

# Growing a culturally and linguistically diverse Queensland theatre sector

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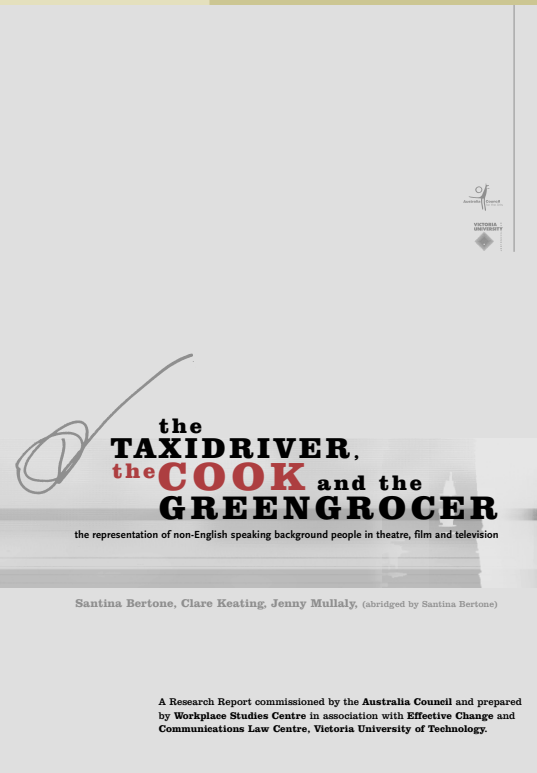
“Today, one in four of Australia’s 22 million people were born overseas, 44 percent were born overseas or have a parent who was and four million speak a language other than English. We speak over 260 languages and identify with more than 270 ancestries. Australia is and will remain a multicultural society.”



“If the performing arts are meant to hold a mirror to society, then the Australian performing arts sector functions as a spectacular distortion”

– Roanna Gonsalves





“The study found significant evidence that NESB\* artists (particularly first generation) are under represented... with substantial under representation occurring in theatre. NESB artists are numerically under represented relative to their proportions within the general Australian workforce and population.”

*The term “Culturally and Linguistically Diverse” or “CALD” has been in common use in Australian policy since 1996, when it was introduced by the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to replace the earlier acronym “NESB”, for “non-English Speaking Background”. It is broadly seen as an improvement on the previous expression, which defined people by what they are not.*



## Barriers restricting the growth of culturally diverse theatre:

- Monoculture of traditions
- Values and norms in Australian theatre
- Lack of will
- Lack of funding
- Discriminatory processes
- Conservatism of theatre-going audiences
- Size of the market
- Lack of risk-taking
- Lack of appropriate plays and roles
- Language (Bertone et al, 2000, xiii)



## Networks

- Lack of connection to the wider arts sector and the mainstream, including artists and organisations

## Opportunity and resources

- Too few opportunities
- Too few roles
- Typecasting
- Conservatism of audiences
- Inaccessible monocultural mainstream theatre strongly influenced by English theatre traditions
- CALD artists creating their own opportunities and generating their own work

## Qualifications and skills

- Lack of knowledge of systems such as Australian arts and culture
- Language barriers
- Lack of business skills



Bertone, Santana, Clare Keating, Jenny Mullaly. 2000. *The Taxidriver, the Cook and the Greengrocer: the representation of non-English speaking background people in theatre, film and television*. Surry Hills: Australia Council

Le, Huong, Una Jogulu, Ruth Rentschler. 2014. "Understanding Australian ethnic minority artists' careers". In *Australian Journal of Career Development* 23(2) 57-68)

“If your work ends up being ‘male, pale and stale’, it won’t look to those on the outside as if the arts belong to them. They won’t try to get in. So the circle stays closed.”

– Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair, Arts Council England



## Why embrace cultural diversity?

- Range of voices creates a more **inclusive culture** and captures ideas from a **wide range of perspectives**
- Keep in touch with changing environments creates **responsive, relevant and artistically vibrant organisations**
- Diversity of **revenue** income streams due increasing **reach** and **engagement** with a range of markets, funders, audience
- **Innovation and new ideas**
- Challenge established ways of thinking
- **Connections** to groups and communities bring **new advocates** for organisations from different places
- **Build adaptive resilience making organisations less vulnerable to unexpected change**





## How have we addressed breaking down these barriers to embrace cultural diversity?

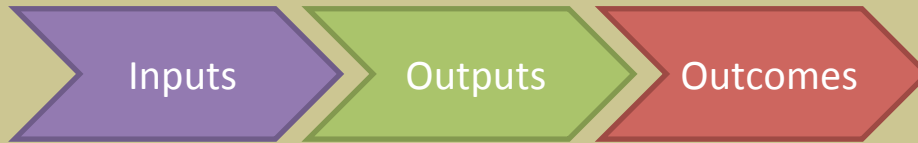
- **Research and publications** e.g. Taxidriver, Currency House papers: What is an Australian play: Have we failed our ethnic writers (Chris Mead), Cross-Racial Casting: Changing the face of Australian theatre (Lee Lewis), Environmental Scan of ALD Artists, Arts Workers and Projects in NSW (Kim Hannah)
- **Programs** e.g. Kultour
- **Forums** e.g. sessions at ATF, Beyond Pale, Male and Stale (SAMAG), Building Audience Diversity (TNN)
- **Cultural Leadership programs** e.g. Griffin Theatre, Malthouse, La Boite
- **Funding for new works by CALD artists** e.g. In The Mix
- **Skills development programs** e.g. Lotus Asian-Australian playwriting program (Playwriting Australia)
- **Collectives and groups from the sector** e.g. Groundswell, The Colourblind Project, Australian Bureau of Asian Creatives
- **New companies** e.g. Performance 4A, Black Honey Company, Polytoxic



**Theatre Diversity Associate Pilot Project  
November 2012 – June 2015**



**Theatre Diversity Associate Pilot Project  
November 2012 – June 2015**





Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

- Funding
- Theatre Diversity Associate
- Collaborating organisations, representative of the Queensland theatre sector, and with knowledge and expertise in developing new work and mentoring emerging theatre practitioners
- BEMAC with knowledge and expertise in in engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse artists, communities and protocols
- Office space and equipment





Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

## Participants

- Collaborating organisations
  - Queensland Theatre Company
  - La Boite Theatre Company
  - Metro Arts
- Artists





Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

## Activities

Consult and identify the needs and challenges of each theatre [organisation] in their engagements with culturally and linguistically diverse artists and their work to inform development of a strategy per company (Position description 2013-14)

Participat[e] in the three theatre [organisations'] programming processes including but not limited to casting, reading and sourcing of culturally diverse works, sourcing of culturally and linguistically diverse artists where appropriate (Position description 2013-14)

Consult with BEMAC to identify and facilitate engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse artists, communities and protocols (Position description 2013-14)

Create opportunities for relationship building between theatre [organisations], BEMAC and culturally and linguistically diverse artists and their work, as appropriate (Position description 2013-14)

Create and manage a database of critical information about culturally [and linguistically] diverse artists and their work including key contacts and areas of specialist interest as required by the three theatre [organisations] (Position description 2013-14)

Broker relationships between CALD artists, community organisations and the collaborating theatre organisations, providing context between the partners (Work plans 2013)





Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

### **Activities continued**

Broker relationships between CALD artists, community organisations and the collaborating theatre organisations, providing context between the partners (Work plans 2013)

Act as a creative contributor to specific projects, where that contribution helps to ensure that the work in development is meeting the needs of the company and the artists and aids in the sustainability and growth of the relationship (Work plans 2013)

Advocate for increased engagement with cultural and diversity in Australian Theatre (unintended activity; not in job description, but appears to come with the job)

Implement Cultural Diversity Action Plans with funding of \$10,000 made available for discreet projects (Position description 2015)

Create an evaluation framework to measure impact of all developed and implemented strategies of engagement with diversity (Position description 2013-14)

Document implemented strategies as 'case studies' for future possible use by other theatre [organisations] (Position description 2013-14)

Consolidate the model for possible replication in other states and developing case studies of artists engaged through the project (Position description 2015)





Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

## Direct Products

- Cultural Diversity Action Plans
- New theatre works in development and presentation
- Sector support services
- Forums
- Database of CALD theatre artists
- Articles and radio interviews
- Three projects to support organisations in the delivery of their cultural diversity action plans:
  - Cultural diversity self-reflection tool (additional output)
  - Evaluation Report including:
    - Case studies on the impact of the program on artists; partnership with QUT and MCI CPAM students
    - Program logic model (retro fit)





