SELF-REPRESENTATION THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE
Welcome to the winter edition of *Australian Mosaic* in 2018, issue 49. I am delighted to present this issue on arts and culture in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities of Australia—an issue where we will celebrate the creativity and innovation of our communities.

Australia is one of the most successful multicultural countries in the world. This success was reflected in the last census which showed that more than a quarter of Australia’s population was born overseas, almost half of Australians had at least one parent born overseas and one in five Australians spoke a language other than English at home—figures which indicate that Australia is increasingly diverse and increasingly multilingual. The Scanlon Foundation yearly surveys Mapping Social Cohesion in Australia have found that support for multiculturalism has become the majority viewpoint in every survey since 2000.¹

Despite this, a Screen Australia survey showed that in current television drama, just 18 per cent of characters are non-Anglo Celtic.² It cannot be overlooked that our creative media can shape Australian society by reflecting who we are: a nation filled with a richness of experience beyond that of any country on earth. This lack of diversity in media (not just in television drama) demonstrates that we have a long way to go before Australian media and broadcast entertainment is representative of the population.

Further, the recent Scanlon Foundation report highlighted that, in spite of high levels of support for Australian multiculturalism, there has been an increase in reported experiences of discrimination because of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion—rising from 15% in 2015 to 20% in 2016 and 2017. The recent report showed that ‘those of a non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 34%, compared to 15% of those born in Australia and 22% of those born overseas in English speaking countries.’³
It is FECCA’s role to encourage an inclusive and cohesive multicultural Australian society and to protect the interests of CALD Australians in the face of rising levels of racism. One way of doing this, is to share stories and positive images of the many contributions the CALD communities make to the Australian society including in the arts and culture.

This issue of Australian Mosaic showcases the diverse, extensive and flourishing arts scene amongst CALD Australian communities. We have created a special issue of Australian Mosaic on the arts and culture in CALD communities to demonstrate the uniqueness of these perspectives and to create a shared space of understanding and connection. A space where people can meet, create a dialogue, and realise that the next person may not be so different from me after all: ‘It’s very hard to hate someone when you have been empathising with their stories, or laughing at their jokes’.\(^1\)

I see arts and culture as a vehicle to preserve and promote Australia’s successful multiculturalism. Arts and culture can offer a safe space for interaction where people can express themselves, recover from trauma, participate in the community and share stories of survival. Such activities have proven benefits for refugees and migrants and encourage people to ‘take positive action towards positive citizenship’.\(^2\)

Arts and culture can also encourage the development of bridges between immigrants and refugees and the ‘host society’ and facilitate ‘encounters between different populations’.\(^3\) Arts and culture can enable a ‘sophisticated democracy; it provides spaces for the articulation and dissemination of complex ideas, and facilitates broad participation in social space’.\(^4\)

The use of arts and culture to share stories and find connections and commonalities is a theme which runs through all of the articles in this issue. From intimate stories on family and reflections of racism through to broader concepts of politics and the impact conflict has had on countries, the articles in this issue of Australian Mosaic are all an expression of how learning about each other can promote social cohesion for a society and a sense of belonging for the individual.

I sincerely thank all the contributors to this issue for sharing their creativity and professionalism and for inviting the readers on a personal and intimate journey through their own work. I also thank the writers for broadening our understandings of the role arts and culture can play in developing social cohesion.

With this in mind, I wish you a happy reading! I trust you will enjoy the stories, the images and the performances showcased in this issue as much as I have.

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\(^1\) Markus, Professor Andrew (2017) Mapping Social Cohesion The Scanlon Foundation surveys
\(^2\) Screen Australia, Seeing ourselves, Reflections on diversity in Australian TV drama, 2016
\(^3\) Markus, Professor Andrew (2017) Mapping Social Cohesion The Scanlon Foundation surveys
\(^5\) The role of culture in promoting inclusion in the context of migration, Report of the Voices of Culture platform, September 2016.
\(^6\) Hebert, Daniel and Bronwyn Bragg, The role of culture and the arts as a framework and tools for settlement
\(^7\) The role of culture in promoting inclusion in the context of migration, Report of the Voices of Culture platform, September 2016.
Welcome to issue number 49 of FECCA's flagship magazine, the *Australian Mosaic*. This issue will explore Self-Representation through Arts and Culture.

This edition of *Australian Mosaic* looks at diversity in arts and culture as an expression of a successful multicultural Australia and examines why showcasing culturally and linguistically diverse arts and culture is important for all communities and societies.

The articles in this issue of *Australian Mosaic* show how arts and culture representing a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints are used as tools to tell stories and promote understanding. We wanted to emphasise the importance of arts and culture in creating an avenue for identity expression as well as to showcase the vibrant and diverse arts and culture scene in Australia. The articles reach across a broad scene of the arts involving people from variety of backgrounds and demonstrate how people at different points in the migration process have valuable stories to share: newly arrived refugees, second generation CALD Australians or older migrants who have lived in Australia for decades but feel excluded and unsure of their place in Australian society.

The contributors articulate the connection between arts and culture and a new homeland. The articles include stories of how the arts have been used in the process of encouraging inclusion and belonging. Arts and culture can provide a space where voices and stories of migrants are heard. By telling stories through arts and culture, a connection can develop between people.

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to read this magazine. Enjoy and learn from the stories told and be amazed by beautiful poems celebrating Australia's diversity. You can read how self-expression through arts and culture has helped people settle in Australia and how shared stories across Australian society have created a common space of understanding. Admire the images in the magazine—photographs and paintings—focusing on diversity and difference as a way of bringing people together.

We start with an article by Diversity Arts challenging the lack of diversity in Australia's arts scene. Arts, they write, has the capacity to open up new spaces and dialogue and the lack of diversity in the Australian cultural space must be addressed. We then get to read the stories of four culturally diverse artists expressing how and why the arts is important for their own sense of inclusion and belonging in Australia.

Identity expression by youth is a theme explored in articles by SBS and AMES. SBS' *Harmony Art Collective* looks at stories that young people have to tell—stories that can be shared with the world in a meaningful way and erase barriers in a collaborative manner. Through this project, SBS noted how exploring diversity through stories can contribute to a more united society.

Laurie Nowell from AMES also notes how arts unites us. Elaborating on the *Heartlands Arts Project*, Mr Nowell describes how the project used film as a medium for young refugees to tell stories about their lives. This experience gave the young people a sense of togetherness through shared circumstances. It also gave the broader community an insight into the refugee experience. This two-way conversation plays an essential role in the strengthening of Australia as a multicultural nation.

Visual expressions as an art form is used by many to convey messages—both on a personal and societal level. Fatima Killeen, a Moroccan migrant to Australia, uses printmaking and painting to express her concern related to the humanitarian, social and environmental impact years of war have had on countries. Her beautiful images often show certain sadness and call for a change in world politics and warfare. Her images also bring some understanding of the Arab and Muslim communities in Australia.

Vicky Okot uses photography to showcase issues that are important to her. Having arrived in Australia from South Sudan, her celebration of the African woman is central to the pieces represented in this issue of *Australian Mosaic*. She describes her art as a way of incorporating the two cultures that have shaped who she is today—South Sudanese and Australian. Her images, giving a voice to women of colour, are striking and beautiful!
Charlotte Raymond uses her writing and her slam poetry as a therapeutic process. By bringing feelings to the paper she opens up a space to tell untold stories. Writing for Charlotte, is a way of connecting with her own story as a second generation migrant. Read the beautiful story of her mother, a hard-working migrant woman finding her place in Australian society.

Winnie Dunn from Sweatshop in Sydney uses writing to explain her ‘complicated’ heritage of being of Australian-Tongan background and to challenge stereotypes in Australian television. She uses her own experiences as a third-generation Tongan-Australian to feel empowered and recognises the importance of using the arts as self-expression.

We also introduce a new book launched by Sweatshop celebrating a decade of youth writing competition. We were lucky to be able to present the winner of 2018, Ms Donna Wilson—a young woman of Vietnamese background expressing the sometimes personal struggles with connecting to her mother’s native language. I think many second generation youths, and older migrants, will recognise these conflicting emotions relating to their world in Australia and their parents’ world often in a country that seems strange, foreign and far away.

Jackline Okot also uses poetry as a vehicle for self-representation. Celebrating her African background while connecting with her new homeland through personal stories and ideas, Jackline wishes to tackle universal problems and recognise that we are all the same. Please enjoy Jackline’s two very beautiful poems about celebrating Africa and standing up against futile discrimination.

Christian Ramilo provides a short presentation on the importance of community arts. Looking at a variety of projects offered at the Darwin Community Arts Centre, he expands on some of the benefits of developing community arts projects involving the arts and culture.

The importance of arts to express feelings of loss and difference when becoming older is addressed by FECCA’s own Director of Ageing and Disability Policy, Cristina Giusti, in her review of Danijela Hlis’ book. The book introduces the readers to the world of ageing, disability, dementia and love. Through beautiful but often sad poems, Hlis tackles issues of dementia among older people from a range of backgrounds. Based on lived experience, she also looks at what it means to be the carer of a family member or friend going through the illness of dementia.

Finally, we introduce two articles reflecting on the importance of maintaining your own culture in a new country and of celebrating diversity through cultural expression. Inspire, a program by Migrant Resource Centre in Tasmania, aims to connect the broader Tasmanian community with diverse multicultural entertainers. In the article, we get to read the stories of three different performers talking about their own experience of coming to Tasmania—in most cases a very different place to where they are from—and the importance of being able to express their own culture and identity.

The Serbian community in Canberra is also an avenue for cultural expression and maintenance and seeks to incorporate traditional folklore, language and culture with their life in Australia. Noting how cultural diversity can strengthen bonds between nations of different origins, the author, Ana Cagic, seeks to highlight the importance of celebrating and sharing cultures in a positive way.

I wish to express my greatest appreciation to all the contributors of this issue of Australian Mosaic. Many of you have shared personal and intimate stories and it is inspirational to see the quality, diversity and magnitude of arts and cultural expression we can find among the CALD community in Australia. Thank you.
Towards a culturally diverse creative sector

Diversity is one of the defining issues of our time. Unprecedented levels of migration and increasingly connected digital networks are creating situations of cross-cultural contact and exchange that we have never before experienced. Australia, as a complex multicultural nation, is at the cutting edge of this global phenomenon.

It is the arts—by creating opportunities for dialogue and interrogating these complexities and frictions—that can help make sense of this. The creative sector can provide the capacity for reflexivity, play a critical role in reducing ignorance and increase visibility of non-dominant social groups and voices. However, a lack of diversity in Australia’s arts and screen sectors and the need for greater inclusion is stifling this capacity to be a powerful force for change.

