

## **SBS SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK REVIEW (OCTOBER 2023)**

### **Key points**

- Multiculturalism is a powerful asset to be embraced, celebrated, and continuously invested in. It is a force for good that can return significant social, civic, and economic benefits for all Australians.
- However, successful multiculturalism requires ongoing and continuously evaluated public policy interventions. Australia cannot rest on the notion of being the 'most successful multicultural society'. In light of contemporary immigration and demographic trends, and examples from around the world of failure in fostering social cohesion, it is timely to consider what institutional, legislative, and policy settings will best underpin Australia's multiculturalism today and into the future. These settings must further foster social cohesion, eliminate fear of diversity, and maximise the benefits of multiculturalism for all Australians, for generations to come.
- This is especially the case in the context of current economic pressures, such as rising inflation and interest rates, which can lead to an increase in racism, exploitation of migrants to Australia seeking employment<sup>1</sup>, as well as impacts on those who have already settled in Australia.
- In light of this, SBS supports all three of the Review's guiding principles: advancing a multicultural Australia; supporting our cohesive and inclusive multicultural society; and ensuring settings are fit for purpose in harnessing the talents of all Australians.
- SBS has a key role to play in any future state of multicultural Australia. SBS's culturally and linguistically diverse cross-platform media and digital services are Australia's truly unique asset and advantage—both for existing residents and in attracting new migrants. SBS is approaching its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and is the most multilingual media provider in the world, and the most trusted news brand in Australia.<sup>2</sup>
- SBS's role is more vital now than ever, at the time of intense competition from powerful commercial media from across the globe, pervasive mis- and disinformation, and prevalent AI-generated content of varying quality and credibility—including in-language.
- SBS's deep experience, and connection to community and reach were clearly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, an event which demonstrated that federal, state and territory governments may not always have the capacity to communicate effectively at scale with multicultural and multilingual communities. SBS was able to swiftly assist governments in communicating health messages, while maintaining the strict editorial independence that SBS's establishing legislation enshrines, and SBS's audiences expect.
- As part of the Multicultural Framework, SBS recommends that a broad perspective be taken by Government to further leverage SBS as a publicly owned asset which has multiculturalism at its core. SBS ought to be at the centre of institutional arrangements—to

<sup>1</sup> Example: *More protection in demand for temporary visa-holder migrant workers* report by SBS Hindi (1 September 2023, in Hindi language), at <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/hindi/en/podcast-episode/more-protection-in-demand-for-temporary-visa-holder-migrant-workers/mqrsez1ho>

<sup>2</sup> The 2023 Digital News Report: Australia by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and the University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre found *SBS News* is the most trusted (equal with ABC News) and least distrusted news brand.



safeguard and promote social cohesion in Australia, elevate the importance of multiculturalism in Australia, and derive benefits for all Australians. In doing so, SBS would:

