work that is created to reflect the voices of our community and the stories we want to hear.

The framework should be co-designed with First Nations, CALD and other equity-led organisations to strengthen representation, participation and shared leadership across the sector. It should establish practical tools, standards and pathways that support inclusive governance, culturally informed decision-making, equitable commissioning, diverse programming, fairer funding and shared partnership models.

A key priority should also be strengthening support for independent artists, freelancers and sole traders from refugee and culturally diverse backgrounds by improving access to professional development, advocacy, legal assistance and copyright information, mentoring, wellbeing supports and culturally safe pathways. This will help ensure diverse artists and creative workers can participate fully, safely and sustainably in Australia's creative life.

The framework should also help build cultural capability and literacy across government agencies, funding bodies, boards, assessment panels and cultural institutions to ensure decision-making reflects contemporary multicultural Australia and is informed by cultural knowledge, lived experience and inclusive practice. This lens as well as being used externally should also be used internally as well in Creative Australia including the Board structure, staff and funding panels to ensure that multicultural and new and emerging communities are represented.

CALD artists and representation cannot be an afterthought.

*FECCA recommends:*

- developing a National Cultural Equity and Inclusion Framework aligned with Revive, the National Anti-Racism Framework, the Multicultural Framework Review and the Government's broader wellbeing agenda;
- co-designing the framework with First Nations, CALD and other equity-led organisations to strengthen shared leadership, participation and representation across the arts and cultural sector;
- embedding cultural capability, inclusive governance and culturally informed decision-making across funding bodies, assessment panels, boards and cultural institutions;
- establishing fairer and more transparent pathways for equitable commissioning, programming, funding and partnership models across the creative industries;
- strengthening support for independent artists, freelancers and sole traders from refugee and culturally diverse backgrounds through professional development, mentoring, advocacy and culturally safe support pathways;

- ensuring Creative Australia’s internal structures, including boards, staffing and funding panels, reflect the diversity and lived experiences of contemporary multicultural Australia.

## **RECOMMENDATION SIX**

### ***Fund cultural truth-telling with targeted investment in First Nations, multicultural and community led arts to ensure democratic participation***

#### **(Revive Pillar 2 – A Place for Every Story)**

Australia must move beyond narrow understandings of multicultural and community arts as primarily celebratory or “harmony” based activities and recognise the arts which embrace diversity as essential infrastructure for innovation, truth-telling, dialogue and democratic participation. *Revive* can play a critical role in shaping public discourse, challenging prejudice and building deeper community understanding across difference.

FECCA recommends targeted investment in multicultural and community-led arts initiatives that create space for honest conversations about racism, exclusion, identity, migration and belonging. Through storytelling, music, theatre, literature and visual arts, communities can challenge harmful narratives, confront structural inequities and foster empathy and connection within local communities whilst developing compelling diverse contemporary Art.

This approach directly supports FECCA’s broader recommendation to address the public discourse, leadership and systems that drive racism and social division. It also aligns with the National Anti-Racism Framework, the Multicultural Framework Review and the Government’s *Measuring What Matters* agenda, all of which recognise that social cohesion requires not silence or superficial harmony, but meaningful participation, representation and shared understanding.

As former Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane observed:

“The arts must also consciously question the status quo. This has always been the role of the arts: to challenge, to disrupt, to speak truth to power; to empower and to inspire; to compel viewers, listeners and audiences to confront injustices and contemplate change.”

FECCA also encourages the exploration of community-based pilot models where trusted multicultural and community organisations are supported through targeted grants to design and deliver local creative initiatives that foster participation, intercultural dialogue, belonging and community connection. Pilot initiatives can help identify innovative and scalable approaches to strengthening social cohesion through arts and cultural participation.

FECCA believes supporting culturally and linguistically diverse artists and creative practitioners to undertake work that challenges the status quo is an investment in confronting injustices, navigating change and building a more inclusive multicultural national story.