The 2017 Australia Council’s ‘Making Art Work’ report reveals how artists from non-English speaking backgrounds are under-represented in the Australian arts sector: they comprise 10 percent of artists compared to 18 percent of the workforce.

The 2016 Census revealed that nearly half (49 per cent) of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or had one or both parents born overseas (second generation Australian). We found out that Australians speak more than 300 languages, with more than one in five (21 per cent) speaking a language besides English at home. Mandarin remains the next most common language, spoken by one in every 40 Australians.
Against these figures, the latest Guardian Essential poll has found that 64 per cent of Australians think the level of immigration in Australia over the past decade has been too high. On the other hand, 55 per cent of the sample agrees with the proposition that ‘multiculturalism and cultural diversity has enriched the social and economic lives of all Australians’. This highlights people’s inconsistent and complex relationships to migration and multiculturalism.

So how do we reconcile this reality with the dominant attitudes and perceptions of diversity and multiculturalism? We cannot act on the principle articulated in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, of which Australia is a signatory, that diversity be ‘recognised and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations’ nor build on a ‘common heritage of humanity’ until cultural diversity and multiculturalism are thought about and framed differently, both at the individual and institutional levels.

This is where the arts come in. The arts has the capacity to challenge and facilitate new ways of seeing and thinking critically about the world; of opening up new spaces and dialogue; and, of creating nourishing spaces to respond to and engage with a whole spectrum of realities through collaborations. For example, performance and film can tackle thorny issues and open people to new ways of seeing, while writing can provide insights into other perspectives.

WHO DOMINATES IN THE CULTURAL SPACE?

There has been significant local and international debate about the lack of diversity in the cultural space and the necessity for self-determination and social justice when it comes to the politics of representation. These debates are not new. Social media has enabled more people to have a voice on these issues, as exemplified by far-reaching social media campaigns such as #OscarsSoWhite in the United States and closer to home in 2016 the #LogiesSoWhite campaign. While there have been discussions and moves to increase diversity in the creative sector locally, often these measures fall short of what is needed.
Invisibility is a serious problem, denying people the right to be seen and heard. Highlighting this issue in his opening address at Diversity Arts Australia’s Beyond Tick Boxes Symposium last year, Dr Tim Soutphommasane quoted Dominican American writer Junot Diaz, who said, ‘There’s this idea that monsters—vampires—don’t have reflections in a mirror. What I’ve always thought isn’t that monsters don’t have reflections in a mirror. It’s that if you want to make a human being into a monster, deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves.’

Soutphommasane then cited Australian writer Benjamin Law who responded to this comment with, ‘When I first heard that [Diaz’s quote], I knew exactly what he meant. Growing up without seeing yourself reflected back in your nation’s stories is a quietly dehumanising thing.’

In conversation with Lena Nahlous for Diversity Arts Australia’s podcast The Colour Cycle, Law, the creator of hit SBS comedy The Family Law, added ‘It’s still really common and really unquestioned to have an all-Anglo cast on television, whether it’s factual or scripted. And that’s not just bad for adults but I really worry about Australian kids who see that stuff as well.’ Law’s comments are underscored by Screen Australia’s 2016 report Seeing Ourselves—Reflections on Diversity in Australian TV drama, which found that Anglo-Celtic and European actors portrayed 88 per cent of the characters in Australian TV drama.

When the mainstream arts sector has opened the door slightly to cultural diversity, it is most often in problematically prescribed ways. Actor, producer and director Bali Padda, points to the stereotyping of people of colour in the film domain: he told The Colour Cycle ‘I’ve been a terrorist, I’ve been the student that works in a convenience store, very rarely have I ever been an Australian-born dude who goes to the beach and hosts barbecues.’ Performance poet Zainab Syed echoes these thoughts, saying Australian audiences ‘have an appetite for stories that are about us being discriminated [against], being victimised, because that’s something that they can relate to. They don’t have an appetite for stories where I am privileged and I own my narrative and I have a strong voice. Those are the stereotypes that you are breaking.’
Walkley-nominated documentarian and journalist Patrick Abboud affirmed this at Diversity Arts Australia’s Beyond Tick Boxes Symposium in Western Sydney last year, ‘Don’t get the Asian kid to make a film about Asian people... let them make whatever film they want!’

**CULTURAL EXPRESSION AS A HUMAN RIGHT**

While many cannot relate to the absence of their stories and experiences in the images, films and arts that are being produced by Australia’s cultural institutions and production companies, remedying this requires more than ensuring that there are ‘diverse faces’ in performances or in front of the camera. It is also about tackling the structural barriers that prevent culturally diverse people from occupying leadership and decision-making positions or from having long-term careers in the arts and screen industries.

DARTS believes that everyone has the right to participate in cultural and creative life. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity articulates that ‘cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.’ Indeed, the free expression of culture should be seen as a human right. As Race Discrimination Commissioner Dr Tim Soutphommasane explained at Beyond Tick Boxes, ‘The idea of human rights is that of

‘VERY RARELY HAVE I EVER BEEN AN AUSTRALIAN-BORN DUDE WHO GOES TO THE BEACH AND HOSTS BARBECUES’

– Bali Padda
everyone being born equal in rights and dignity… we can all appreciate that someone’s dignity can be connected with how they—or, to be more specific, the group they belong to—are depicted in the public sphere. Where a group in society is invisible or demeaned, the message is clear. Those in that group are outsiders, second-class members, or even an “other” against whom society defines itself.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

When we talk about inclusion in the arts, we are also talking about power. For example, decision-making power: what exhibitions are mounted, what stories get told and who gets to tell them, what films are funded, who gets cast, what histories and genres are taught, and so on. It is essential for culturally and linguistically diverse people to have agency in all of these processes.

This sentiment is echoed by Author and Broadcaster Sunil Badami, in his article in The Guardian, ‘Many “non-mainstream” artists like me—many of whom are also non-white, or non-male, or non-straight, or non-whatever—often decry the “gatekeepers” controlling funding and opportunities, upon whose often closed doors we’ve had to knock, or get our foot in, to open the crack a little wider for those who’ll come after us.’

Addressing inequities in the arts sector starts with addressing the colonisation of Australia’s First Nations Peoples. The approach we adhere to at DARTS is to put First Nations peoples, culture and communities first as a starting point to a truly inclusive arts sector.

A key learning is to emphasise what Lily Shearer, Co-Artistic Director of Moohaglin Performing Arts calls the ‘Three Rs’: Relationships, Respect and Reciprocity. Engagement must come from a place of respect for culture, and an acknowledgement of history and the legacy of dispossession and colonial damage, not as an afterthought, or a tokenistic gesture. Engagement must be more than ‘ticking a box’. Mainstream arts organisations must not assume that hiring diverse actors or artists is enough. As Lily Shearer said at the Beyond Tick Boxes symposium, ‘Don’t expect trained actors to also educate about their culture. They’re trained actors, not teachers!’

Another instructive lesson articulated by First Nations artists is that reciprocity is the key to good relationships. If you want something from an artist bringing their knowledge and experience of culture, you must be prepared to offer something meaningful in return. Too often, diverse artists are asked to be generous with their culture and knowledge but too often this is not reciprocated, which can lead to cultural appropriation and tokenism.

We acknowledge the important work that is being undertaken in the arts to increase cultural diversity and diversity more broadly, for example Screen Australia via Developing the Developer, the Australian Film and Television School as founders of the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network and Footscray Community Arts Centre’s Emerging Cultural Leaders program. However, initiatives such as these need to be amplified and given greater and sustained support and investment over a longer time period.
In her article in Southern Crossings magazine, Author Roanna Gonsalves draws from the discussions at Beyond Tick Boxes to provide an overview of actions that will lead to change:

- Audience development programs to lower access barriers to engaging with the arts in Australia.
- A call to organisations such as the Australia Council, Create NSW, NSW Writers’ Centre, Copyright Agency, etc. to support individual diverse artists, as money to make stuff is what matters. But there was also a strong call to also ‘Support the Supporters’.
- Long term funding for organisations to be sustainable.
- The need for Affirmative Action, and quotas, because, as Michael Mohammed Ahmed noted, there is plenty of international and local evidence that quotas are needed and that they work.
- Access to support and mentors already established in the field. Capacity building is important.
- Linking diversity to acceptable standards of creative production, setting standards, like the British Film Institute Diversity Standards.
- People at the top of the organisation need to set standards for others in relation to diversity.
- A more nuanced understanding of diversity, with a focus on intersectionality. E.g. support for women must include not only white women but also women from minority communities.

DIVERSITY ARTS AUSTRALIA

To support the arts and creative sectors apply these principles, DARTS undertakes research, strategic projects and capacity building initiatives. Research and data are critical to creating evidence-based responses and for monitoring progress. We are currently involved in a number of studies that we anticipate will produce material outcomes that contribute to transformative change.

DARTS develops strategic initiatives and projects which centralise the role of culturally diverse artists in speaking to these issues. We commission new works and create shareable media, such as Diverse Screens, The Colour Cycle podcast, Creative Lives and the Diversity Dialogues initiatives. These projects also position the ‘artist as advocate’, providing the platform for artists themselves to creatively contemplate themes of diversity and inclusion, being active participants in the conversation, framing their own stories and responses which act as provocations for wider discussion in the community and the sector.

Our work in capacity building includes providing professional development, training and support to organisations in promoting critical diversity and inclusive practice, to develop diversity action plans, and to create culturally safe environments. We also connect the sector through regular events and symposia and one example of this is our Futuring workshops, in collaboration with Arts Front. These allow participants to imagine a future where a truly diverse Australian arts landscape has been achieved and then develop concrete tangible and actionable steps to get there.

We work in partnership with other social movements to create an arts landscape that reflects and engages all peoples, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender, age, ability, status or history.

‘WHERE A GROUP IN SOCIETY IS INVISIBLE OR DEMEANED, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR. THOSE IN THAT GROUP ARE OUTSIDERS, SECOND CLASS MEMBERS, OR EVEN AN “OTHER” AGAINST WHOM SOCIETY DEFINES ITSELF.’
– TIM SOUTPHOMMASANE
DARTS project ‘Creative Lives’ has the goal of profiling culturally diverse arts and to identify, recognise and connect artists from culturally diverse backgrounds. The aim is also to provide opportunities for collaboration and networking with small, medium and large arts organisations. Below are a few examples of the stories that form part of the project. You can learn more and read other stories at Diversity Arts website.

