



**diversity
atlas**

By Cultural Infusion

**MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK REVIEW
RESPONSE**



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About Cultural Infusion

As one of the peak independent cultural enterprises in Australia, Cultural Infusion is pleased to comment on the Review's Terms of Reference. Cultural Infusion was founded in Melbourne in 2002 by Peter Mousaferiadis, with a mission to build global harmony through intercultural action within education, information and communications technology and the arts. We are a global leader in promoting intercultural understanding, which we do through our community networks, cultural programs in schools, award-winning apps, participation in conferences and through our flagship global product, Diversity Atlas, launched in 2019. Peter Mousaferiadis was an official Observer at the 2023 UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and has been invited to present Diversity Atlas at the 2023 World Forum for Democracy at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France.

Peter Mousaferiadis has worked for more than three decades in the cultural and creative industries. He began his career as a conductor, and has since conducted, directed and produced large-scale regional, national, international and intercultural productions for a range of clients, including the Victorian State Government, the Parliament of World Religions and the United Nations. He has directed nine Australia Day Concerts and has a swag of international awards in interculturalism, including the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Intercultural Innovation Award, and created the winning slogan 'Diversified We Grow' for the UN's 'Do One Thing for Diversity' campaign.

Cultural Infusion's flagship product, SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) diversity data and equity tool Diversity Atlas, captures demographic and cultural data and produces analysis and results in real time. Diversity Atlas was inspired by and modelled on Indra's net, the infinite net wherein a jewel exists at each intersection, reflecting every other jewel. Diversity Atlas maps 42,000+ human attributes that are represented in its datasets, collectively referred to as a 'Global Database of Humanity', making it the world's first and only holistic diversity data tool. The datasets have been decades in the making with expert contributors from diverse communities and academic fields, including partnerships with UNESCO and the Australian National University. Diversity Atlas launched in 2019 and has been adopted by some of the world's major organisations and implemented in at least 32 countries worldwide.

The significance of a holistic data and equity tool is impossible to overestimate. It honours every language, dialect and ethnicity as the jewel it is. The effect of this is to illuminate each person's inherent and inalienably equal value, transforming planning, policy and strategic work by creating egalitarian information that has not been skewed by the usual selective datasets.

The 2022 Mondiacult Declaration moved culture back to the centre of conversations on how parties to the Declaration and UN member states can reach the United Nations' 2030 goals on sustainable development. As an organisation that has firmly centred culture since our 2002 inception, we are uniquely placed to inform much of the current action in this area.

Introduction

We embrace the stated goals of the review:

- *advancing a multicultural Australia*
- *supporting our cohesive and inclusive multicultural society*
- *ensuring settings are fit for purpose in harnessing the talents of all Australians*

In meeting these goals, we urge a nuanced approach. As our peer in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) field, Amri B. Johnson cautions, 'To create systems that make inclusion normative, accessible to all, unambiguously prioritized, and purpose aligned, we must explore ideas truthfully. Systems require more than the simple redress of symptoms ... Reconstruction is about truth and reconciliation, acknowledging past inequities, and building trust through respectful and principled collaborative actions across our myriads.' Johnson concludes (referring to the United States, but fully applicable to Australia), 'In a country with a history of racialization and its cousin, dehumanizing racism that generally enters the door quickly after that, we won't achieve the goal of equal opportunity without the acknowledgment of the reality that there are still decisions made, systems crafted, and networks are woven that have left people out, particularly the racialized and people experiencing poverty.'

'And, if we are ever to go beyond responding to racialization with interventions that reinforce racialization, even with positive intent, the notion that the racialized require perpetual supplementation could quietly grow into or reinforce the subtle resentment often interpreted as microinequities or institutional racism.'

We welcome the review into a Multicultural Framework to support Australia's cohesion and to reap the benefits of a diverse society and we appreciate the invitation to comment on the Terms of Reference.

Defining Culture, Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity

Attempts to deal with the seemingly inherent vagueness of the concept of culture have been made in the scholarly literature across a range of disciplines. This has been at least partly achievable due to the specialised nature of the work performed in different fields, which allows them to define it prospectively. Theoretical work has been done in fields as diverse as literature on business, international education, international relations and cross-cultural psychology. This work is valuable, but its specialised nature and conceptualisation of key terms limits its generalisability. Chief among these terms is 'culture'. The 'culture' concept has undergone continual refinement, recalibration and fragmentation, which has itself been the subject of intense and fractured scholarly debate.

