



**The National Ethnic and Multicultural
Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC)**

NEMBC Submission to the

National Cultural Policy

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Do you agree to your submission being made publicly available on the www.culture.arts.gov.au website?*

Yes

No

About you or your organization:

The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) is a national peak body that advocates for multiculturalism and supports multilingual community broadcasting around Australia. The NEMBC contributes to media diversity in Australia by maintaining and connecting people to their language, culture and identity.

The role of the NEMBC is:

- To promote and represent the interests of ethnic and multicultural community broadcasters throughout Australia in Radio, Television and other electronic media.
- To advance the development of a harmonious multicultural society in Australia through broadcasting.
- To promote racial and religious harmony in Australia.
- To prevent discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religious and political affiliation and other forms of discrimination or distinction.
- To promote and extend ethnic and multicultural broadcasting services to meet ethnic communities' needs and to the benefit of the entire Australian community.
- To promote principles of community independent media and programming diversity reflective of ethnic and multicultural views.

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

The development of a national cultural policy is important especially in the context of significant changes in the demographics of Australia society. A new National Cultural Policy will be able to examine changes that have occurred in the media landscape, including the community media sector, and assess the delivery of arts and culture with the growth of new digital platforms.

It is good to see that the National Cultural Policy *Discussion Paper* already recognises Australia's indigenous traditions. The NEMBC would like to first and foremost acknowledge the importance of respecting and supporting Aboriginal People, as the first people of this land and that they receive support to self-determine their cultural policy and are involved in any discussion on inter-cultural dialogue and understanding.

Australia also has a unique and diverse migrant culture that is constantly changing, therefore, it's vital for all areas of society to find the best ways to recognise and work with this cultural diversity.

A National Cultural Policy is important to complement other overarching frameworks, such as the national multicultural policy, People of Australia, in order to highlight and support the arts and cultural aspects of this diverse nation. The introduction of Australia's multicultural policy in the early 1970s has assisted in creating a diverse and harmonious

Australian society. Many Australians from a culturally and linguistically diverse background put a high priority on maintaining and developing their own culture/s.

Australia is now in its second and third generation of immigration since the 1960s and a lot has changed in that time. Migrants have been entering Australia from a larger number of countries and today there are multiple generations of Australians from various backgrounds who have 'grown up in societies marked by diversity and growing global connectedness.'¹

With every new wave of migration or new generation born in Australia there are new forms of music, arts and cultural expression. This increased cultural diversity as well as linguistic diversity needs to be considered and supported as it forms a vital component in our multilingual and multicultural society. A new National Cultural Policy needs to address the changes that have occurred, recognise this growing diversity and respond with more opportunities for active and meaningful participation of diverse members of society. This requires policies that reflect these multiple forms of identity and belonging and ensures respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

It is also important to recognize the growing multicultural and multilingual community broadcasting sector that provides the opportunity for communities to broadcast cultural content and provides many new emerging artists and groups the opportunity able to be heard and to tell their stories. This sector has grown rapidly over the last twenty years, and has almost doubled in numbers since 1996. Community radio has a broad listenership with 54% of Australians listening to community radio in an average month, with an increase of 32% of the total number of people listening since 2004, it forms a significant part of the Australian media landscape². The ethnic community broadcasting sector now has 130 stations broadcasting different language programs (including six full-time ethnic stations) this is important in terms of supporting a multicultural society - considering that ethnic community radio is Australia's largest language laboratory, promoting cultural and community development in over 100 languages.

There is a real chance now for a National Culture Policy to take a fresh look at multiculturalism and multilingualism in Australia to enable the development of effective platforms for cultural expression and engagement which will lead to innovative ways of negotiating and engaging with the arts and culture, heritage, identity and belonging.

1 Elsa Koleth, Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas, 8 October 2010 pg 33.

2 McNair Ingenuity Research 2010 / 2011 Community Radio <http://www.4peoplemedia.com.au/communit-radio-stats> accessed October 2011

A new and original National Cultural Policy would contribute to:

- Public discourse from diverse voices, active participation from all sections of society, innovation and economic productivity. It will reduce the marginalisation of cultural communities by supporting social cohesion in an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan society.
- The recognition of the multicultural and multilingual community broadcasting sector as a positive vehicle for the dissemination and development of culture and artistic expression in a multicultural Australia.