MAHLA KARIMIYAN

‘When I was in detention I met a lot of good artists and good friends. They were really good supporters. That’s why I could start doing artwork in Australia in a nice way, in a really positive way […] They supported me a lot even when I was in the detention centre, they brought me a lot of stuff[…] But it was hard to find the right community, because I didn’t know anything about Australia. It was completely different, different language, different place, different people, different cultures. I had to learn about it a lot.’

Still: Margaret Mayhew

AZIZEH ASTANEH

‘It’s kind of interesting how no one sees how strongly arts can help asylum seekers, and people like me who are living in strange, funny types of visas. They think that other things are more important. Whereas, I see that art has played a vital and important role in my life, not just my life but in other lives as well […] I see myself as a voice, not just [for] my experience. It has not been my experience only, it’s been the experience that I have shared with many others […]’

‘I’m growing, but inside a glass bottle. I don’t really exist, I don’t really live in the community. There’s a glass barrier between me and the community to live my life to the full[est]. And to be honest, I don’t think I deserve it, just because I’ve saved my life, I’ve tried to save my life. That’s something that every human being would do if their life is being threatened.’

Still: Margaret Mayhew
‘I’m involved mostly in making people more aware of the different kinds of books that are out there. When I say African literature, I mean literature from all over the world that’s written by people of African descent. So, we know that people were stolen from Africa hundreds of years ago who are still producing content in the Caribbean and in the Americas. We know that there are Africans living everywhere in the world now as well, and they are also producing content. But, there are also people on the African continent itself who are producing content. And even though, when we think of literature often people think ‘oh it’s just books’ and I’m like, yes I started off with ‘just books’, but I’m also a spoken word artist and a storyteller, and a lot of our books were written as a way of preserving our oral traditions, so you know….you can’t limit it to the just the written word, you also have to include the spoken word.’

Sista Zai Zande

‘I SEE THAT ART HAS PLAYED A VITAL AND IMPORTANT ROLE IN MY LIFE, NOT JUST MY LIFE BUT ALSO IN OTHER LIVES AS WELL.’
– Azizeh Astaneh

GAWAA LUNDA

Gawaa was born in a rural village in the Gobi Desert in 1975. Gawaa is a painter, sculptor, photographer, video and mixed-media artist. His works are humorous, daring and colourful commentaries on identity, modernity and authenticity, often taking playful aim at Australia’s sacred cows. Gawaa has exhibited widely, including at exhibitions at Stirrup Gallery, Chrissie Cotter Gallery, Alpha Gallery, 107 Projects, M2 and Tortuga Gallery in Sydney, as well as shows in Mongolia, Italy, Melbourne and Braidwood. He often works with typography, inspired by the weird misalignments that can occur when learning a new language, and the barriers that language can create. ‘When I started doing art, I wanted to kind of reject Western culture. Stuff like, bullshit, this seems like bullshit, you know? And that started my typography and text-based artwork. It’s been like finding how to fit in in the culture but still living a little bit against it, you know: oh this is bullshit you guys—you’re just going to live life, work and die. And it’ll just be in a concrete jungle in a rat race. Because I’m an outsider I can see that.’

Bullshit, by Gawaa Lundaa
The Harmony Art Collective returned for its second year in 2018, continuing the important work of celebrating diversity and fostering social cohesion in Australians, from newly arrived immigrants, to disadvantaged youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

A collaboration between SBS, the Australian Government and aMBUSH Gallery, this nationwide initiative has engaged with over 450 young participants aged between 15–24 since its inception, as part of a unique national art project for Harmony Day (21 March).

The project expanded its footprint to Western Australia for the first time this year, marking a truly national snapshot of Australian youth expressing their unique narratives, identity and cultural heritage. Every young person has a story to tell—and through art these stories can be expressed creatively and shared with the world in a meaningful way.

In late 2017, four Australian artists known for incredible urban artworks—stenciller Luke Cornish (aka E.L.K.), mural master Georgia Hill, artist Jeremyville and creative partner Megan Mair, and large-scale street artist Fintan Magee—embarked on a five month national tour of local community centres in Darwin (NT), Westmead-Girraween (NSW), Wyndham (VIC), Mirrabooka (WA), Ipswich (QLD), and Salisbury (SA) to mentor participants.
EVERY YOUNG PERSON HAS A STORY TO TELL—AND THROUGH ART THESE STORIES CAN BE EXPRESSED创造性 AND SHARED WITH THE WORLD IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.
The artists conducted six workshops where, under their inclusive and relaxed guidance, a wave of Australian youth felt empowered to create artworks that reflect cultural, political and social perspectives unique to their situation.

For the Harmony Art Collective participants, the workshops provided an environment where barriers were erased by the collaborative nature of the artworks. New friendships were made over markers, stencils and spray cans and nearly all participants said the workshop gave them the opportunity to learn more about a culture different to their own, as well as learn new ways to express their identities through art.

One participant from the QLD workshop said: ‘the ability to work collaboratively with new people from diverse backgrounds was an incredible experience’. For others, it was a remarkable way to meet other people within their own community.

Bella Ndayikeze, a participant from the Mirrabooka, WA workshop, and currently a youth programs coordinator for Edmund Rice Centre WA, said that ‘coming to Australia gave me opportunities to express myself in ways I could have never done so in Tanzania. The Harmony Art Collective was an amazing experience because we could offer the opportunity to young women with the Arts program to express themselves in a way they would never have done so before. I had the opportunity to bring four young girls to the program and they enjoyed it fully and still can’t stop talking about it.’

The project uncovered some incredible new talent with captivating stories, including Simon Shahin from Western Sydney (NSW), a Syrian migrant who went from living just a kilometre away from the terrorist frontline to pursuing photography; Mohamed Bulhan from Darwin (NT) who has lived through attacks on
his family in Somalia; and Bella Ndayikeze from Koondoola (WA), who has found a safe space to express herself and ignite her creativity—far from the Tanzanian refugee camp she grew up in.

The 16 large-scale artworks produced delivered dynamic engagement between the general public and the vibrant youth experience, and are simultaneously approachable and unifying. The Harmony Art Collective fulfils the interests of social exchange and communication amongst the wider community by exploring who we are and who we could be through the eyes of young Australians.

SBS was uniquely positioned to deliver this campaign alongside aMBUSH Gallery, with its core purpose of inspiring all Australians to explore, appreciate and celebrate our diverse world, and by doing so contributing to a more united society.

As noted by Clare O’Neil, Director of Corporate Affairs at SBS, ‘SBS is proud to bring young people together to strengthen and celebrate their sense of identity; particularly those newly arrived in Australia. Last year’s Harmony Art Collective was such a success and we saw some amazing work produced by the young artists.’

Bill Dimas, Director, aMBUSH Gallery also acknowledged how ‘for us, the Harmony Art Collective is a deeply powerful and meaningful project. We have seen first-hand how it helps Australians understand the experiences of the young migrants who come to our country, and opens a door to empathy. It enables all participants—regardless of where they have come from, what hardships they have suffered or what language they speak—to express their own story, which in turn connects to the minds and hearts of the next generation of Australians. The Harmony Art Collective gives audiences a true picture of the hopes and aspirations of recently-settled migrants, refugees and vulnerable young Australians, and has the power to change perceptions.’

At the end of its workshop journey, the artworks culminated in an outdoor public exhibition space in Sydney CBD’s Darling Quarter OPEN, visited by almost 1.2 million people since its launch earlier this year for Harmony Day. The launch event featured an address by the Honourable Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, who noted the importance of celebrating diversity and the value of community.
Alongside the exhibition, the project was captured in four short documentaries which premiered on SBS VICELAND’s social media channels, plus a behind the scenes photography exhibition showcasing works by Sydney photographer Billy Zammit.

As part of SBS’s educational team, SBS Learn, also created new online learning resources to enable schools and community centres to run their own art workshops, based on The Harmony Art Collective’s artist styles.

You can learn more about the Harmony Art Collective by browsing through their website.

THE LAUNCH EVENT FEATURED AN ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE ALAN TUDGE MP, MINISTER FOR CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS, WHO NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY.

The Honourable Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs addresses the crowd at the Harmony Art Collective launch, March 2018. Photographer: Enzo Amato
Heartlands 2016 Arts Project: Stories from Refugee Youth

By Laurie Nowell, Public Affairs Manager AMES Australia

Laurie Nowell has been a journalist and writer for 25 years. He has written for publications in Australia and the United Kingdom. His work has been published the Herald Sun, The Age and The Australian in Australia and in the Times and the Guardian in the UK. Recently, working in public affairs for migrant and refugee settlement agency AMES Australia, he has been writing about the migrant and refugee sector while also working with migrant communities to help them engage with mainstream media. In previous roles, Laurie was a senior editor at News Limited and an international correspondent for London’s Today newspaper.

There’s a saying that while politics divides people art unites us.

Art also has the ability to speak to people on an intimate and visceral level that transcends political spin and self-interest.

With this in mind, each year migrant and refugee settlement agency AMES Australia facilitates an arts project that give opportunities to people from refugee backgrounds to express themselves, to share something of their cultures with the broader community and also to have voice in public conversations.

The philosophy underpinning AMES’ ‘Heartlands’ projects is that there is two-way engagement with the artists able to express themselves, but also the broader community able to gain insights into the refugee experience.

In 2016 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had a particular focus on refugee youth, so the Heartlands project also focused on youth.

It used the medium of film, arguably more appealing to youth, and invited ten young people from refugee backgrounds to make short films about some aspect of their lives or journeys.
The result was ten compelling short films that tell stories about the lives and the communities of these young refugees; while celebrating a sense of togetherness through their shared circumstance as refugees.

The storytellers came from countries including Somalia, Burma, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and Syria.

The films highlighted the passions, hopes, dreams and journeys of these young people in a series of narratively different but emotionally connected short films.

To put some context around the 2016 project; currently, the world is witnessing its largest ever refugee crisis with the number of displaced people around the globe now more than 65 million—that is more than were displaced at the end of WWII.

The Heartlands project gives insight into some of the communities who have found refuge in Australia in recent years.

Transcending cultural barriers, it reveals the challenges, successes and everyday lives of people who make up our refugee communities.

One overarching aim of Heartlands is to strengthen multiculturalism in Australia; to give the broader community insights into the refugee experience in the context of the refugee communities who have settled here.

The organisers wanted to show in a visual and accessible way the journeys of refugees, the difficult and often dangerous circumstance from which they have come and the associated effects of conflict, trauma or torture.

They also wanted to show the barriers, difficulties and challenges refugees and migrants face upon arriving in Australia; and some of the short films tell of exclusion from opportunity, isolation and discrimination.