- have an expanded role—for it to work with, and be supported by, agencies from across all governments; and
  - have a seat at the table to help design both policy and service delivery initiatives, including by being a formally recognised advisory member—for any new national body (or Commission) for multicultural Australia.
- To enshrine the principles of multiculturalism in legislation at the federal level, SBS supports a Commonwealth Multicultural Act that formalises legislative and policy settings in this area, including formal recognition of the vital role of SBS. The Multicultural Act should also seek to establish a national body (or Commission) for Australia's multicultural matters and include SBS as one of its ongoing advisory members, noting the expertise and connections between SBS and multilingual communities across Australia.
- Shifting multicultural affairs into a distinct Departmental portfolio—for Immigration, Citizenship, and Multicultural Affairs—will be important to reframing multiculturalism as a national asset.
- This reframing, and the broader reform of the Multicultural Framework, will also help attract new migrants to Australia. SBS is a soft power asset for Australia; and given the international reach of SBS's online services, SBS can be central to this reframing—by having an expanded role diplomatically and internationally.
- Australia's Multicultural Framework ought to also comprise an explicitly recognised cross-government framework for inter-agency collaboration to deliver on key policy objectives and outcomes, rather than continued reliance on ad-hoc collaboration opportunities.
- SBS's world-class efficiency and effectiveness, together with its well-established infrastructure, means that collaboration between SBS and a broad range of government agencies would deliver superior marginal utility, with benefits flowing directly back to Australian taxpayers. This could involve further leveraging of existing investments (such as [Australia Explained](#)), or new funding opportunities to enhance and expand SBS services in ways that deliver on multicultural policy objectives.
- There is an opportunity for SBS to be further funded for screen or audio content that delivers objectives set out in the National Cultural Policy, for example, the production of more premium, Australian multilingual drama that reflects the diversity of Australia or purposefully inclusive First Nations children's programming, in-turn, further promotes social cohesion and sense of belonging. Further investment in SBS content also has the significant benefits in driving economic outcomes in the content production sector, and in broadening the skill and representation base in a way only SBS can.
- SBS's industry-leading initiatives drive and support the advancement of diverse, multicultural, and First Nations practitioners across the sector in which SBS operates; and set out diversity, equity and inclusion targets—externally for its screen production partners, and within SBS itself as an organisation.
- SBS's own leadership and workforce diversity helps it to understand, reflect, and serve its increasingly diverse audience—the Australian population at large. SBS encourages settings that promote workforce diversity across all other agencies and entities, and offers the SBS Inclusion training module to help foster it.



### **SBS recommendations**

1. A **formalised and expanded role for SBS in the institutional, legislative, and policy framework** will further deliver outcomes for multicultural Australia. The trusted position and unprecedented reach and connection of SBS, in multilingual communities, should be further leveraged to improve outcomes for both policy development and service delivery initiatives, both domestically and internationally.
2. The Multicultural Framework should comprise an explicitly recognised **cross-government framework for inter-agency collaboration**, rather than relying on ad-hoc collaboration opportunities.
3. SBS supports the **establishment of the Department of Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs**.
4. Under new federal legislation, the Multicultural Act, **SBS's role should be formally recognised** as an ongoing member of an advisory committee of a national body established under the Act for Australia's multicultural matters.
5. The Multicultural Framework should **recognise the value in further investment in SBS** to achieve priority policy outcomes, for example the objectives of the National Cultural Policy could be met by increased funding to SBS for more production of multilingual Australian drama series or purposefully inclusive First Nations children's programming, in-turn promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Special Broadcasting Service (**SBS**) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's Multicultural Framework Review (the **Review**) led by an appointed panel in conjunction with a reference group.

The Review is timely, at this moment of a historic level of immigration to Australia.<sup>3</sup> It is increasingly important to reframe Australia's multicultural settings—not only to ensure that Australia is the destination of choice, and comprehensively support new arrivals; but to also purposefully invest in the future generations of Australians who will genuinely embrace, celebrate, and benefit from Australia's unique diversity and inclusion in the coming decades.

There are clear social, civic, and economic benefits arising from efforts to maintain and further invest in Australia's successful multicultural society, primarily through increased participation and social inclusion. The additional economic dividend from Australia having a more inclusive society is estimated to be worth \$12.7 billion annually (see *Example 1* below). This is a clear and significant advantage to Australia in the context of a highly competitive international environment, fraught with examples of failure in fostering and benefiting from social cohesion.

### **Example 1 – quantifiable economic benefit of social inclusion**

In 2019, Deloitte Access Economics' *The economic benefits of improving social inclusion* report<sup>4</sup>, produced in collaboration with SBS, revealed that the economic dividend from Australia having a more inclusive society is estimated to be worth \$12.7 billion annually as a result of higher productivity, improved employment outcomes and improved health outcomes.

Supporting multicultural Australia requires a combination of 'hard tools' (including border protection); and 'soft tools' such as enabling and supporting diverse Australians to see

<sup>3</sup> On 15 September 2023, the ABS released its figures to the year ending 31 March 2023 showing the growth comprised record-high Net Overseas Migration (NOM) of 454,400, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/the-economic-benefits-of-improving-social-inclusion>



themselves reflected and thriving in the creative realm of the country—SBS plays an important role in this, and is well positioned to do more (see **II.** below).

