

SBS RESPONSE TO THE OFFICE OF THE ARTS CONSULTATION A NEW NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY AUGUST 2002

Introduction

The Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (**SBS**) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Government's consideration of a new National Cultural Policy.

SBS is a key cultural institution, providing services that are vital to Australia's cultural life, and is a key arts provider and supporter. No other media provider reflects Australia's diverse voices like SBS does. With television, radio and online services in more than 60 languages, SBS is the world's most linguistically diverse media network.

SBS welcomes the five pillars put forward to shape a new National Cultural Policy:

- First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.
- A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.
- The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.
- Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.
- Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

The pillars align strongly with SBS's suite of services and this submission outlines how SBS can form a critical part of the achievement of policy objectives in this important space, including recommendations for further initiatives:

In addition to recognition of our existing contributions, SBS recommends:

- Recognition in the National Cultural Policy of the importance of adequacy and certainty of funding to support SBS in acquitting its unique cultural role,
- Additional funding for SBS for premium, Australian drama that reflects the diversity of Australia, and
- Additional funding for SBS for First Nations children's content.

Pillar 1 – First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture

SBS is a leading contributor to cultural policy objectives for First Nations arts and culture and, with additional funding, could deliver enhanced outcomes for First Nations Children's content.

National Indigenous Television (**NITV**), part of SBS, is a dedicated multiplatform media provider and the only national media service made by, for, and about Indigenous Australians. SBS, including NITV, collaborates with First Nations entities and organisations on content and initiatives that support First Nations practitioners in the sector. This value is enhanced through numerous career development and investment initiatives, including the SBS *Beyond 3%* initiative, encouraging media



agencies and advertisers to put at least 3% of their spend into First Nations media platforms. This has driven investment across the sector, with all incremental investment in NITV going straight back into First Nations content.

SBS helps Close the Gap, particularly in relation to First Nations children—better educational and childhood development outcomes arise when children see themselves represented on screens, including through SBS's programs such as *Little J and Big Cuz*, and *Thalu*. In-language content on SBS and NITV services also helps progress Target 16 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, relating to an increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.¹

There is considerable scope to enhance these outcomes through increased output of First Nations Children's content. Additional funding would allow the creation of more Australian, First Nations children's content, which will serve to promote a shared understanding of First Nations culture among all Australian children, including multilingual children or those in families who have recently arrived in Australia.

There are strong potential benefits across government policy priorities and in support of Pillar 1, including through supporting culture (which is central to health for individuals, families and communities) increased opportunities for the Indigenous screen sector, addressing declines in Australian children's programming and through subtitling and dubbing in key Indigenous languages (aligned with SBS's multilingual content strategy and supporting Indigenous language preservation). As part of our Elevate Level Reconciliation Action Plan, SBS has committed to driving understanding through connecting our newest Australians with the world's oldest living continuous culture and the refreshed cultural policy represents an important opportunity to accelerate this work.

Pillar 2 – A Place for Every Story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture

SBS is the home of every Australian story. SBS's inherent strengths in this area can be further leveraged in support of this pillar. Amongst the full slate of Australian content across platforms and industry sectors, SBS's Australian content is truly unique.

Recent examples of these series include dramas such as *True Colours*, *New Gold Mountain*, *Safe Harbour*, *Sunshine*, *Dead Lucky*, *On the Ropes*, *The Hunting*, and *Hungry Ghosts*.² These unique productions feature diverse stories, languages, settings and storytellers in ways not found on other platforms.

A bigger more multilingual SBS drama slate will reflect the stories of a truly multicultural nation and drive genuine inclusion that will deliver value for taxpayers, and cultural and policy outcomes.

SBS's proposal is to create more Australian drama content that reflects the diversity of Australia so we can showcase more uniquely Australian stories and voices on screen and promote social cohesion. Increased drama investment will create more Australian jobs and increased export value for Australian content. Every \$1 spent by SBS on premium adult drama equates to \$2.18 spent in the Australian production industry for the period FY20 to present,³ and approximately 90% of SBS production spend reaches the wider sector.⁴ Tentpole SBS Australian drama is translated into multiple languages other than English consistent with a mature multilingual content strategy.

The SBS commitment to diversity and inclusion extends to off-camera practitioners. In February 2022, SBS launched the *SBS Commissioning Equity & Inclusion Guidelines*, which reflect SBS's unique place in the media landscape as Australia's multicultural and Indigenous broadcaster. They also recognise our role in championing ongoing industry change to be more representative and

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap/7-difference/b-targets/b16>

² Available on SBS On Demand [sbs.com.au/ondemand](https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand)

³ Source: Internal SBS data

⁴ Source: Internal SBS data



inclusive of our audiences, which also makes for entertaining, compelling and inspiring storytelling that connects with all Australians.

The Guidelines outline genre-specific targets for on- and off-screen roles for SBS-commissioned content and internal productions, designed to remove barriers and ensure that everyone in the sector can participate, with equal opportunity to succeed. They reflect our goals for representation of people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ and women - in front of and behind the camera - across a three-year period (from July 2021 to June 2024).

Through these and many other initiatives, SBS is supporting the industry to better reflect modern Australia. Such diversity championed by SBS also leads to economic benefits. An SBS-commissioned report by Deloitte Access Economics revealed that social inclusion adds additional \$12.7B to the Australian economy every year.

Pillar 3 – The centrality of artists: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture

SBS's extensive and diverse range of career development initiatives demonstrate the value we can provide in support of this pillar.