The films evoke the inherent resilience of refugees; their resourcefulness; positive outlook and the contributions to society they have made and are making.
But ultimately the films evoke the inherent resilience of refugees; their resourcefulness; positive outlook and the contributions to society they have made and are making.

The project was launched at ACMI at Federation Square—in the centre of Melbourne—in June 2016 and was on display there for two weeks.

Subsequently it was exhibited for two weeks at each of the Footscray Arts Centre; the Walker Street Gallery, in Dandenong; at the Wyndham Library, and in Werribee, Mildura and Shepparton.

Ultimately, the project amounted to a unique two-way conversation between the film makers and the broader community.

For the broader community, the films give insight into the refugee experience and for the refugee communities they provided a voice with the potential to influence public attitudes and policy around migration and refugee settlement.

Some of the films are being used as educational and communications resources by schools, not-for-profit organisations and community groups operating in the multicultural sector in and around Melbourne.

The films have been viewed first hand by around 30,000 people at venues in Melbourne and around Victoria. Collectively and individually they have achieved around 50,000 hits on YouTube.

The project has had a profoundly positive impact on the lives of most of the participants and has given them status as role models and innovators in their own communities.

It has helped the storytellers build networks into the broader community and into artistic and business networks. One storyteller, Mehdi Jaghuri is currently enrolled in a fine arts degree course at Monash University.

Another two of the storytellers have begun studying film and documentary making while also working as video entrepreneurs within and outside their communities.

AMES Australia interviewed all of the storytellers last year—six months after the project was completed. All reported that their involvement in the project had been a positive experience and had given them valuable experience and new networks.
The response from refugee and migrant community leaders who have viewed the films has also been positive with a common thread emerging that the films have helped to ‘humanise’ and ‘demystify’ public issues around refugees and migration.

An evaluation found the project had contributed to social cohesion in Melbourne by giving the broader community insights into the refugee experience while emphasising our common humanity.

The organisers say the biggest challenge in staging the Heartlands project in 2016 was finding young people confident enough to tell their stories through film and giving them the right amount of technical support while ensuring that the stories remained their own work.

It was important that the storytellers had artistic control of their stories and the tone of the films while still achieving uniform production values.

To achieve this, an exhaustive consultation process was established that started at the inception of each of the stories, continued through the shoot and right up until the final editing.

This process has been adopted for all Heartlands projects into the future and continued in 2017 with an exhibition on show featuring fine art by refugees and migrants.

The Heartlands project surpassed its aims in terms of its public engagement, positive messaging and media coverage.

More than 70,000 people have seen the films either first-hand or online and the response of viewers has been overwhelming positive.

The project has featured prominently in the media. Notably by SBS TV and radio news, The Age and Herald Sun’s art sections, Broadsheet Magazine, RRR radio, ABC 774 program, Radio National as well as an array of suburban newspapers.
Artists are producing works influenced by social issues that are directly affecting their lives. Anti-immigration policies, climate change, inequality and discrimination... War over nearly two decades has engulfed most of my thoughts to express my concern in relation to the humanitarian, the social, and the environmental impact that it had on countries of conflict; the American led war has succeeded in turning them into zones of crisis.

I am a Moroccan migrant of Arab and Muslim descent living in Australia. My work highlights a visual language that is instantly recognisable, shouting out loud messages of desperation and endured bigotry. It also focuses on the misunderstanding between Arab migrants versus Australian politics tagging behind USA dogma. In a speech addressed to the Senate the leader of One Nation said: ‘We are in danger of being swamped by Muslims who bear...
a culture and ideology that is incompatible with our own’ and called for ‘Muslim immigration to be banned’.

My work is an outcry and a desperate need for change, though sometimes I feel as if I am pouring water on sand. Most people are disengaged and misguided about social issues concerning migration, detainees and asylum seekers fleeing war entrenched countries.

Social change can be engaging and stimulating to the creation of a tangible body of work, asserting an artistic direction and social interest. Art on the other hand can be empowering to indoctrinate society creating a social comity and a considerate behavior to others and all. It is a visual language instantly recognised and able to shout out loud messages of various concerns, this can engage debates not only within small communities, but—thanks to the social media—it can amplify deliberations to other parts of the world.

The freedom of expression, can either hinder or stimulate the creative process of making art that comments on social issues, and grant a stream of endless creativity with poignant ideas.

Art is an engine of a thriving society where power is built on artistic creation, tolerance and critical thinking. It is not necessarily about making the perfect picture, it is a conscious determination to make a statement in order to endorse respect and sustain the wellbeing of the environment that we all share.

I am interested in the dialogue that takes place when foreign objects are placed together in the same installation—they provoke ideas and accessibility to the world that I translate to the viewer. It is an instantaneous placement of thoughts.

I believe in the strength of a multicultural Australia with the diversity of cultures and experiences that contribute to the wellbeing of the land we all call home.

Art and social change influence each other. I use the beauty of Islamic art forms to extrapolate a hidden message of despair and desolation. My heritage is interwoven with the work and I feel that
it forms a connection with both the viewer and the artwork, leaving them to ponder and question our ‘principles.’

I want people to appreciate the beauty of Islamic and Arabic culture. The works is a celebration of Islamic design and Arabic calligraphy submerged in the Australian landscape.

My work is an attempt to bring some understanding and resolve to the negative stereotype surrounding the Arab and Muslim community in Australia, it sheds the light on elements of culture and tradition as an insight into a complex, often struggling and divided community, living with a national media contingent that continuously broadcasts messages of condemnation and disapproval.

My work lives inside the hearts of fellow Arabs, they recognise the familiar objects and feelings that are contained in my installations. It also resonates with the wider Australian community as they engage with familiar objects and expressions derived from the Australian culture.

The fusion of my heritage as a Moroccan/Australian artist conveys the beauty and mystery of the Islamic culture within the Australian landscape.
Vicky Okot is originally from South Sudan and arrived in Australia in 2005. She started learning photographic techniques during workshops run by dlux Media over 2013-15. These workshops allowed her to produce her first series of artwork in 2014 called Traditional African Portraits: Remixed. Vicky’s artwork focuses on the representation of black women and girls, to empower them to be fearless and to embrace their individuality and self-worth. In her first series she was aiming to paint a vivid picture of feminine strength—the head wrap makes the facial feature appear striking so that anyone that wishes to look upon an African woman would look up at her face rather than down on her body.

Why do you photograph?
I photograph because it allows me to highlight issues that are important to me. The expression ‘A picture is worth a thousand words’ is certainly true to me; where my photos are bold, loud and speak for themselves.

What are you trying to communicate with your art/photography?
My artwork focuses on the representation of black women and girls. I want to show the struggle that women of colour face every day in society but also share their strength and achievements. Giving them a voice to express themselves and being proud of who they are, despite what society has taught them for all these years.

How do you feel your photography is received by the general Australian public?
My work is very confronting, there is always mixed emotions about the messages I am trying to convey. I think for most part the general public have been very supportive and understanding. My previous artwork discussed issues such as skin lightening and skin bleaching and also issues such as female sexuality in today’s society. I like hearing people’s different views on the issues, I use it as both an opportunity to educate and learn.

How do you feel your photography is received by your migrant community?
I think my artwork has been received very well by my community. There has been a lot of positive feedback especially from the women. This is why I believe representation is so important. These women see themselves represented in a way that is positive, it makes them feel acknowledged.

'I AIM TO INCORPORATE THE TWO CULTURES THAT HAVE SHAPED MY IDENTITY.'
– Vicky Okot
Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your photography?

At the beginning of my practice I was very scared to talk about certain issues because of how my community might take it. However, over the years I’ve realised maybe not talking about certain things might be contributing to the issue. When photographing, I have to be careful of how I choose to represent my work. People can be easily triggered by what is presented; it is a matter of finding a balance between showing the honest truth but also being considerate of the audience.

Who inspired you?

Alek Wek is one of my biggest inspirations. I remember seeing a photo of her and how dark she was—I was so happy. My favourite moment was when she was in a fashion show and they put her in a blonde wig. As she walked down the runway she threw the wig into the crowd. For me that was a wow moment. This girl embracing herself without fear or shame, I wish I saw that when I was younger.

Grace Jones is someone who inspired me later in life, when I was becoming conscious of my identity and trying to find my place in society. Her androgyny challenges the way society has set up a standard of beauty, you can’t categorise her, she celebrates her masculinity and femininity equally and people can be intimidated by that. Who gets to decide what beauty is anyway?

How do you think you, as a photographer from a migrant background, can you connect with the wider Australian society?

I am proud of my culture; I will always celebrate my blackness. I am also proud to be Australian. When I put out work, I aim to incorporate the two cultures that have shaped my identity. Growing up in Australia has given me the opportunity to freely express myself and my ideas. My Sudanese background is something I’m very proud of. With Australia being such a multicultural country I hope we can all find common ground—if you think about it we are all migrants to this beautiful land with the exception of indigenous people of the land.

What do you enjoy by photographing?

It gives me the opportunity to connect with other people, to tell their stories and see the difference and similarities we share as humans. I love seeing people embracing themselves unapologetically. Photography allows me to shine light on issues that sometimes words alone cannot.

‘PHOTOGRAPHY ALLOWS ME TO SHINE LIGHT ON ISSUES THAT WORDS ALONE CANNOT.’
– Vicky Okot
Growing up the daughter of migrants, I had to unlearn that with assimilation often comes silence. The narrative of my parents was lost in the oceans crossed, tongues drowning in pursuits to keep themselves afloat. Through poetry, writing and performance I have embarked on a therapeutic process of relearning the story of my people. I write to tell the stories left unspoken, knowing that my story is but a mere chapter in a cultural chronicles still left untold.

I asked my mother if there were any fairy tales she had grown up hearing.

She responded with a sharp – No.

Disappointed in her response, but knowing that this was her story, not mine to tell, I let it go.

My mother has often been a woman of many words, and I have only recently learnt to truly hear them. Words spiral out of my mother’s mouth as she shifts between mother tongue and languages of learnt speech as effortlessly as the sun rises each morning. Yet despite all the words she’s had to give, I’ve never known my mother’s favourite colour or favourite food. As a child, I assumed she never had one. Now at 56 and still working as tirelessly as ever, she has measured her worth by her roles as a wife, a mother, a nursing assistant, her entire life built on servitude. It’s only as her own children leave the nest and take flight that she learns how much her own wings have been clipped when she attempts to fly.