As an essential cultural institution for almost 50 years, SBS has been providing its Charter-led services to all Australians including multicultural Australians, and First Nations peoples.

SBS is a truly unique asset to and advantage of Australia—as the world's most linguistically diverse media provider, particularly through its end-to-end and cross-platform in-language news, information, and entertainment ecosystem. Currently, SBS's offerings are available to almost 100 per cent of the Australian population in more than 60 languages, delivering on its principal function, pursuant to the SBS Charter—

'The principal function of the SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural broadcasting and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society.'<sup>5</sup>

SBS's purpose is to foster social cohesion—helping to drive the cultural, civic, economic, and social participation and inclusion and their consequential benefits.

The SBS's purpose of championing social cohesion aligns strongly with the Review's guiding principles. SBS therefore supports all three of the Review's guiding principles, of—

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

SBS's world-class efficiency and effectiveness, together with its well-established digital infrastructure, means that work effected through, or with the help of, SBS would deliver superior marginal utility to Government and in-turn the Australian community.

Although SBS services are made for Australian audiences, analysis reveals that approximately 30 per cent of SBS content across its comprehensive online services is consumed by overseas audiences<sup>6</sup>—this demonstrates the consequential and ongoing international public policy benefits (and further potential) of SBS services, including in the area of international diplomacy, soft power, and competition for migrants.

SBS provides an end-to-end ecosystem for multilingual and multicultural audiences—key examples of its services are provided in [Appendix A](#); and the SBS network is also home to National Indigenous Television (**NITV**)—a service by, for, and about First Nations peoples. SBS is therefore in the unique position as Australia's dedicated Indigenous and multicultural broadcaster to connect the newest Australians with the Custodians of the oldest living culture on Earth<sup>7</sup>—promoting the sense of belonging, and understanding and celebration of First Nations peoples' culture among the new Australians, and in-turn bolstering Australia's social cohesion and national identity.

To better understand, reflect, and better serve multicultural Australia, [Appendix B](#) provides a summary of SBS's work both internally and as a participant in the media industry, including its ambitious diversity, equity and inclusion targets as well as assisting other organisations in this area.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/sbs-charter>

<sup>6</sup> This example comes from analysis of social media referrals to SBS's websites, 30 per cent of which are from overseas – Source: Adobe Analytics: Unique Visitors : Referrer Type, Countries : 2022/08/01 - 2 023/01/31 : Social Traffic - Aus v Non-Aus Dashboard

<sup>7</sup> As an example, through SBS's *Multilingual Research* (see **III.1** below), it was found that Arabic language community consumes SBS's First Nations content more than average.



### **(I.1) As revealed through its comprehensive research capability, SBS is quantifiably effective and impactful**

SBS has the depth and breadth of research capability—to understand nuances in audience consumption and preferred genres—which in-turn drives audience reach, and has helped SBS become the most trusted provider in Australia.<sup>8</sup>

As a key example of reaching diverse communities, the SBS In-language Research Program for financial year 2022–23 revealed that every week, the SBS network reached at least 1 in 2 of the more than 1,200 language speaking audiences surveyed.<sup>9</sup>

Among its many research programs, SBS also regularly measures the impact of its commissioned content, to ensure that the content, in which taxpayers invest, is effective and relevant.

As another example, subsequent to Season 3 of *Filthy Rich and Homeless* series exploring Australia's homelessness, our post-transmission research revealed that—after watching the series, 60 per cent of audience members surveyed donated money, food or clothing to charity or directly to a homeless person; while 45 per cent engaged in a conversation or made eye contact with a homeless person; and 50 per cent talked about the series with someone.<sup>10</sup>

A study in 2022 also found that SBS's multi-award-winning *Little J & Big Cuz* First Nations children's series, available in 13 languages, has had a big and positive impact—including in relation to First Nations children's education and their language preservation. See further details of SBS's *Little mob making a big impact* study in subsection (II.7) below on page 15.