*FECCA recommends:*

- targeted investment in First Nations, multicultural and community-led arts initiatives that support truth-telling, dialogue and democratic participation;
- supporting creative work that challenges racism, exclusion, harmful narratives and structural inequities through storytelling, music, theatre, literature and visual arts;
- recognising arts and cultural participation as a critical mechanism for fostering meaningful participation, intercultural understanding and shared belonging across diverse communities;
- supporting culturally safe creative spaces where communities can engage in honest and constructive conversations around identity, migration, belonging and social change;
- piloting community-based arts initiatives through trusted multicultural and community organisations to identify innovative and scalable approaches to strengthening social cohesion and participation;
- strengthening support for culturally and linguistically diverse artists and creative practitioners whose work contributes to a more inclusive, reflective and socially connected national story.

## **RECOMMENDATION SEVEN**

***Embedding audience diversity and cultural inclusion across Australia’s arts and cultural sector to strengthen inclusion.***

### **(Revive Pillar 5 – Engaging the Audience)**

Cultural institutions should prioritise strategies that expand audience diversity by investing in culturally inclusive programming, multilingual access, community-led initiatives, affordable participation, and pathways for underrepresented and marginalised communities to shape and experience Australia’s cultural life. This includes sustained support for multicultural arts organisations, new and emerging communities, regional and remote access, disability inclusion, youth participation, and culturally safe creative spaces that reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia.

Importantly, audience development is not simply about attracting “new audiences” to existing structures. It requires democratising the processes, rethinking programming, leadership,

communication, partnerships, pricing, accessibility, and community engagement and participatory practice so that diverse communities are active participants, collaborators, and co-creators of cultural life.

Inclusive audience development transforms arts participation from a transactional activity into essential social infrastructure. By engaging diverse communities as active creators, storytellers, and cultural leaders, the arts foster empathy, trust, intercultural understanding, and shared belonging across increasingly diverse communities and divides.

FECCA recommends dedicated targeted investment in diaspora communities, culturally diverse artists, arts workers, programmers, and multicultural and community-led organisations, alongside accessible programming and co-designed initiatives that ensure all Australians can participate in and see themselves reflected in the nation's cultural life.

FECCA supports bold storytelling through the arts that helps shape a more just inclusive and vibrant multicultural society.

*FECCA recommends:*

- embedding audience diversity and cultural inclusion as core principles across programming, communication, partnerships, accessibility and audience engagement strategies;
- investing in multilingual, culturally accessible and affordable arts programming that enables broader participation across Australia's diverse communities;
- supporting multicultural and community-led organisations to co-design initiatives that reflect the lived experiences, stories and creative aspirations of underrepresented communities;
- strengthening participation pathways for regional and remote communities, young people, people with disability, new and emerging communities and other marginalised groups;
- recognising audiences not simply as consumers of culture, but as active participants, collaborators and co-creators of Australia's cultural life;
- supporting bold and inclusive storytelling that strengthens empathy, intercultural understanding, belonging and social cohesion across contemporary multicultural Australia.
- dedicated support and targeted investment in diasporic communities to ensure relevancy of cultural product for new audiences.

## CONCLUSION

Despite principles of access and representation throughout *Revive*, significant gaps remain. Underrepresented CALD communities and artists are not explicitly recognised in the policy, despite their central role in shaping the nation's cultural life.

This omission may have far reaching implications. Communities that are not explicitly recognised are excluded from the systems that determine what is culture and what is to be funded.

Multiculturalism, the arts and cultural expression are essential infrastructure for social cohesion, democratic participation and national wellbeing if this is missing it has huge disadvantage for the whole community and is a systemic flaw in the system.

*The Multicultural Framework Review: Towards Fairness -A Multicultural Australia for All* further recognises the important role arts and culture play in fostering intercultural understanding, representation and social cohesion. The Review positions multiculturalism not simply as demographic diversity, but as an active nation-building project grounded in participation, fairness and connection. In this context, multicultural arts practice becomes a critical public space where Australia's diversity is reflected, negotiated and celebrated, and where communities contribute to a shared national story.

FECCA calls for stronger structural alignment between the Multicultural Affairs portfolio, Creative Australia, the *National Cultural Policy Revive*, the *Multicultural Framework Review* recommendations, and the *Measuring What Matters framework* to ensure greater equity, inclusion and accountability across Australia's cultural landscape. Multicultural arts and cultural participation must be recognised as core to the national infrastructure contributing to wellbeing, democratic participation, inclusion and social cohesion.