My mother is 4’11”, Filipino, hardworking and meticulous, seldom taking a moment to put up her feet. She was born to a family of rice farmers in the village on Antique, Tibao moving to Talisay, Cebu in her adolescence. My mother’s tiny frame curls even smaller when she bends down to help others to their feet. She has fire in her voice when needed, a gift I have gracefully inherited.
One memory stands out from my childhood. I ask myself how my parents came to choose my name and she tells me that she would have liked to have called me ‘Cinderella’. She said as a young child she often felt like a maid as she attended to the never-ending demand of domestic work, and when she soared continents and nested a new home in Australia, she found herself doing much the same. At the time, I didn’t truly understand what she meant. As a small child, the daughter of migrants, the disparity in choice, opportunity, and privilege my migrant parents had graced me with was unbeknown to me. The only homage I have payed to Cinderella is my own extensive shoe collection, my ode to Imelda Marcos herself.

The plight of women like my mother is not uncommon. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild explore this in their book *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. This provocative text explores the way in which mass migration and economic exchange of a globalised world affects women working in domestic services. Many women from the Global South are fulfilling domestic service roles in the developed world to appease the desires of the affluent West. As the position and opportunities available to women continue to steadily increase in the West, this is not necessarily a global phenomenon. While growing prospects mean that migrant women are able to better financially support their families than if they were teachers, and nurses back home, it does not discount the love and devotion that could be provided to their own children left behind that is now being diverted to the children of women in the West.

There is a secret love affair between the *Global South* and the affluent West, that does not openly proclaim the commodification of women in a globalised world. Perhaps there is shame in admitting this reality. In a world where women of the West are opening doors and meeting raised expectations, often it takes the love and nurturing of someone else to fulfil the impossible demands imposed upon women today expected to ‘do it all, have it all.’

In the first chapter of Ehrenreich’s *Global Woman*, parallels are drawn between experiences by women from the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Born to a Filipino mother and a Sri Lankan-born father, this was the first time in all my 24 years that I had ever seen these two cultures described in the same sentence other than in describing myself.

Named after my father’s family servant, I wonder if I too, through the professional choices I’ve made, play the role of Cinderella also, binding myself to a life of servitude.

My mother may be wife, mother, and nursing assistant, but she is also woman, spirit, fire, and queen.

She is both the Cinderella who hems the dress and scrubs the floors, and the woman who dances till midnight, the belle of the ball in sparkles and silk.

Through poetic art, like a fairy godmother, I share my mother’s story.

A woman who speaks five tongues, has plenty of stories to tell and I call it upon myself to open up that narrative and read out those tales.

When I perform, when I write, her bloodline haemorrhages in my hands as the words splatter across the page.

When the clock strikes midnight, and she returns to her work, I remind her, that even in those moments, the glass slipper still fits.

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‘I THINK WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS FOR SPACES TO BE CREATED FOR MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES TO SPEAK THEIR TRUTH.’
– Charlotte Raymond

The author, Charlotte Laurasia Raymond, with her mother
Why do I write?
I write as a therapeutic process. Whenever I have a strong feeling or feelings about an oppression or experience I find it helpful to bring this feeling to paper. When I perform I feel it opens up space for other people who may feel that they are not given sufficient space to tell their untold stories.

What am I trying to communicate?
My truth. I can only communicate my truth and it feels invalidating for me to speak on behalf of someone else. Particularly as a queer woman of colour I’ve often been faced with voices that feel that they know my experience and can speak on behalf of people like myself. My writing seeks to counteract these people.

How is it perceived by the general Australian public?
Overall, I feel it is perceived quite well. My work is quite personal but can also be quite political because the two constantly intersect. I do find that when my work tackles issues like white privilege and colonisation there are people who can get uncomfortable in their seats but I feel that in speaking about these issues I can prompt some really insightful critical self-reflection in those who need it most.

How is it perceived by my migrant community?
I am pretty removed from a lot of my Filipino Sri Lankan culture which is one of the reasons I write about it. It helps me process my feelings of disconnection and I have found that there are people who can definitely relate to my work having also been told they are not ethnic enough.

How can I connect with the wider Australian community?
I think what is important is for spaces to be created for marginalised communities to speak their truth. The wider Australian community needs to make a commitment to recognising a need for equity and in turn, the best way for me to make a connection is to seek out these spaces.

What do I enjoy about performing or writing?
The most enjoyable part is the cathartic release that comes with writing. Performing allows me to present my truth without shame and having performed in various capacities all my life, I always find home on the stage.
Although I am a third generation, Tongan-Australian from Mt Druitt, I’ve lost count of the amount of times I have been referenced as belonging to ‘the islands’, as international, as not from here. Once I went on a Tinder date with a White guy from the Bible belt suburb of Castle Hill. Mark had freckly mayo skin and hair the colour of strawberry milkshake. In the middle of Mt Druitt Starbucks he stroked my forearms and told me he was born in Liverpool, England but he calls himself Aussie.

‘I’ve been here since I was six so I think that qualifies.’ He said, yelling over the pressure steam to warm milk and a group of Filos in Adidas trackies drinking green tea matcha frapps. One of them in a Nike snapback sniffed back phlegm and shouted, ‘Yeah nah bro it ain’t gay to think Zayn Malik is hot shit!’

Mark held back a laugh. I could tell because his freckles rose like bubbles. He then asked me, ‘Where are you from?’

I told him I was born in Liverpool too, ‘But y’know, the grotty one South-West of here.’

Mark narrowed his blue eyes the colour of Sydney train seats. ‘No really, where are you from?’

A local newspaper in Western Sydney will tell you that I am ‘Tongan-born’ even though the caption under a photo of myself states I am ‘Tongan-Australian’.

The 2017 edition of a prominent literature festival’s website will announce to you that I am an ‘International’ guest speaker, even though my bio states I am ‘Tongan-Australian’.

This public display of ignorance, as well as Mark’s exotic fetishism with my brown skin, shows that Australia has limited understanding about the complex identities of Pasifika communities in Australia. We are rendered invisible by their colonial gaze, pushed back to the islands in which were apparently always born in.
I have heard many people, both White and Brown, refer to themselves or of cousins they knew, as FOB—meaning fresh off the boat. But, being from South Pacific heritage, we stay FOB, especially within the context of colonial Australia. There is a history of enslaving Pacific people to toil on Queensland sugar cane fields in the 1860s and now the enslavement of the broader South Pacific community as ‘Seasonal Workers’.¹ This history is continued on Australian TV. On TV, Chris Lilley, a ‘palangi’ from the Sydney suburb of Pymble, is allowed to cover himself in brown paint, wear a curly afro wig, offer to whip his dick out in a FOB accent and call himself Jonah from Tonga.

I identify as Tongan-Australian, but no one is born inside a hyphen. However, I feel it is the only way to explain my complicated heritage of being a mixed-raced Tongan (more broadly identified as a Pasifika) and to push up against racist stereotypes in Australian law and televisions, which disempower my whole community through social, economic and cultural oppression.

I only came to recognise my complex intersections and the importance of self-representation by joining Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement.² In the early months of joining Sweatshop, Director, Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad, asked me how I was able to spend time writing and studying. At first I was confused by his question, since my parents have always supported me in my pursuit of higher education whilst working as night-shift security guards. When I told Mohammed I wasn’t sure what he meant he asked again, this time in different direction. ‘You haven’t thought to yourself why you’re the only one in your family to go to uni?’

It felt like tapa was being banged on my chest when I admitted, ‘Oh, I just always thought it was because I was the smartest.’ Since that interaction, I have worked with and for Sweatshop to obtain skills that would decolonise my thinking, so that I could be open enough to uplift my Tongan (and broader Pacific/Pasifika) community, without ego.

Before I could commit to writing, I first had to commit to critical reading. Sweatshop introduced me to texts such as: The Autobiography of Malcolm X, as told to by Alex Hayley, Cultural Criticism and Transformation and We Real Cool by bell hooks, White Nation by Ghassan Hage and Orientalism by Edward Said. These texts taught me what it was to be a radical and politicised Pasifika, how to empower my identity for the good of my community and how to arm myself against imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. These texts were learned informally and against what I had been taught to think in tertiary education. It is no coincidence that I learnt how to read critically and became empowered, from a trusted and educated man of colour.
When I started writing seriously with a transformed mind, I began in a group that was exclusively made for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals from Western Sydney. Never before had I seen a collection of writers from Western Sydney, let alone ethnic ones. Seasoned Sweatshop writers like Peter Polites, Shirley Le, Stephen Pham, Maryam Azam and Monikka Eliah educated me on how to find literature in my everyday (on being Tongan-Australian in Mt Druitt), how to see the importance of the existence of Tongan language in literature and how to write the most original form of literature that contributes to world knowledge. It is no coincidence that I learnt how to write critically and became empowered, from a trusted and educated group of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse writers from Western Sydney.

Although I am still learning, my coming to critical thinking has enabled me to speak to and about my tribe with honesty, emotion and conviction. Through my work, I have been able to edit anthologies such as *The Big Black Thing* (2017), which opens the literary field to culturally and linguistically diverse voices. I was also given the space and respect whilst editing *The Big Black Thing* to privilege Pasifika voices. I have been able to create and dedicate a space within Sweatshop exclusively for women of colour, who are also on a journey of critical thinking and writing. Now with thirty new members, three of them, Didi de Graff, Talei Luscia and Christine Afoa, are Pasifika women. I deeply respect their presence, as it shows a progression towards decolonisation in our community.

‘Ofa lahi atu!’

Although I am still learning, my coming to critical thinking has enabled me to speak to and about my tribe with honesty, emotion and conviction.

– Winnie Dunn

At the 2018 Stella Prize Awards Night, winner Alexis Wright recognised the oldest library of her community—the land, the sea, the wind and the sky. Wright has made history as the first Indigenous woman (and indeed woman of colour) to win the Stella Prize.

Hearing Wright speak, I felt the truth of her claim, especially as a Pasifika who is connected to my villages of Malapo, Kolonga and the moana and tapa that connects all South Pacific nations. Yet, I also recognise that I find libraries in places like the Khome Pacific shop in Liverpool, the El Jannah in Blacktown and the Starbucks in Mt Druitt. It is these places that Australia’s literature needs more of if Pacific/Pasifika communities are to find true empowerment through self-representation.

I know where I’m from.