### **(I.2) Australia is rapidly becoming more multicultural and diverse**

Australia is more multicultural and diverse than ever before, according to the 2021 Australian Census, with the rate of change increasing rapidly.<sup>11</sup> As the nation's diversity increases, the need for, and the importance of, SBS's services that foster social inclusion continues to intensify.

Notably, when comparing the 2021 Census data with 2016 Census data, languages used at home other than English (including First Nations languages) have seen a significant growth rate at 16%—almost twice of that of the overall population growth (at 8.6%).

This means that the number of people who use a language other than English at home increased by nearly 800,000 between 2016 and 2021, rising to over 5.6 million people, or nearly a quarter of the entire Australian population.

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<sup>8</sup> The 2023 Digital News Report: Australia by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and the University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre found *SBS News* is the most trusted (equal with ABC News) and least distrusted news brand.

<sup>9</sup> Financial year 2022–23 SBS In-language Research Program (McNair Research) of Mandarin- (n = 445), Arabic- (n = 425), and Cantonese-speaking (n = 407) participants

<sup>10</sup> Source: The Exchange. *Filthy Rich and Homeless* (S3) Content Evaluation, 24/06/20 – 14/07/20. Base – Those who watched *Filthy Rich and Homeless* (S3) n=166

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>



**Example 2** – an excerpt from SBS's easy-to-use and data-visualised [Census Explorer tool](#), available online in nine languages<sup>12</sup>

### What are the most spoken languages?

1	<a href="#">English</a>	<div><div></div></div> 72.0%	↓ 0.7 since 2016 (72.7%)	18,303,662 people
2	<a href="#">Mandarin</a>	<div><div></div></div> 2.7%	↑ 0.1 2016 2.5%	685,274
3	<a href="#">Arabic</a>	<div><div></div></div> 1.4%	↑ 0.1 2016 1.4%	367,159
4	<a href="#">Vietnamese</a>	<div><div></div></div> 1.3%	↑ 0.1 2016 1.2%	320,758
5	<a href="#">Cantonese</a>	<div><div></div></div> 1.2%	– 2016 1.2%	295,281
6	<a href="#">Punjabi</a>	<div><div></div></div> 0.9%	↑ 0.4 2016 0.6%	239,033
7	<a href="#">Greek</a>	<div><div></div></div> 0.9%	↓ 0.1 2016 1.0%	229,643
8	<a href="#">Italian</a>	<div><div></div></div> 0.9%	↓ 0.3 2016 1.2%	228,042
9	<a href="#">Hindi</a>	<div><div></div></div> 0.8%	↑ 0.1 2016 0.7%	197,132

■ Australia

### (1.3) There are examples of shortcomings, particularly if the multicultural framework is not optimally set

Whilst Australia often regards itself as a strong and successful multicultural society, there is evidence of rising levels of concern regarding racism and exclusion. These risk factors, and the experience of comparable overseas societies, support the need for carefully calibrated and adequately funded institutional and policy frameworks.

For example, a 2021 study by the Scanlon foundation reported an increase in the number of respondents who see racism in Australia as 'a very big problem', up from 40 per cent to 60 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

A recent inquiry by the NSW Parliament found that '[i]ncreases in racism and discrimination towards culturally and linguistically diverse communities during the COVID-19 pandemic [...] caused trauma and fear and had negative health consequences for CALD communities.'<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed shortcomings in the ability of governments to communicate and engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and did not recognise and utilise the vital role that other organisations play in supporting communities during a crisis. As a Government agency with pre-existing capabilities to communicate with Australia's diverse communities, SBS was well positioned to assist, as demonstrated by its swift and comprehensive work in response to the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> In its initial stages, this work was done by

