



New South Wales Government

The arts and cultural diversity

Principles for
multicultural arts support in
New South Wales



NSW Ministry for the Arts

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Background

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that people everywhere in New South Wales share in the rewards of a lively and vibrant cultural life.

The Government wishes to create the conditions in which the arts flourish, information is readily available to all, and the cultural heritage of the State - its collections of fine art and artefacts, its buildings, its records, and all evidence of its natural history and creative endeavour - is preserved and accessible.

New South Wales is made up of many communities, each with its own story and identity. The Government believes that a vigorous cultural life is an integral part of the health of *all* communities in a culturally diverse society such as ours.

Cultural diversity in itself, however, is no guarantee of a lively cultural life. If arts and cultural institutions, companies and organisations are to acknowledge and cater for this diversity they must accept that there are inequities in the distribution of resources, and that many communities are missing out on benefits and opportunities available to others. They must accept the need for change.

The need for multicultural funding principles

Australian Bureau of Statistics data for New South Wales,¹ on work and participation in culture and leisure activities,² underlines the need for a new approach to funding to address inequities:

- In New South Wales, 11% of Australian-born people participated in culture and leisure activities compared to 8% of people born outside Australia. Participation is less, 5.8%, for people born in non-English speaking countries;
- The same results are found when analysing data about people involved in paid and unpaid work in culture and leisure activities;
- People born in non-English speaking countries tend to visit cultural institutions and participate in performing arts activities (with the exception of music) less frequently than Australian born people and those born in English speaking countries;
- In households with video recorders, more people born in non-English speaking countries hire pre-recorded videos (67% compared to just under 60% for the other two groups), suggesting that they have fewer cultural opportunities of their own.

Inequities such as these highlight the need for a strategy of intervention. The principles set out in this document signal the Government's expectation that all funded arts and cultural activities should cater for the needs of a culturally diverse society.

¹ Overseas Born Persons and the Arts in NSW, unpublished report compiled for the Ministry for the Arts in 1996, based on the most recent surveys carried out in 1993.

² The ABS category of culture and leisure activities includes performing arts, visual arts/crafts, writing/publishing, galleries and museums, libraries and archives, cultural organisations, radio, television, film/video, and excludes hobbies and sporting activities.

Guiding principles

The principles guiding and informing arts funding in New South Wales reflect many of those principles contained in the Government's *Cultural Development Policy* (March 1995), the Government's White Paper, *Building on Our Cultural Heritage: Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000* (December 1996), and the earlier *Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society* (February 1993).

The key principles are:

1. The Government acknowledges the *inter-relationship* and *interconnectedness* of areas that have been previously considered distinct: community arts and professional arts; traditional art and contemporary art; mainstream art and minority art; commercial art and non-commercial art. It acknowledges that arts practice exists on a continuum in which all activities have a place.
2. The Government will ensure that the resources it administers are distributed as equitably as possible. This will result in fairer outcomes, generating more work by artists of non-English speaking backgrounds and greater participation by people of these backgrounds.
3. The Government will treat cultural diversity, as expressed in the arts, as one of the defining characteristics of a united modern Australia.

The Government will promote the benefits of a more culturally diverse arts environment. This will result in the best possible use of linguistic and cultural assets and the creation of economic and cultural opportunities.

Coordination and leadership

To give these principles the necessary status and drive required for effective implementation, the Ministry for the Arts will be the lead agency. The Ministry will have the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the strategies and undertaking a range of activities relevant to its areas of operation and funding.

In doing so, the Ministry will use both its own authority and the authority derived through an Ethnic Affairs Agreement negotiated with the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW.

This agreement will cover the Ministry's own responsibilities through its arts funding programs as well as those inherent in its role as a portfolio co-ordinator, ensuring compliance with target outcomes negotiated with the individual State cultural institutions.

A two-directional approach

The issues of multicultural arts development are complex. They involve the supply of appropriate and adequate product and the level of need or demand. Practical implications need to be addressed, change needs to be facilitated.

To achieve this, there will be two major strategies:

1. **Focusing on cultural diversity**

The first is directed to the various *ethnic groups* themselves (as well as the other communities that make up our society). It aims to help them maintain their cultural heritage and build the necessary infrastructure and support networks to develop their culture and present it to others.