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For ten years now Sweatshop and the City of Canterbury have run the annual Youth Writing Competition for young culturally and linguistically diverse writers in Western Sydney. The work of this year’s finalists and those from each year dating back to 2008, have been included in a book entitled Bent not broken: 10 years of creative writing from Canterbury-Bankstown. The book was produced by Sweatshop and Council, in partnership with WestWords and Western Sydney University, and funded by Create NSW and the Packer Foundation. It is available for purchase at [www.sweatshop.ws](http://www.sweatshop.ws)

The winner of the 2018 annual Youth Writing Competition was a Sefton teenager with a poem about struggling to connect with her mother’s native language. Read her poem here (taken from Bent not Broken, ten years of creative writing from Canterbury-Bankstown):

1 Edited by Michael Mohamed Ahmad, Winnie Dunn and Julie Koh, an initiative of Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement and the City of Canterbury Bankstown
Vietnamese School
By Donna Wilson

It was
Two till four-fifteen
Every Saturday
Ages five to fifteen

It was
learning a way
to communicate
with my family,
to hear my bà ngoai’s stories

It was
learning proverbs
I still hold with me
and the stories
I will pass over
to those who come after me

It was
culture and celebrations
New Year’s and Children’s Festival
lanterns and mooncake
the sticky purple xôi
my bà ngoai used to make

It was
learning history
no school textbook
had the spine to carry

It was
my mother
sitting beside my bed
fingers gently combing through
my hair –
lighter than my mother’s
yet darker than my friend’s at school

It was
her soft humming,
folksongs from
a childhood
she’d left behind
in a war town country
she was forced to flee

It was
string
wrapped around
my mother and I –
holding,
pulling us closer

It was
the same words
rolling off my tongue
con tên là Donna
as my mother’s friends
pinched my cheeks
‘you speak well…
for a hapa’

It was
feeling lesser
than my peers
because when they went home
they all had a father to speak Vietnamese with

It was
never feeling like I was enough
because despite eight years of learning
I still choke
over words
lodged in my throat
they cling to the sides
as I try and try so hard
to force them up
out of my mouth
where they dive off my tongue –
but they don’t know what else to do
so, they dangle in the air
ready
waiting to be mocked
until they fall
crashing
on concrete floor…

I am
a flower
hanging off a dying tree
petals unfurling
desperate
reaching out
for a glimpse of sunlight…
Rootless

As hard as I try
my words will always be cheap,
they will never compare
to the silk
that flows seamlessly
from my mother’s lips

It was
visiting my family’s homeland
wondering
how different
my words would sound
if I had been raised
on the rich soil
my ancestors were rooted in

It was
when my final year inevitable came
still not knowing what to say;
because despite eight years’ worth of teaching and
knowledge,
no words
in any language –
that I b r e a k apart and try to stitch back together –
could tell you how grateful I am

It was
tears
prickling the corner of eyes
dripping over warm cheeks,
hollows on either side of a smile
deepening,
as my friends and I
all stood together
one last time

It was
something a lot like family
Why do you write?

Writing, for me, is how I can express myself in such a way that all of my ideas and emotions can be conveyed completely.

What are you trying to communicate with your writing?

I always try to spread messages of love and acceptance in all of my work. It makes me sound like a hippie, but love fuels everything and I feel like everyone should see that.

How do you feel your writing is received by the general Australian public?

Generally, I think the Australian public receives my writing well because even though I refer to my own culture and history, the themes I play with are universal, that is, they can be applied to any situation. If people are willing to listen, they will hear and realise that they can relate because even though we may be different in whichever way, we are all human and are all driven by the same energy, which is life.

How do you feel your writing is received by your migrant community?

From what I have seen, everyone is really excited and supportive. All the feedback I’ve received from my community has been constructive and they are always willing to help me in any way that they can.

Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your writing?

I feel like there will always be a lot of challenges for any writer trying to express themselves and that’s not any different for me either. However all those challenges do blur into one constant problem and that’s remembering that every word holds weight.
Do you remember the first poem you ever wrote?
The first poem I ever wrote was my piece ‘Africa’. Growing up with stories from my parents and other relatives about my motherland constructed an image of strength, resilience and unmatched beauty in my mind. I developed a very deep love for my continent, race, country, tribe and home from a very young age. However, it was 2016, civil war was still raging in South Sudan, my home, and other places in Africa were also enduring troubling conditions. I have so much respect for Africa; it has gone through so much and still produces beauty. I felt like none of that beauty was being represented so I wrote my poem to express my own personal thoughts and emotions that I knew would be similar for many people.

How do you think you, as a writer from a migrant background, can connect with the wider Australian society?
I think what I’m doing with my writing already is the best way for me to connect with the wider Australian society: tackling universal themes and issues with personal stories and ideas. In this way, I can use a concept everyone is familiar with, such as love, and show how this is represented in situations that other migrants and I are familiar with.

What do you enjoy by performing?
I’m a naturally loud person. I like to be heard and I like the knowledge that I can inspire people to listen to what I have to say, uninterrupted.

‘WE ARE ALL HUMAN AND ARE ALL DRIVEN BY THE SAME ENERGY, WHICH IS LIFE.’
– Jackline Okot
**AFRICA**
by Jackline Okot

Africa is the motherland
The beginning of all things
Her beauty is consuming
An essence for Kings
Her tongue enchanting
Encapsulating, like strings
Like exotic birds, she sings
Her songs of peace, love and harmony
But her children they don’t listen
They’re torn by war, hate and inequality

Children used to grow
But now they’re dying
Brothers used to play
But now they’re fighting
Sisters used to laugh
But now they’re crying
Because inside their hearts they’re all broken

But she’s been beaten and disrespected so much
that her face is bruised and sore
She is the majestic epitome of nature’s gifts
She is the perfect example of life’s thrills
So why can’t anyone see
That she is all we need
That she is all we want
That she is what we cannot have
Because if we have perfection
We cannot learn
If we have perfection
We cannot grow

Only queens that have endured hardships can rule
their kingdoms with fortitude, faith and freedom

Only queens that know the truth behind pain
can guide their kingdoms with knowledge

Only queens that have suffered can survive

Only queens that have died before can live now

And only queens that have felt the pain of hate
can sow the seed of love

And those seeds of love are what we need
in this world
You try to take us down by using words and insults
to obscure your insecurities
To shield yourself from what is hurting you
But this obscurity turns into immaturity
And you no longer act like how you used to
And whilst trying to cover your vulnerabilities
You lose sight of where to leave your charities

And nobody really knows who you are anymore
You’ve become cold and indifferent
Because you no longer accept our warmth
So we don’t know how to reach you anymore
And all our attempts seem frivolous
You can’t see how much we really care
We just want you to know that we’ll always be there
For you we’ll always care

But you can’t talk to people like that
You treat us like we’re children, a lower class
You refuse to accept the fact
That we’re not figures made of glass

We can handle whatever you throw at us
I promise we will not shatter
So please, just talk to us
And tell us what is the matter

Let us try to fix the problem
Satisfy the desire
Your heart doesn’t need to be so solemn
Come, let us light the fire on those bright leaves
of autumn
Before winter comes and drowns them
And your demeanour turns austere
Yes, your sobriety is becoming worse

You’re too restrained and unemotional
And you understand that everyone has pain in their hearts
And that nobody is free from suffering
That happiness is a choice
And Nirvana is just in our heads.
So why hasn’t your light flickered
Why are you still trying to straighten corners
Knowing that the world is a curve

We know that there is no loophole in life
Just the need to persevere
So why do you start looking for exits
The moment life stops being so pleasant

No, you’re just selfish and don’t want to ride the same wave
You know we’re trying to help but your paranoia takes it’s step
and labels us as vicious heathens that with ill intent are compelled
To give you a hand to drag you down into the depths of hell

Can’t you see that we’re all in the same boat
I guess your selfishness has turned into blindness
Since you discard all our kindness
Forgetting that we are you’re life vest, the only reason you still float
Community Arts can be described as arts practice in a community context. In many ways community arts can be considered different from individually-based practices—in particular for CALD artists. Community art is all about community engagement and include participation and benefits central to the community rather than an individual expression.

Recent projects by Darwin Community Arts Centre highlight the advantages of community based arts for CALD artists and communities.

The first one is the Harmony Soiree. The performances for this event are managed by DCA for the Northern Territory Government. Harmony Soiree celebrates Darwin’s thriving and successful multicultural community; it is a celebration of diversity representing who we are as Territorians. The event provides Territorians with an opportunity to reflect on our common values of community participation, inclusion, respect and a sense of belonging for all. The benefits from this event include:

1. The preservation and transmission of tradition and cultural knowledge
2. Great participation among the communities
3. Good exposure of various cultural expressions to the broader community

Another project we run is the Community Shed that includes: Our Common Threads project—a textile art program focusing on sewing, weaving, printing and other craft activities; and the Craft Workshops, for weaving, jewellery-making, and other crafts. The project promotes interaction and understanding between participants of all cultural backgrounds, including refugee, migrant and Indigenous through exchange of cultural information. The benefits from this project include:

1. Producing art or products for sharing (or sale)
2. Social inclusion
3. Skills and story sharing
The final project I will mention here is CemeNTworx. This is a community theatre program offering workshops, production and other theatre activities for all ages and communities. CemeNTworx also explores sound, voice, movement, dance, and multimedia practice towards an integrated multi-arts approach to community theatre. The many positive benefits from this project include:

1. Great participation
2. Exploration of different styles of performance
3. Intergenerational involvement

The projects of Darwin Community Arts demonstrate that arts and culture are fundamentally important to CALD communities for communities’ artistic and cultural development. Community-based arts approaches address artistic as well as non-artistic interests of communities.

Everyone has the right and the capacity to be an artist, whether as an amateur or professional, full-time or part-time, individually or as part of a collective effort.

DCA’s Vision: A Darwin Region where art is made and shared by anyone, anywhere, anytime.
In this article, Cristina Giusti, Director of Policy, Ageing and Disability, for FECCA, introduces the reader to the world of ageing, disability, dementia and love, all topics of Danijela’s third book, *Forget-me-Nots/Spomincice*. Art and culture are inextricably linked in the work of Danijela Hlis. The beautiful illustration of her book cover—the offering of her brain to research and time ticking away—prepares us for a special journey. In her book, we meet many Australians from diverse backgrounds and hear their cry for help in their journeys of faded independence. Danijela shares that cry for help. A cry of around 50 million people globally and in Australia who, due to their condition, have to face a sudden challenge of becoming different—to themselves and the world around them.

When I first read *Forget-me-Nots/Spomincice* by Danijela Hlis, I found tears were welling in my eyes and spilling onto my cheeks. The raw touching words which characterise the condition of dementia were a little too close for me. My personal journey concerning dementia commenced seven years ago when my Italian born mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. In essence the poetry was reigniting the loss, guilt and sadness which I found pervasive over the years.