<sup>12</sup> SBS Australian Census Explorer tool is available at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/creative/census-explorer/xtjxeqygs>, in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), English, Greek, Italian, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese

<sup>13</sup> Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2021*, available at <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2021/>

<sup>14</sup> New South Wales Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services report *Improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities*, available at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/2870/Report%20-%20improving%20crisis%20communications%20to%20culturally%20and%20linguistically%20diverse%20communities.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Examples of SBS's work in response to COVID-19 crisis include the [SBS Multilingual coronavirus portal](#)—created within only four days in late March 2020, following the first reported case in the Australian community. The portal centralises all of SBS's COVID-19 content in more than 60 languages. This content has been viewed by more than 11 million unique visitors (UVs) thus far. Further examples include SBS's provision of coronavirus and vaccine explainer videos, and live interpreting for NSW and Victoria's daily press conferences in multiple languages. SBS was able to assist the states with these unique capabilities.





SBS independently of other government agencies, though as the pandemic progressed and SBS's role was recognised, successful partnerships were developed with agencies including the Commonwealth Department of Health, the Government of NSW and Multicultural NSW, and the Government of Victoria, among others, to expand services to the community.

There is also the potential for other societal and economic pressures to give rise to suspicion and negative sentiment towards migrants, such as commentary linking migration levels with housing shortages.<sup>16</sup> Migrants in Australia are also susceptible to employment exploitation, through widespread underpayment and other factors, made worse by the tougher economic environment.<sup>17</sup>

Australia ought to also have regard to the experience of comparable nations, such as France and Scandinavian countries, where social cohesion is under pressure and immigrant communities face structural and economic disadvantage.<sup>18</sup> In Canada, attacks based on people's ethno-cultural backgrounds are also reported to be rising.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, social cohesion is an ongoing challenge for many societies, and requires vigilant care and attention from Government. It is therefore critical that institutional arrangements are appropriately calibrated to the specific needs of multicultural policy and services. To this end, SBS sees significant benefits which may arise from a distinct Government function of Multicultural Affairs, outside the Home Affairs portfolio. There are clear and distinct differences between the policy areas of multiculturalism and social cohesion on the one hand, and border control and national security on the other. A standalone portfolio and department can ensure the Government has the required agility, and responsiveness to rapid changes and unique challenges. It would provide a firm foundation to further drive Australia's success as a multicultural nation and the country's aspirations to continue as a world leader in inclusion and social cohesion.

SBS, as the world's most linguistically diverse broadcaster, has been a key champion and supporter of Australia's multiculturalism, and is uniquely well positioned to do more—to further drive these aspirations of Australia—in conjunction with structural and institutional arrangements optimally set to support multiculturalism.

## **II. A FORMALISED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SBS SHOULD BE INTEGRATED AS PART OF A DEDICATED INSTITUTIONAL, LEGISLATIVE, AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA**

This part of the submission outlines a set of recommendations to revise and renew the institutional, legislative, and policy framework for multicultural Australia.

The central feature of these recommendations is a formalised and expanded role for SBS, a publicly owned asset with multiculturalism at its foundation, to better leverage existing funding and more effectively maximise the unique expertise and potential of SBS.

While maintaining its editorial independence in relation to content, there is a benefit in SBS having an expanded role beyond its current portfolio boundaries to:

- support all agencies across all governments to effect their work in relation to multicultural communities and multicultural Australia; and
- support Australia diplomatically and internationally—for the country to be the destination of choice among migrants, and in societal and national security.

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Please refer to more examples in SBS's August 2020 [submission](#)<sup>15</sup> to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19's *Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic*.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/peter-dutton-warns-migration-boost-will-worsen-australias-housing-crisis-in-budget-reply/ubm4ugk63>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/tens-of-thousands-of-these-workers-are-exploited-could-this-plan-put-an-end-to-it/ht1kc8ut2>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.afr.com/world/europe/france-s-disintegrating-social-compact-20230628-p5dkoy>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/2/27/hate-crimes-muslims-canada-growing>



SBS is a soft diplomacy tool—thanks to its deep understanding of cultures, which warrants its role as Australia's communicator of key messages to drive not only domestic but also international policy outcomes.