What are your views about each of the four goals?

Firstly the NEMBC believes that central to all arts and cultural policy there should be the recognition of Indigenous People and their arts, languages and culture through continued support and investment.

Secondly promoting arts and culture in a multicultural context encourages social cohesion, a positive sense of wellbeing and underpins a physically, emotionally and socially healthy community. Multiculturalism allows for people to identify with a community and at the same time with the wider society - feeling connected and having a sense of belonging are essential for health and wellbeing.

The goal of **ensuring government support** is imperative especially in light of reality that many Australians are from diverse cultural backgrounds, it's important to provide them with the opportunity to participate in Australia's cultural life. Supporting cultural and linguistic maintenance and development is essential for all new migrants as it provides them with important settlement support, a sense of belonging and opportunities to participate in Australia life. While this may be more encouraged in cities, supporting culture for migrants in regional and rural areas in Australia needs greater addition.

The goal of **encouraging the use of new emerging technologies** is important in assisting the development of models that can disseminate information and provide for better networking to increase creative industries and provide greater access and participation. In this endeavor multicultural and multilingual community radio is now broadcasting in digital and adapting to new multimedia platforms to deliver wider services.

The goal of **strengthening the role that the arts can play in telling stories** is important. The fact that community radio or TV programs are locally produced in language encourages those living in Australia to make the connection with their culture, heritage and sense of home here in Australia – to tell stories in a local setting and represent themselves and their identities. This local production is vital, for belonging and inclusion in Australian society, for if migrant communities are only accessing satellite or re-broadcast media services from their country of origin they can sometimes live with a sense of home being somewhere else,

rather than being here in Australia. Community media's capacity to incorporate news, information and cultural content from both geographical areas encourages multiple feelings of home, belonging and inclusion both in Australia and elsewhere.

The goal to **increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy** is important. The promotion and engagement of the arts in a multicultural context can be mediated through the use of languages and cultural skills. Cultural expertise is able strengthen society and to create economic and investment opportunities. Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers have stated that 'developing language skills and inter-cultural understanding is an investment in our national capability and a valuable resource'(reference?). Multicultural community broadcasting is a leader in encouraging inter-cultural dialogue and awareness which inevitably contributes to greater understanding and a more peaceful and productive society.

In addition, ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting is a contributor to strengthening the economic fabric of a community by assisting in: developing capacity through training and transferrable skills; providing career pathways; engaging and promoting artists and musicians (73% of community radio programs play music); developing partnerships with business and other not for profit organizations to deliver services.

Most importantly the community broadcasting sector engages and skills 23,000 volunteers who provide an estimated \$212 million worth of labour. Full time ethnic stations engage well over 3,000 volunteers³. Quite often new and emerging artists are part of or very well networked or this grassroots community involvement.

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

The NEMBC would like to focus on the important role that all sections of the media, including ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting plays in supporting the arts, cultural content and an active multiculturalism in Australia which supports the voices of migrant and refugee communities. Ethnic community broadcasting has flourished since its inception 35 years ago, and should receive greater recognition for providing a valuable contribution to a culturally and linguistically diverse Australian society. In providing for a service for arts and culture, community radio offers:

- Local entertainment, cultural, and social services to its local community.
- A platform for public community expression and a voice for arts and cultural identity

³ This estimate is based on the model established in Culture, Commitment, Community: The Australia Community Radio Sector. Forde,S., Meadows,M., and Foxwell,K., Griffith University, Brisbane 2002. – www.cbonline.org.au.

- Support for local groups to tap into economic benefits, through promotion or local sponsorship.
- A forum for community engagement and celebration of creative skills
- Information about local services and orientation to Australian systems
- Translated government and community announcements for local areas
- Cross-cultural communication spaces
- Opportunities for language learning

A new National Cultural Policy needs to address changes that have occurred, recognise the growing cultural diversity and respond with more opportunities for dialogue and active, meaningful participation of diverse members of society. This requires policies and media that reflect these multiple forms of identity and belonging and ensures respect for cultural diversity.