Danijela migrated to Australia in 1979. She first worked as a Human resource manager and later as a tourism operator in Tasmania. In 1996 her parents migrated from Slovenia and she became their carer. This unexpected introduction to ageing for people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds was an eye opener, and she became an active advocate, fighting for better inclusion. When her mother was diagnosed with dementia, Danijela studied this illness and became involved in dementia research. She also worked with Migrant Resource Centre and Multicultural Council of Tasmania, creating bicultural tools, and as a bicultural social support worker/Diversional therapist for people from CALD backgrounds. Today, she is a very active member of Dementia Australia National Consumer Network, presents at conferences, and has recently been appointed to FECCA’s national ageing committee—The Positive CALD Ageing Network.

Danijela’s book was published with the assistance of a grant from the Slovenian Ministry of Arts and Culture, and Alzheimer Slovenia. Beautifully illustrated by two Australian artists, *Forget-me-nots/Spomincice*, takes us on a journey of Australians of French, Slovenian, Polish, Italian, and Aboriginal background as well as people identifying as LGBTI. The book explores their living experiences and the importance of love in the face of illness, grief and loneliness.

The book expresses a global feel. Danijela’s subjects hark from a variety of backgrounds which holds a true reflection of the four hundred thousand people living with dementia in Australia. Realisations that every person with dementia is unique, yet the experience of dementia is one we all share—human to human, from heart to mind—and the themes that arise are universal.

Danijela’s poetry is about humanity, about understanding other people, what their lives entailed and how, sometimes, all becomes forgotten by those caring for them. Like the poem of French tailor who survived World War II:

*He describes his tailor shop in France.*
*His birth place in Poland.*
*The Germans killing his mother.*
*He demands to go home,*
*from where he was removed by force,*
*deemed unsafe to live alone.*
*His tired head on my shoulder,*
*we dance to the Danube waltz.*
*The sun is knifing through trees,*
*his dementia damaged brain struggles*
*like a clayed soil called Life.*
*He holds my hand as if pure gold.*
*‘Give me a kiss’ he asks with a smile of hope.*
There are more than 100 types of dementia. Danijela describes dementia as an alien; distressing and an ‘agitated ocean’ to navigate for many, even more so when ‘the compass in [your] head is forever unsettled’. The constant swimming between fear, loss of identity, fight for better inclusion, respect, loneliness and confusion—and grappling the loss of independence and self is a battle shared by all.

Shifts in lucidity are central in much of Danijela’s work, providing an emotive representation of what wading through ‘the corridors of [your] brain / Infused with fog and smoke’ could be like, and the polar shifts between ‘sink[ing] into the depth[s] of fear of dementia, [and] be reborn again, fearless’. She looks at this both from a perspective of a person living with dementia (PLWD), and the carer.

A certain playfulness exists when exploring the nuances of the condition, aptly captured in ‘Did You Find my Memory? Have you found my ring? My brain?’ and the choice to ‘make dementia our friend’ in the face of fighting the unwinnable battle that is Alzheimer’s disease. The loss of inhibitions and innocence that often accompanies dementia is represented with a fresh reminder that sometimes as we grow into adulthood we forget to fall in love with the little things that surround us: ‘patchwork on the sky, mother waves to the clouds’.

Perhaps the strongest force in this journey through dementia, noted within Danijela’s works, is love. Love of all kinds: parent love, kids’ love, partner love, be it between same sexes or opposite sex partners. Defining LGBTI as an ‘abbreviation basket’, Danijela attempts to surpass the labelling by describing all couples regardless of homogeneity as ‘couples are oaks and eucalyptus, strong and beautiful’, ‘…the love of the human heart is stronger than bad proteins in the brain’. In her poetry, love has no limits and it is a gift of each other, being together at the moment:

‘on this journey of delusions and illusions
To not be alone is God’s most beautiful gift.’

Many members of the CALD community who are affected by dementia often revert to their first language. This can become problematic without the assistance of culturally competent and inclusive aged care supports and services. It can also result in major communication difficulties and isolation, both of which lead to negative health and well-being outcomes.

Danijela understands fully these challenges. She is a compassionate individual who works towards helping CALD people living with dementia to engage with art. She believes that art is a particularly effective form of communication:

‘Through music, painting, literature, dance, sculpture, flower arrangements etc. people living with dementia can participate, feel empowered to explore, share and learn. Any community, any race, any culture can blossom under the umbrella of arts. And education: I would love to see my story Little feet dancing on the moon introduced to our schools.’

Danijela’s stories beautifully reflect the challenges of dementia as well as the genuine love that many individuals finally allow themselves to express. Her words are simple yet give the reader a profound insight into this difficult and very personal experience.

‘This bilingual collection of poetry and prose is my cry for help. My hope for a better world where we embrace each other no matter what illness or condition we live with. Our attitudes must change; life well lived is only when we accept, respect and love one another. My mother Marija, auntie Mici, friends like Owna and Jerry, all died after a long journey with dementia, but I see their bright eyes and hear their loving voices and I continue to work hard so as to improve the quality of lives for those yet to be diagnosed. Through my work, personal experience and voluntary involvement I see every day what a difference a little love makes.’

For me, reviewing Danijela’s book, perhaps the most poignant artwork is ‘My Princess’. The poem takes the reader through an exchange of love, gentle understanding and acceptance between mother and daughter. Here traditional roles reverse through the screen of dementia yet there are certainly still valuable lessons to be followed ‘with wings in [the] heart’:

From a deep crevasse in her mind
A butterfly with aching wings
Stills her fear deeper into the mud of delusions
Holding onto me, her monologue
Is like changing radio stations.
We walk, me nodding, mother talking:
“Who I want to be who I think I am
Who you tell me I am…”
“Just be what you wish to be NOW”
Her eyes sparkle: “A princess”
So I bought her sparkling rings and crowns and tiaras,
Together we found beauty in life,
Listened to sweetness of compassion from passers-by,
Mother glowed with hope and trust
I followed with wings in my heart.
The link to kinship of our indigenous people, our first people, presents itself in the poem of a lost Combara (Aboriginal name for a woman) with ‘Music of the waves throbbing in her insides, persistently melting her throbbing heart’. Or in the poem of a lonely Gagadju woman ‘pondering from room to room’, being invisible in the nursing homes that are ‘corridors for lost souls’. 

Through her chosen art mediums, Danijela touchingly and powerfully not only showcases the essence and uniqueness of dementia, but empowers the heroes of her book, giving them a powerful voice. John, Geoff, Kate, Christina, Tomaz, her friends living with dementia, sharing their thoughts. And she concludes:

‘we can all begin again, in another form. Impermanence is a principle of harmony.’

Even with all its difficulties and complexities, Danijela recognises that dementia to some people brings ‘the joys of forgetting’. It can be liberating for those who lived through wars, persecution, domestic violence, and are suddenly free of horrific memories, though these may still exist in their sub consciousness and flare up unexpectedly, hence the importance of acknowledging person’s cultural and linguistic heritage.

‘My mother used to empty the fridge during the night, and hide everything in the bed’, Danijela tells me. ‘It was due to her memory of being hungry during the WW II.’

The final word from the author, however, might be the most moving. In it she discusses loneliness and its intractable link with dementia, ‘born out of lack of understanding, lack of compassion, out of loss of one’s identity… often caused an acute grief’. Yet, Danijela sees this as a temporary thing, that ‘loss is just a movement and as such can change any minute’.

Danijela’s parting message is an important message for all of us: ‘may my book be a tool of empowerment to us all, so that we open our heart to receive and give love; let us all work towards dementia friendly communities where human rights for all are respected.’

Cristina Giusti and her team at FECCA are currently leading the development of the action plan for CALD communities under the Aged Care Diversity Framework. Cristina represents FECCA on a number of national committees covering different aspects of aged care and disability. She is an aged care professional who has in the last few years been working in various areas of aged care; including aged care operational management, policy, advocacy, training and business development; particularly concerning culturally and linguistically diverse communities. She has throughout her time in aged care worked with various CALD older communities to inform them of the age care reforms.

YOU CAN ORDER THE BOOK FROM cdthirion@gmail.com ($15+$3 POSTAGE)
About Inspire Tasmania

Cultural performance art creates an avenue for self-expression, the practice of traditions, the sharing of ideas and the breakdown of barriers. Inspire, a program by Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas), funded by the Tasmanian Government, is an innovative and vibrant platform that supports, celebrates and promotes diversity in performing arts in Tasmania.

The aim of the Inspire program is to showcase and connect Tasmanian multicultural performers and entertainers to the broader Tasmanian community. Inspire enables both new and established community members to promote, negotiate and manage their own paid and voluntary cultural performances.

Tasmanian businesses, local and state government, schools and community members can book professional multicultural performers through the dedicated website: www.inspiretasmania.org. The website hosts a variety of talent including Hip Hop, Bollywood Dance, African Percussion, Afghan House Music, Afro Pop, Chinese Opera, and more.

As part of the Inspire program, participants undertook a range of training with ExitLeft Performance Academy to refine their performance skills. MRC Tas case, youth, and bicultural workers and volunteers supported Inspire participants throughout the program.

Since the launch of Inspire in June 2017, the program has received overwhelming interest and support from the Tasmanian community. Participants have been booked for a range of events including festivals, community events, workshops, citizenship ceremonies and Harmony Day celebrations.

Bhuvana Veeramani and Rakhee Iyer ‘Dancing Divas’——Indian Dancers

https://inspiretasmania.org/2017/06/21/dancing-divas/

When we first arrived in Tasmania from India, we were spellbound by the sheer beauty of our new island home. Hobart’s Kunanyi (Mount Wellington) stands majestically as if blessing everyone, the sparkling water of the River Derwent looks as if there are diamonds floating on the surface glistening in the sun, and the lush green land beckons its inhabitants to become one with it. But what is most striking about this place is the warmth of the people who welcome everyone with open hands and hearts.

We have always been passionate about Indian dancing; it is part of our identity and culture. We wanted to share the joy of dance with all, whether it be Indian classical dance, Indian folk style, Bollywood dancing or just moving along to some amazing music.
We started our dance school ‘Dancing Divas’ in Hobart in 2016 to showcase and share the various forms of Indian dancing with the people of Tasmania. We hoped that we would be greeted with love and respect, and we weren’t disappointed. We hold regular classes on weekends for adults and children and teach two different dance forms; Indian Fusion Dance and Bharathanatyam (Indian classical dance from South India).

If we had even the faintest of doubts whether our art would be accepted in Tasmania, it vanished when we became a part of Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania’s Inspire program. Not only did we get to showcase Indian dance forms across various platforms and events, we also received love, encouragement and complete support. Everywhere that we have performed, spoken on radio and conducted workshops, we have felt special and cherished.