2. **Requiring mainstream arts structures to incorporate cultural diversity considerations in their activities**

The second is directed at organisations within the notional *mainstream*, which will be encouraged to recognise and demonstrate their cultural diversity as a condition of receiving Government support for their activities.

It is envisaged that these strategies will work together. Successful implementation will result in greater equity in the distribution and consumption of resources and the development of new work, both reflecting our present cultural makeup and assisting in the development of our evolving cultural identity.

1.

Focusing on cultural diversity

A focus on diversity is essential to resourcing, nurturing and showcasing the work of non-English speaking background artists and other people from ethnic communities. A duplication of the roles and objectives of funding bodies has sometimes led to frustration on the part of artists and arts organisations of non-English speaking background. There is a need to define the roles and outcomes for each of the organisations responsible for providing resources for the arts.

The following strategies will be implemented to address these issues:

1.1 *A cultural component in the Ethnic Affairs Commission's Grants Program.*

The Ethnic Affairs Commission's Grants Program has in the past been used to foster the maintenance of cultural life in ethnic communities. Small amounts of money can assist ethnic community arts organisations to maintain and develop forms of art and music integral to their cultural identities. These funds often have material and symbolic value reinforcing the message that cultural maintenance is important.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission will be asked to consider allocating an amount from its annual Grants Program to ethnic community cultural groups for arts and cultural maintenance activities.

1.2 *A higher priority for multicultural activity through the Community Cultural Development Program of the Ministry for the Arts.*

The Ministry for the Arts has, through its new Community Cultural Development Program, already made a strong commitment to the area of cultural diversity. Grants under this program are intended to encourage initiatives which enable artists and communities to develop a variety of arts and cultural activities reflecting the cultural diversity of the people of New South Wales.

This program differs from that of the Ethnic Affairs Commission Grants Program in that it is intended to provide transitional resources to encourage innovative arts development. The aim is to encourage artists and communities to develop their work to the stage where it is valued by the mainstream arts community.

1.3 *A continuing State-wide focus on multicultural arts through Carnivale.*

Carnivale is the only annual event which showcases a wide range of artforms by non-English speaking background artists and communities, covering traditional contemporary, cross-cultural and hybrid work.

In doing this Carnivale will be encouraged to focus on the identification, development and presentation of new work. The festival each September will provide the framework around which new work will be shown, and will in time become an important means by which Australian and international arts producers and managers can observe and participate in this work. In this way, the link to the mainstream will be developed and maintained. Carnivale will provide a continual supply of high quality new Australian work.

As this role becomes familiar to artists and ethnic cultural groups, Carnivale will increasingly come to be seen as the presenter of new work.

1.4 *Further efforts by the Government to publicise the existence of funding programs, resources and the distinct roles and responsibilities of the individual funding bodies.*

If these initiatives are to be effective, the delineation between these three sources of funds in terms of the intentions, roles and responsibilities of each agency needs to be clearly explained and publicised.

This will facilitate the process by which artists and arts organisations apply for resources. It will also provide a sense of confidence in the arts funding process and, in time, a much better access to available resources for the development of art in a culturally diverse society.

The establishment of a Museum of Migration.

A Museum of Migration must fulfil a number of inter-related needs. Its key role will be to assist in documenting and interpreting the contribution of migration to New South Wales.

The Museum will be positioned to complement existing institutions rather than replicate existing functions and programs. It must develop programs collaboratively with other cultural institutions at regional, State and national levels, linking with heritage sites for migration history, ranging from points of arrival to houses, work places and suburbs.

The Museum should not be a monolithic institution, but rather a dynamic organisation, advising on collection policy development and administration. It will play an important role in working to achieve the inclusion of both movable heritage and the heritage fabric of immigration in the historic record of this State, assisting communities to conserve their collections, and enhancing public access to these collections.

The Government will further develop the best operational and structural model for the Museum, one which allows for maximum flexibility and effectiveness.