The power of the media is such that it plays a central role in shaping societal views and has the ability to include or exclude different groups of people. It is crucial for the wellbeing and sense of belonging for all in society to have all sections of the media (commercial, public and community) to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of this nation. This will validate the diversity of perspectives and value the contributions of all Australians, and in doing so will provide a sense of belonging and inclusion for all. It will also facilitate active public engagement with culture and language as well as raise awareness of different experiences in the wider community.

As Australia's population becomes more diverse and more complex, so too must this multicultural reality be better represented and reflected in institutions, government structures and the media. A National Cultural Policy can play a central role in supporting culture and language across different areas of government and society.

The digital era has brought new multimedia platforms for communication, which will expand with the commencement of the National Broadband Network (NBN). Community radio has started broadcasting on the digital spectrum and is enjoying a growing presence online, embracing this opportunity for innovative communication and dialogue. The Government's policies on arts and culture must also aim to increase digital literacy for migrants so that they too can utilise these resources and reach their potential in society.

Multicultural community broadcasters in Australia retain strong links with communities in their country of origin as well as diaspora communities. Community radio has already embraced innovative technology, such as online broadcasting, to connect dispersed communities and share local (Australian) information and culture with communities around the world. Online simulcasts and 'listen-on-demand' broadcasts of multilingual radio shows produced in Australia allow communities here and abroad to engage with each other and their respective countries and cultures. Online platforms and networks – such as the NEMBC's innovative new multimedia website which will act as a hub of multilingual radio

programs – provide a novel and creative way to transmit information and knowledge and negotiate, culture, identity and belonging.

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

The ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting sector is a community platform for disseminating information, entertainment and culture. It also actively supports and encourages creative expression and engagement with the arts. Community radio has the distinct advantage of having local knowledge, connections to the local geography and the people that live in the community. This presents a rare opportunity of celebrating local cultural expression which is vital to validating the diversity in local communities. Moreover, this access and participation on a grassroots level also facilitates ‘equal dialogues’ and it is this equality which is essential to a peaceful and socially connected society.

This vibrant community media sector fulfils an important role in providing opportunities for artists to publicise and play their work so that communities can engage with these local or international artists. It also plays an important partnership role in assisting government to reach into local communities with information and vice versa for communities to nurture cultural expression in society. Community broadcasting is well known for its commitment to supporting creativity and innovation. As community radio stations adapt to the new digital technologies these different platforms become useful tools for strengthening the arts and further networking and development of cultural content. New digital technologies provide for a broader network of linking programs from the local community to a national and international level.

Local content is the essence of community broadcasting—which is media created by local people for their communities. Local communities telling their stories in a relaxed and non-commercial environment, is attractive to listeners because the stories that are told form a shared experience. This is just one of the unique strengths of community radio that many communities find valuable.

Community broadcasting should be recognised for its role in education and training in media. Through its commitment to access and participation, inexpensive entry-level training and more opportunities to broadcast through a larger number of stations community radio plays a unique role in training and skilling people, developing economic and career pathways – for creative practitioners, artists and musicians. For example, the Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation 2007 survey reveals that community media contributes substantially to the media industries, providing training and networks which lead to real career opportunities across the commercial, public, community and education sectors.⁴

⁴ Ellie Rennie, *Community Media and Industry Training*, Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, 2007.

Moreover, the Australian Music Radio Air Play (AMRAP) project actively supports local musicians to access airplay on community radio, which further highlights the link between community radio being an incubator and platform for creative expression.

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

A suggested additional goal: **To increase and strengthen networking and distribution opportunities for artists and their work, providing improved communication and marketing opportunities.**

The NEMBC is presently working on promoting and improving access to multicultural and multilingual music by scouting new and emerging artists for placement on the Australian Music Radio Air Play (AMRAP) website. There are over 100 multicultural music groups and individuals that are added to this website. The AMRAP site then allows community radio broadcasters the opportunity to download and play the songs thus giving exposure to the artists.

The NEMBC would like to continue to employ a Music Ambassador and through the use of various new technologies and digital platforms to promote multicultural artists. As explained earlier there are 6 full time ethnic stations in Australia, one in each capital city. Every week, one of these stations will broadcast over 60 different language programs and the music of their culture. The amount of culturally specific music that is played on these stations is extraordinary. With the advent of new technologies there is a real possibility to create a centralized music resource library. This would allow for language programs to share and network music and provide promotion of multicultural music from both established and new emerging artists.