Since arriving to Tasmania, we have been encouraged to embrace our cultural origins and express ourselves through our traditional dance. We feel that we are part of a community that not only relishes our dance, but also respects it. The acceptance we have received through performing and sharing our art form has made us feel a strong sense of belonging to Tasmania.

Lawrence Gino ‘Big Money Gino’—South Sudanese Hip Hop Artist

In Sudan, our land is made up of many tribes; each has their own language, customs, dances, foods and beliefs. Fourteen years ago, my feet touched Australian soil for the first time and here they’ve remained, but my Madi culture remains a strong part of my identity.

My music is one example of where my Madi and Australian cultural identities meet. I began making music in high school but started to take it more seriously around ten years ago. I use music to tell stories—my story and the story of my people and my communities. Music is a powerful tool and as has been said, it is the language that unites us.

I focus on making songs with meaning. I make songs in Madi and in English, and love that people who don’t understand a word of what I am saying can really enjoy it, and get the feel for the message behind the music. In 2013 I wrote a song called ‘I Still Call Australia Home’—the lyrics tell a part of my settlement story and the struggle I faced trying to fit in. The song explores some common issues that arise when settling in a new country—especially for someone like me who’s previous experience of culture was very different to the Australian culture I found myself in.

I am very thankful for my music and the opportunity I’ve had to showcase it. I feel like I get to share a part of myself every time I perform. Music has allowed me to work with people from across all backgrounds and share my story as it fosters that mutual understanding between us.
My full name is Shuangshuang Zhang, which is a Chinese name. Shuang is a very poetic word in Chinese, being present in many classical poems and idioms. My journey into the arts started in my childhood. I went to a mountain called Chang Bai Mountain in northeast China. I saw such an awesome view in front of me that it touched my heart. So then I asked myself, ‘How can I take this beautiful scene back home with me?’ The answer was painting.

Some years later in my childhood, I discovered that, like how painting could capture beauty, my voice and movements could be used to express my appreciation of that beauty and share those feelings to others in the form of singing and dancing.

I came to Tasmania due to family reasons, but having lived here for 5 years, I’ve found that it is a very peaceful place to spend time working on art without stress. Although Tasmania does not have bustling modern cityscapes, it has its own unique charm with its natural beauty which I have fallen in love with.

In China art schools focused more on technique, but here the local artists have taught me about ideas and creativity. I have learnt to be more open minded, and to draw on inspiration from different countries, as well as the beauty of Tasmania.

Some of my friends who don’t know Tasmania very well think I’m crazy for coming to such a quiet and small place to live. My new home always surprises me and has changed my life a lot. The rich and unique culture of Tasmania has grown a flourishing art scene that attracts many people to our state. Government funded programs such as Inspire, as well as the cheers and applause of locals and visitors, support many multicultural artists who are living here, including me, to get involved in the Tasmanian art community and express our souls through art.
Population migration has been happening since first days of human civilization on Earth; depending on current socio-political situation, these waves varied in all aspects. Speaking about the Serbian population in Australia, data shows that one of the biggest migration waves to Australia took place after 1990s civil war in the former Yugoslavia. Many Serbian refugees have chosen friendly Australia to be their new home. The last major migration wave, however, occurred between 2001 and 2006.

Data on Serbian migration to Australia seize back to 19th century, but it was not until the second half of 20th century that stronger bonds have been made. Initial needs of Serbs who came to Australia in early 1990s have changed. Today, Serbian-born people in Australia think of this country as their home and are eager to become full participants in the society. Needless to say though, they still have sentiment about their motherland. Activities of the Serbian community (SCAA) are primarily focused on developing innovative services for improvement of these peoples’ quality of life and their position in Australian society. An important part of this mission is the maintenance of one’s cultures traditional values and heritage, but incorporated into modern society scheme and seen through a multicultural, contemporary world prism.

A modern approach to establishing strong connection between Australian and Serbian society is based on projects that promote links between these two cultures, including shared cultural values and bilingualism.

There is an important note on the idea of traditional values; while most of us commonly use the term ‘tradition’ to describe or understand archaic practices and cultural heritage coming from far past; it is more complex than that. Tradition is being created continually and it includes all the elements that particular society’s culture consists of, in both past and present.
St Sava Festival in Canberra

Serbian culture is abundant, dynamic and colourful—in all aspects. From traditional food, arts and crafts, folklore dances and religious practices, to Serbian language and Cyrillic letter, contemporary art, science, and business. Above all, the educational aspect is what is greatly appreciated and encouraged. Modern Serbs are not farmers in ‘opanci’ and ‘sajkaca’, but they would never stop dancing kolo or eating ‘burek’ and ‘slatko’. However, these amazing elements of Serbian folklore are today wisely incorporated in an up-to-date way of perseverance. Australians are intrigued and fascinated by the richness and versatility of Serbian tradition, which appears a bit exotic to them. Additionally, they respect Serbia's literary and artistic heritage. They also think of Serbia as a country that has given the world many notable people, who left their mark in global annals.

Creating a new perspective on Serbian culture by promoting not only its traditional values, but also its contemporary tendencies and modern development, is the foundation stone for building an image of Serbia and its people as true citizens of the world.

For Serbs in Australia, celebrating their language and culture is of a vital importance. It not only reminds people of their mother country, history and cultural heritage, but also helps them connect with people in the country they live in. Cultural diversity is often seen as an obstacle for mutual understanding; the thing is, it could actually strengthen bonds between nations of different origin and create new ones. Celebrating your own culture in a benevolent and positive manner is what contributes to mutual understanding, appreciation and love. In addition, it’s exciting and inspiring!

The focus of Ivo Andric Society is that exactly. This enthusiastic organization has an exciting approach to the idea of promoting a nation’s culture, language and tradition. It is a young organization, formed only a year ago, around the idea of promoting and celebrating Serbian language and culture in the multicultural Australian environment. The Serbian community in the city of Canberra, where the Society operates, is relatively small, but spirited and motivated. According to the Society’s representatives, the support of the SCAA plays an important role in making their vision alive.

Through educational activities combined and spiced up with more traditional elements, the Ivo Andric Society introduces Serbian language and culture not only to Serbs living in Australia, but also to Australians, Australian-born Serbs, and Australians connected with Serbian tradition through marriage.
or family line and vice versa. Through promotional activities, the wonderful world of Serbian culture is open to tourists and visitors from other parts of the world, as well. The Society had its debut at Multicultural Festival in Canberra, earlier this year and it was a huge success. As they have said, it gave them hope and motivation to continue their mission and make it even greater.

The Society operates mainly through promotional and educational activities. They are proud to say that children play an important, if not the most valuable role in presenting Serbian culture at such events. For example, Serbian children from Dositej School had a serious task at the festival, but they did it like professionals. They were teaching visitors about Serbian letters and instructed them to write their own name in Cyrillic! At Ivo Andric Society’s stand at the festival, visitors could take brochures about the school, buy books from Serbian Bookstore, play educational games, win a lottery, learn a bit of Serbian language and many more.

The mission of Ivo Andric Society is to show that Serbian culture is far more than ‘sarma’ and ‘rakija’, products that, we have to admit, other nationalities find quite tasty. Serbia is proud to be a homeland of talented and recognized artists, authors, scientists, excellent sportsmen and individuals successful in other fields. The presence of the Society at the festival in Canberra demonstrated how people of various cultural backgrounds enjoy Serbian music and dances, food and drinks, souvenirs and art and that they were eager to learn more about educational programs and Serbian language.
Dositej Serbian Language School, the institution where the idea of I.A. Society was born, has established collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia, public schools in Canberra and with Australian societies that promote and support bilingualism. The school has been working hard ever since and there are more and more people interested in attending the classes. Not only parents from Serbia who want their children to learn two languages and preserve their Serbian heritage, but also adults who are related with Serbian culture through family are eager to get closer to Serbian (modern) tradition.

The response of multinational audience in Canberra is very positive and encouraging for the Serbian community. It brings people together and creates new relationships, mutual love and support. Australians consider Serbian culture dynamic and inspiring, but also a culture that has much to offer in an educational and professional way.

Representatives of Ivo Andric Society are pleased with such results. They plan new programs for the celebration of Serbian language and culture in Australia to strengthening bonds between the Serbian community and Australian society. They plan collaboration with similar organizations and institutions in other Australian states and look forward to new opportunities.

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My Health Record is an online summary of your key health information. More than 1 in 5 Australians already have one. Over time, My Health Record will bring together health information such as medical conditions, medicines, allergies and test results in one place. This means safer and more efficient care for you and your family.

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For more information go to:
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W: www.diversitat.org.au

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
145 Victoria St Ballarat East 3350
PO Box 1418 Bakery Hill VIC 3354
P: 03 5383 0613
E: admin@brmc.org.au
W: www.brmc.org.au

Ethnic Council of Shepparton & District
158 Welsford St Shepparton VIC 3630
PO Box 585 Shepparton VIC 3632
P: 03 5831 2395
F: 03 5831 3764
E: ecshepp@mcmedia.com.au
W: www.ethniccouncilshepparton.com.au

North East Multicultural Association
3 The Close Wangaratta, VIC 3677
PO Box 417 Wangaratta VIC 3676
P: 03 5721 2090
E: nema@nema.org.au
W: www.nema.org.au

Gippsland Ethnic Communities’ Council
PO Box 314 Moe VIC 3825
P: 03 5122 6714
E: GippslandECC@gmail.com
W: gippslandethniccommunitiescouncil.website.com.au

Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
107–111 Twelfth Street Mildura VIC 3500
PO Box 1213 Mildura VIC 3502
P: 03 5022 1006
E: reception@smecc.org.au
W: www.smeccinc.org

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
National Ethnic Disability Alliance
PO Box 971 Civic Square ACT 2608
P: 02 6262 6867
W: www.neda.org.au
FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We provide advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism.

FECCA’s membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing executive committee and professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders.

For more information and to read more about FECCA’s policies and program, please visit our website: www.fecca.org.au. Alternatively, please contact the FECCA office on (02) 6282 5755, or email: admin@fecca.org.au.

LIST OF FECCA CHAIRPERSONS

Mr Wadim (Bill) Begorow AM MBE
(Inaugural Chairperson 1979–1983)
Mr W. George Wojack AO MBE
Mr Carl Harbaum MBE
Mr Victor Rebikoff OAM
Mr Randolph Alwish AM
Mr Nick Xynias AO BEM
Mr Abd-Elmasih Malak AM
Ms Voula Mesimeri
(2005–2009)
Mr Pino Migliorino
(2010–2013)
Mr Joe Caputo OAM
(2014–2017)
Ms Mary Patetsos
(2017–Present)
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