## Short term

### For organisations:

- Understand the current state of their engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse artists and their work
- Aware of any objections including limiting beliefs, values and attitudes to engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse artists and their work
- Aware of issues and challenges faced by CALD theatre artists
- Willing and able to develop strategies to address these issues, and provide opportunities, conditions and platforms for CALD artists and their work
- Aware of good practice strategies to engage with cultural diversity
- Understand and experience the benefits of embracing cultural diversity



### For artists:

- Greater knowledge of the arts sector and the key players
- Greater ability to navigate the system
- Greater connection to mainstream theatre
- Feel included as a part of Queensland theatre sector
- Understanding of grant application processes and guidelines; and ability to apply



## Intermediate

### For organisations:

- Articulate a vision for engagement with cultural diversity
- Demonstrate a commitment to action /creative evolution (Bazalgette)
- Greater engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse artists and their work
- Take steps towards growing engagement with cultural diversity across a range of organisational aspects, such as programming, audiences, leadership and workplace
- Reflect and evaluate their engagement with cultural diversity, and modify actions accordingly
- Sustainable engagement with cultural diversity



### For artists:

- Greater confidence to engage with mainstream theatre
- Greater ability to develop and manage their careers
- Share their knowledge with others in their community





**Creating the climate for change**

**Engaging & enabling the organisation**

**Implementing & sustaining for change**

**1. Create urgency**

Australian Theatre Forum where it all began (2011)

**2. Form a powerful coalition**

Arts Queensland, Australia Council, QTC, La Boite, Metro Arts, BEMAC (2012)

**3. Create a vision for change**

**4. Communicate the vision**

Working with the TDA through the Activities, creation of Products and achieving short term outcomes (from 2012)

**5. Empower action**

**6. Create quick wins**

Seeded, developing and presenting some new work (2013-2015)

**7. Build on the change**

Consolidation of how far the sector has come – self-reflection tool, forum, intermediate outcomes (2015)

**8. Make it stick**

Not there yet...?

## Self-reflection tool

The Cultural Diversity Self-Reflection Tool is an online questionnaire that enables you to reflect upon your organisation's level of engagement with cultural diversity. It's a holistic tool that invites you to reflect on a number of organisational aspects such as: vision, governance, management, programming, artists, audience engagement, marketing, workplace and evaluation. The tool will help you to:

- Get a greater understanding of where your organisation is at in terms of engagement with cultural diversity
- Set a vision of your organisation's aspirations and commitment to growing engagement with cultural diversity
- Identify strengths and challenges which can be used to develop strategies and plans for improving your engagement with cultural diversity
- Develop the next iteration of your cultural diversity action plan



## So where are we at?

- Varying degrees of readiness across individual organisations and individuals within organisations
- Identified priorities to continue increasing engagement with cultural diversity
- Ready for more action!



## Commendations

We commend the Queensland theatre sector for:

- Responding to the call for change;
- Creating visions for change;
- Not only committing to vision but also for developing and taking steps towards growing engagement with cultural diversity;
- Breaking down some of the barriers and changing the lives and careers of participating CALD artists; and
- Through these actions, increased engagement with CALD artists across Queensland stages.



## Affirmations

We affirm that:

- The focus of this project was on increasing engagement with CALD and that there are other aspects that need further attention to support their engagement with artists, such as audiences, leadership and workplace
- Individual organisations and individuals within organisations are at varying stages of readiness for making change but there is a general feeling of being ready for more action



## Recommendations

- Opportunity to build upon the success of the pilot project in Queensland and for another long term coordinated project to continue increasing engagement with cultural diversity across Queensland stages and to work with the collaborating organisations continue their work and priorities, particularly in terms of audiences
- Opportunity to test the temperature of theatre organisations across Australia using the self-reflection tool to gauge readiness to engage with cultural diversity
- Opportunity to pilot this project in other states with other theatre organisations
- Opportunity to continue identifying CALD artists and to provide platforms for their work
- Opportunity to coordinate all initiatives for sustainable engagement with cultural diversity





Longer term, coordinated, engagement projects like this

lead to

sustainable practice

which lead to

IMPACT



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