2. Requiring mainstream arts structures to incorporate cultural diversity considerations in their activities

While it is important to foster the development of arts and new artistic work which reflect the State's cultural diversity, it is equally important to ensure that there are adequate venues and forums to enable this work to become an integral part of the cultural life of the State.

The Government will ensure that all State-funded arts and cultural institutions and activities incorporate and reflect the State's cultural diversity, and thereby open up resources and opportunities to artists and communities of non-English speaking backgrounds.

By providing better access, the Government will help these artists and organisations play a more effective role in the arts. By ensuring that the arts industry develops a stronger emphasis on cultural diversity, the Government will foster the development of new product and greater audience development both by attracting new non-English speaking background audiences and sustaining existing (mainly English speaking) audiences.

This will be achieved through the following strategies:

- 2.1 *The Ministry for the Arts will enter into an agreement with the Ethnic Affairs Commission in accordance with the requirements of the Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000.*

The Government's December 1996 White Paper on ethnic affairs, *Building on Our Cultural Heritage: Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000*, for the first time provides legislative power and appropriate sanctions by which the Ethnic Affairs Commission can require commitments by State Government organisations to meet the needs of the State's ethnic communities.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission will formulate an agreement with the Ministry for the Arts to include both the Ministry's role in managing and implementing these multicultural arts funding principles and its role as arts portfolio co-ordinator. As such the Ministry will use its own authority and that derived from the EAC's legislative requirements to bring about change.

2.2 *The Ministry for the Arts will negotiate and establish individual agreements with the State's cultural institutions to deliver outcomes in accordance with this policy.*

The Secretary of the Ministry for the Arts currently enters into annual performance agreements with the heads of all the State cultural institutions. This process will be broadened to include agreements on support for multicultural arts.

These agreements will provide the mechanism for negotiated and monitored initiatives designed to achieve a greater and more equitable accommodation of cultural diversity.

In specific terms the agreements:

- will be on an annual basis;
- will entail regular reporting;
- will be developed through negotiation with the Ministry to establish clear expectations appropriate to the individual institution.

To facilitate this process of negotiation, the Ministry for the Arts will establish a framework of performance measures for cultural institutions to consider and comply with. These may include audience development measures; exhibition and curatorial policies; use of existing infrastructure; staffing policies; and employment of artists of non-English speaking backgrounds.

2.3 *The Government will continue to ensure that there is appropriate non-English speaking background representation on all decision-making boards and committees.*

The Government has been keen to ensure that all its funding advisory structures have adequate representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. This has been achieved for the Arts Advisory Council and for each of the Council's Cultural Grants Program assessment committees within the Ministry for the Arts.

The inclusion and maintenance of such representation is seen as essential in ensuring that assessments include a diversity of cultural views and backgrounds and thereby serve to minimise mainstream cultural bias.

2.4 *The Ministry for the Arts Cultural Grants Program will include cultural diversity issues in its funding guidelines and develop contract compliance requirements for funded agencies.*

The Ministry has included “arts in a culturally diverse society” as a major policy principle underpinning its Cultural Grants Program and in its Guidelines for the 1998 program.

To ensure a more rigorous compliance with this principle, the Ministry will strengthen its review of this principle in the assessment process and develop specific contract compliance provisions in funding agreements to provide the outcomes required.

While there may be arguments over the effectiveness of this measure for organisations funded from a variety of sources, it is imperative that the Government gives a clear message that it will no longer support funding which is exclusive and does not benefit the whole community.

2.5 *The Ministry for the Arts Cultural Grants Program will be promoted to non-English speaking background artists, whose success within the program will be monitored.*

The Ministry will continue to promote its grants program to non-English speaking background artists.

The Ministry will monitor both the rates of application and the number of grants to non-English speaking background artists. This will provide valuable information about the areas on which the Ministry needs to focus the Community Cultural Development program of the Cultural Grants Program.

By doing this, the Ministry will achieve an important objective in having mainstream funding reflect the State’s cultural diversity.

2.6 *The Government will encourage Carnivale to play an increased role in advocacy and consultancy to assist arts organisations to develop their programs*

Carnivale will be a key reference point and expert resource for the arts industry and for interested community organisations.