In a period marked by rising racism, social fragmentation, loneliness, declining trust and increasing polarisation, investment in multicultural arts and cultural expression is not discretionary; it is central to building a connected, resilient and inclusive Australia. Through storytelling, festivals, theatre, literature, music, visual arts and community-led creative practice, culturally and linguistically diverse communities create spaces for dialogue, empathy, participation and belonging that strengthen the social fabric of the nation.

This position is strongly reinforced by the Australian Government's *Measuring What Matters Wellbeing Framework*, which recognises social cohesion, inclusion, connection, trust and belonging as core indicators of national progress and wellbeing. The framework affirms that Australia's success cannot be measured through economic indicators alone, but must also account for the strength of communities, civic participation and shared belonging. FECCA argues that arts and cultural participation are among the most effective ways these outcomes are realised in practice.

Diversity Arts Australia's cultural policy submission reinforces this argument. The organisation has consistently shown that cultural diversity in the arts is essential not only to equity and representation, but also to Australia's social cohesion and democratic strength. Its work shows that when culturally diverse artists and communities are visible in cultural institutions and creative industries, people feel a stronger sense of belonging, recognition and connection to public life. By contrast, ongoing underrepresentation and structural exclusion diminish both cultural relevance and social cohesion.

Australia's next phase of the *Revive* cultural policy presents a significant opportunity to embed multiculturalism, equity and democratic participation at the centre of Australia's cultural future. The next stage must move beyond short-term initiatives toward long-term structural reform that recognises anti-racism, cultural safety, equity, participation, workforce sustainability and accountability as interconnected pillars of national cultural infrastructure.

If *Revive* is to fully realise its vision culturally diverse and marginalised communities must not only be visible within Australia's cultural life, but meaningfully resourced, supported, represented and empowered to shape the institutions, narratives and creative futures of the nation.

At a time when social cohesion is under increasing pressure, arts and culture is essential public infrastructure for fostering belonging, intercultural understanding, empathy, and shared civic identity. As reflected through FECCA's consultations and national pulse survey, many Australians are seeking spaces where difficult conversations around identity, diversity, racism, belonging and social change can occur constructively and respectfully. Arts and culture can provide these spaces through shared storytelling, participation and creative practice that foster dialogue, empathy and collective understanding.

Cultural policy cannot remain neutral in the face of exclusion and division. It must actively contribute to building a socially cohesive, inclusive, and democratic Australia by ensuring culturally diverse communities are not only visible within the national story, but are empowered as leaders, creators, decision-makers, and equal participants in Australia's cultural life.

FECCA strongly believes the review of the National Cultural Policy represents a critical nation-building opportunity. The revised policy must move beyond aspirational language and embed anti-racism, cultural safety, equity, justice, accountability, and equitable participation as non-negotiable foundations across all five *Revive* pillars.

A mature democracy understands culture and diversity is not an optional enrichment, but is essential to democratic infrastructure, critical to belonging, participation, social cohesion and the collective imagining of multicultural Australia's future.

## REFERENCES

- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia / Australian Human Rights Commission. *An Anti-Racism Framework: Experiences and Perspectives of Multicultural Australia*. Sydney: AHRC. Available at: [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. *Towards Fairness – a multicultural Australia for all: Multicultural Framework Review Report and Government Response*. Canberra: Australian Government. Available at: [Department of Home Affairs](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission. *National Anti-Racism Framework*. Sydney: AHRC. Available at: [humanrights.gov.au](http://humanrights.gov.au)
- Diversity Arts Australia. *Training Portal and Creative Equity Framework*. Sydney: DARTS. Available at: [Diversity Arts Australia](#)
- UNESCO. (2005). *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. *Mapping Social Cohesion Report*. Melbourne: Scanlon Institute. Available at: [scanloninstitute.org.au](http://scanloninstitute.org.au)
- A New Approach (ANA). *Belong, Trust, Connect: National Analysis Paper*. Canberra: ANA. Available at: [newapproach.org.au](http://newapproach.org.au)
- United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- FeelBeit. (n.d.). *FeelBeit: Culture without borders*. [FeelBeit official website](#)
- Creative Australia. (2023). *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey 2022*. Available at: [Creative Australia report page](#)
- Australian Government Treasury. (2023). *Measuring What Matters statement*. Australian Government. Available at: [Treasury – Measuring What Matters](#)

Office Address



Postal Address