Multiculturalism can be defined as the presence of and support for the presence of diverse cultural or ethnic groups within a society. But the concept of diversity has been 'poorly defined', 'analytically neglected', and identifiably in need of 'systematic or robust understandings' (Stirling 2007, 707; Benhamou et al. 2011, 11). Understanding of the meaning of cultural diversity is hindered in the vernacular use of the term diversity to describe individuals who, for example, may be members of a diaspora community in multicultural Australia. This usage is misleading because it connotes that diversity, which is a property of a group of two or more people, can be an inherent attribute of the individual members within it.

The Need for More Comprehensive Data

Australia is a diverse society, with people from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Current options in the national Census and most other data-gathering enterprises are grossly insufficient to capture the complexity of Australia's cultural landscape, because these fields are far too broad for individuals to self-identify given the complexity of individual ancestral and ethnic identity. Some people may identify with more than three cultural heritages and ancestries or may speak multiple languages and dialects.

Our comprehensive datasets and method of analysis can be used to identify equity issues in all aspects of Australian society, for example under-representation in the public service, and who is excluded from political and social discourse. Data that reveals information on ethnicity, gender, sexuality, languages and religion can help in identifying disparities in access to services, employment opportunities and other resources. This data can be used to develop policies and programs aimed at addressing discrimination, structural and systemic barriers, and promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

We propose that our Australian-grown and world first holistic diversity data and equity tool Diversity Atlas set the standard for data collection and analysis in Australia. The Diversity Atlas database includes almost 9,000 cultural / ethnic options, 7,900 religions and worldviews, 11,200 languages and dialects, including each of Australia's Indigenous languages and dialects.

What is Diversity Atlas?

Diversity Atlas was created to address the problem of measuring the full vibrancy and richness that exists in humanity – our collective cultural diversity. It offers a nuanced, world-first diversity data-analysis platform (with the largest datasets of ethnicities, languages and religions commercially available in the world) that provides the most inclusive insight into cultural and demographic diversity within an organisation.

It enables organisations to understand the diverse richness and complexity of its teams and to better measure, understand, acknowledge and act on its diversity, equity and inclusion development strategies.

Diversity Atlas was commercially released in 2019 after an extensive development stage including more than 300 literature reviews in partnership with anthropologists, linguists, theologians, sociologists, mathematicians and data scientists, the release of a scientific peer-reviewed research paper and formal research partnerships with the Australian National University, UNESCO and the Dialogue of Civilizations.

It is a compilation of the world's most extensive and inclusive datasets, backed by the Diversity Index algorithm and offering not just the world's first cultural diversity definition and

measurement, but intersectional analysis (internal and external) across a range of demographics and attributes, both acquired and intrinsic.

Diversity Atlas has been adopted by the United Nations, Amazon Web Services, the Diversity Council of Australia, ADP, BDP, hospitals, finance institutions, government agencies, museums, and the Salzburg Global Seminar, among many others.

Our Methodology

Cultural Infusion set out to achieve a robust understanding of the concept of cultural diversity. We engaged a team of linguists, sociologists, anthropologists and other subject matter experts working on more than 300 literature reviews. After two years of commitment to this project, we disaggregated cultural diversity into four key pillars, each with subsets. These are: country of birth (including ancestors' country of birth), language, worldview (secular and non-secular), ethnicity/ancestral heritage and culture/s one may identify with. As we continue to evolve the details and definitions, this remains the strong basis for our work. Our goal was to create a universal understanding of cultural diversity, one that leaves nobody out. The four key pillars shape individual identity, behaviour, social norms, values, belief systems and interactions with others and the world.

Underpinning our work is the understanding that cultural diversity is humanity's greatest asset, our strongest driver of innovation, and a source for progress and global development. When properly managed and understood, cultural diversity is the key to stronger, more socially cohesive and more peaceful communities because social change is embedded in cultural change.

Our Research

Cultural Infusion and the Diversity Atlas team have contributed to the field of academic study of diversity data aggregation.