Across SBS and NITV, there are currently 15 career pathway initiatives and content opportunities for creatives from under-represented backgrounds, across Unscripted and Scripted. They are part of SBS's commitment and investment in ensuring everyone has a pathway in our sector, improving representation on and off screen, and seeing more stories on our screens reflecting and exploring the diversity of contemporary Australia.⁵

Recent examples include the *No Ordinary Black* NITV short film initiative, the *Centralised Documentary Australia Foundation Indigenous Fellowship*, *Diversity Talent Escalator*, *Emerging Writers' Incubator*, *SBS Emerging Writers' Competition*, and *Red Ochre* NITV documentary initiatives, amongst many others.

SBS should be recognised as a key contributor to the achievement of policy priorities for this pillar.

Pillar 4 – Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

As noted throughout this submission, SBS is a critical part of the broader cultural ecosystem, delivering unmatched value for audiences, practitioners, creators and Government.⁶

One of the main ways that Australians interact with cultural content is through engagement with media content (both on-screen and via audio). SBS audiences have significantly grown in recent times, particularly when compared to those of other major networks, making SBS a key source of cultural interaction for Australians. For example, SBS has recorded 575% growth in digital video and audio consumption hours since FY16.⁷

SBS would support the formal recognition of this role within the National Cultural Policy, and a corollary is the recognition of the fundamental importance to this role of certain and adequate Government funding of SBS. In a similar manner, certainty and adequacy of funding are also key for organisations such as Screen Australia, state screen agencies and cultural training institutions.

⁵ Full list of initiatives here - <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/content-initiatives>

⁶ Whilst out of scope for this consultation, we note that SBS services and activities also support other policy areas outside the Arts including, among others, Indigenous affairs, immigration and humanitarian assistance (such as through the [SBS Settlement Guide](#) in more than 50 languages), education (such as through [SBS Learn](#) platform for teachers and school-age students, and [SBS Learn English](#) podcasts), health (such as through [SBS Multilingual coronavirus portal](#)), and foreign affairs and trade.

⁷ Note: Digital Video and Audio consumption hours include methodology changes across the period as analytics capability and coverage improved such as video co-viewing from January 2020 onwards

Source: OzTAM VPM, Adobe Analytics; SBS internal data;



Pillar 5 – Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad

SBS has a sophisticated, highly contemporary and multifaceted broadcasting and digital distribution network which ensures near universal reach across the Australian population. The network ensures that the cultural, educational and other benefits of SBS's content and services are available to all Australians. Cross-platform content distribution is crucial to the success of content discovery and consumption and SBS has accelerated investment in digital media content. SBS reaches audiences on the platforms they are using and this reach makes SBS an invaluable partner in the delivery of a National Cultural Policy.

In a crowded market, SBS remains a distinctive, free and unique proposition for audiences, with our market-leading in-language user interfaces and subtitled programming. SBS audiences generally do not consume commercial free-to-air or subscription TV, amplifying the importance of our impact.⁸ SBS is also now the most trusted media brand in the Australian market.⁹

Awareness of SBS is very high among multilingual/multicultural audiences (up to 96%),¹⁰ demonstrating SBS's value in ensuring cultural value is delivered to all Australians. SBS also provides subtitling of its screen content in seven languages¹¹ as well as accessibility services such as closed captioning and audio description. All of these help make SBS content highly accessible by very wide audiences, including the 9.6 million via broadcast television,¹² 6 million via radio,¹³ and 1.7 million online each month.¹⁴

SBS also has unique impact for overseas audiences. While SBS is focused on serving audiences in Australia, SBS Language and Radio pages have nearly the same number of unique visitors each month from outside Australia as they do from within Australia, demonstrating SBS's unique ability to contribute to Pillar 5.

Conclusion

SBS welcomes the commitment from Government to developing "a comprehensive roadmap to guide the skills and resources required to transform and safeguard a diverse, vibrant and sustainable arts, entertainment and cultural sector now and into the future."¹⁵

As outlined in this submission, SBS's unique purpose, services and strategies mean it is uniquely placed to help deliver outcomes which support all five of the identified pillars and we would welcome ongoing involvement as this work progresses.

In addition to recognition of our existing contributions, SBS recommends:

- Recognition in the National Cultural Policy of the importance of adequacy and certainty of funding to support SBS in acquitting its unique cultural role
- Additional funding for premium, multilingual drama, and
- Additional funding for First Nations children's content.

⁸ OztaM, 5 City Metro, SBS primary, Seven primary, Nine primary, Ten primary, STV, Wk 35-37 2021, Sun-Sat 18:00-22:30, total people, duplication and exclusivity analysis (threshold 5 absolute consecutive minutes), consolidated, excludes spill-in

⁹ Source: SBS Brand Pulse – October 2018– Apr 2022; Q How do you trust the following media brands?

Base: All Australians; Total sample n=750

¹⁰ 96% awareness of SBS is among Italian language users in Australia, according to SBS's annual commissioning of McNair audience research since 2008.

¹¹ Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, and Punjabi

¹² Source: OZTAM Metro And REGTAM Regional; SBS Network; 1 Jan 2022 - 31 July 2022; Sun-Sat 02:00-02:00; Total People; Average Monthly Reach (5 Min Consecutive Reach); Consolidated

¹³ Source: Streamguys; Stream Starts. Adobe Analytics; Audio Plays, Feedpress; Uniques, Soundcloud; Starts, Spotify; Starts, TuneIn Radio; Sessions.

¹⁴ Adobe Analytics

¹⁵ <https://www.arts.gov.au/have-your-say/new-national-cultural-policy#:~:text=A%20new%20National%20Cultural%20Policy%20is%20needed%20to%20establish%20a,now%20and%20into%20the%20future.>

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We would welcome opportunities to work collaboratively with Government throughout the development and implementation of the National Cultural Policy and can provide further detail on our unique offering as required.