A collection of our research can be found at: <https://diversityatlas.io/research-papers/>

Recommendations for the Multicultural Framework

1. Acknowledge strengths of and unresolved issues with diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Victorian Government report in multicultural affairs 2021–2022 provides a good model for this.
2. Provide a clear, inclusive definition of ‘multicultural’. Every person in Australia has one or more cultural identities and belongs to multicultural Australia.
3. Take a detailed inventory of our major public institutions to map their cultural diversity and publicly share the results.
4. Convey a clear statement of understanding and campaign to educate the general public that we have collectively failed to fully benefit from the rich assets of multicultural Australia and that this failure has a negative impact on everyone. Case in point, studies have shown that Australian children from a language background other than English received ‘markedly higher marks in reading, writing and spelling’ in most parts of Australia. University of New England (UNE) languages and literacy education expert Professor Anne-Marie Morgan has said, ‘Australia is playing catch-up with the rest of the world’s population, which is largely plurilingual. We disadvantage our young people by not preparing them for the world they engage with, and in providing them with the many benefits learning an additional language brings.’ Language is just one of many aspects of culture. We can extrapolate that being monocultural deprives many Australians of an understanding of other cultures and the benefits that come from this understanding. The link between cultural diversity and financial performance has been well established in studies. Given the stubborn overrepresentation of Anglo-Australians in leadership positions (77% of CEOs of ASX 200 companies, 79% of elected politicians, 82% of high-ranking public servants and 85% of university vice-chancellors with an Anglo-Celtic background compared to 68% of the general population, according to this 2018 study), the lack of cultural diversity in the leadership of so many of our institutions has a negative effect on almost every one of us since it is almost certainly collectively holding us back in most areas while adding to hardship, distress and resentment among underrepresented people and creating conflict.
5. Establish national standards of diversity data collection and analysis. Data is the basis of all knowledge. Without comprehensive, granular data, it is impossible to create appropriate policies, strategies and plans for communities. Through a comprehensive understanding of our dynamic

collective culture, it is possible to see ‘systemic barriers’ through a fresh, larger lens, enabling us to perceive these barriers as opportunities to grow into the mature nation that longs to emerge from the grassroots. A nation that recognises that our most underutilised resource is our collective cultural heritage that exists in dynamic communities throughout Australia. A nation where people are working together with a shared sense of purpose and vision to achieve untold productivity and unimaginable wealth (not merely in dollar terms). Nothing is more vital to the success of the Multicultural Framework Review than a clear intention for comprehensive, inclusive data collection at every level of government, and for nuanced, intersectional analysis that recognises and values the cultural heritage of every single Australian and ensures that those who sit at the intersection of multiple forms of oppressions (including sexism, ableism and homophobia) are not left behind. When everyone is counted and no one is left behind, everyone benefits:

- *Interactions in communities are lively and dynamic once they have an evidence-based understanding of who they are and their members know their cultural identities are acknowledged, respected and protected.*
- *Policy settings and programs are based on evidence rather than guesswork.*
- *Services are designed appropriately, according to the evidence.*
- *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategies are appropriately tailored.*

6. Further to this appeal for a rigorous approach to data collection and analysis, we echo the call from Jieh-Yung Lo in the Mandarin for ‘Cultural Diversity Composition Reporting Legislation’ be brought in, in line with the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.
7. Establish a truth and reconciliation process with an understanding that our systems were often not designed for the inclusion of underrepresented groups and that truth and reconciliation may have far-reaching implications. See the quote in the section above indicating that simple redress of symptoms is not enough to fix the problems caused by lack of diversity in public institutions.
8. Create strategies with members of underrepresented cultural groups to ensure access to information, opportunities and support is available to these groups.

9. Centre culture in line with UNESCO's Mondiacult 2022 Declaration that asserts 'the individual and collective responsibility, on behalf of future generations, to ensure the conservation, safeguarding and promotion of the entire cultural sector including cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, as an ethical imperative, ensuring greater equity, geographical balance and representativity of heritage across all regions, as well as the promotion of cultural and creative industries, as fundamental dimensions to sustain cultural diversity and pluralism, the respect of which constitutes, today more than ever, a ferment of peace and a force for creativity and innovation to build a more sustainable world.' Strengthen support for all cultural education, training and expression, including in the areas of festivals, ceremonies, music, dance, storytelling, languages, religious studies, visual arts, literature, sports, cuisine, architecture, technology, crafts, clothing and more. These are the areas where multiculturalism in Australia is simultaneously healthiest and most deserving and in need of greater financial support to provide all cultural workers with equitable platforms and living wages and intercultural training to stem the many infamous racist incidents that plague some of these areas.

10. Streamline recognition of overseas qualifications.

11. Establish a Multiculturalism Act.



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