As noted in evidence presented recently to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's Pathway to Nation Building Inquiry<sup>20</sup>, the work of SBS can be utilised even before people arrive in Australia (leveraging the approximately 30 per cent of its online audiences overseas<sup>21</sup>), then throughout their settlement journey (similar to an effective 'onboarding process') (see **II.3** for further details), and well into the future for generations of Australians—for and by whom our multicultural society continues to be strengthened and prosper.

SBS is impartial and independent pursuant to the legislated provisions in the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (**SBS Act**) and only advocates for specific policy outcomes as relevant to its operations, as distinct from some peak and community organisations who specifically include advocacy and policy influence as part of their remit. This may make SBS a preferred partner in terms of service delivery and other activities.

### ***(II.1) SBS is highly effective and efficient and should be further leveraged.***

As a vehicle for the delivery of government policy priorities across portfolios, SBS is highly effective and efficient, with unparalleled and deep multilingual and multicultural expertise, and extensive cross-platform infrastructure. This includes its capability to seamlessly deliver digital media and information services in multiple languages, and provide login and navigation for SBS On Demand in six languages other than English<sup>22</sup>, with SBS On Demand the highest rated media/streaming app on the Apple App Store.

According to a recent survey in August 2023, SBS is now more essential than ever, demonstrating the effectiveness of SBS's content and services:

- 95% of audiences surveyed claim that overall it is good that SBS exists.<sup>23</sup>
- 87% of audiences surveyed say that SBS helps Australia to be a more inclusive nation.<sup>24</sup>
- 91% of audiences surveyed say SBS helps them find content they wouldn't find anywhere else.<sup>25</sup>

Awareness of the SBS network is 96% among Italian language users in Australia<sup>26</sup> and 92% among Arabic language users<sup>27</sup>, demonstrating high level effectiveness in SBS service delivery. The SBS network reaches 53% Mandarin speakers, 55% of Arabic speakers, and 64% of Cantonese speakers in Australia each week<sup>28</sup>, with 3.8 million SBS Audio podcast downloads each month that span a range of languages.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of efficiency, SBS has maintained the lowest cost per audience hour consumed across the free-to-air media sector (for both television and radio) and was also the only free-to-air network which increased audience numbers between 2012 and 2021.<sup>30</sup> Audio delivery is also

<sup>20</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Migration – Pathway to Nation Building Inquiry, Public Hearing 17 May 2023: [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/commjnt/26884/toc\\_pdf/Migration%20Joint%20Committee\\_2023\\_05\\_17\\_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22committees/commjnt/26884/0000%22](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/commjnt/26884/toc_pdf/Migration%20Joint%20Committee_2023_05_17_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22committees/commjnt/26884/0000%22)

<sup>21</sup> This example comes from analysis of social media referrals to SBS's websites, 30 per cent of which are from overseas – Source: Adobe Analytics: Unique Visitors : Referrer Type, Countries : 2022/08/01 - 2023/01/31 : Social Traffic - Aus v Non-Aus Dashboard

<sup>22</sup> Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), English, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese

<sup>23</sup> SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

<sup>24</sup> SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

<sup>25</sup> SBS Charter Tracker – August 2023 Base: SBS Engaged Audiences

<sup>26</sup> According to SBS's annual commission of McNair audience research.

<sup>27</sup> SBS McNair Arabic Study 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Financial year 2022–23 SBS In-language Research Program (McNair Research) of Mandarin- (n = 445), Arabic- (n = 425), and Cantonese-speaking (n = 407) participants

<sup>29</sup> Streamguys, 01/01/2023 – 31/12/2023, Total Podcast Downloads

<sup>30</sup> *The Australian*, 30 May 2022, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/eyeballs-on-the-march-as-freetoair-television-slumps/news-story/0c1b75f006d73dbcb2624f53cb35d004>



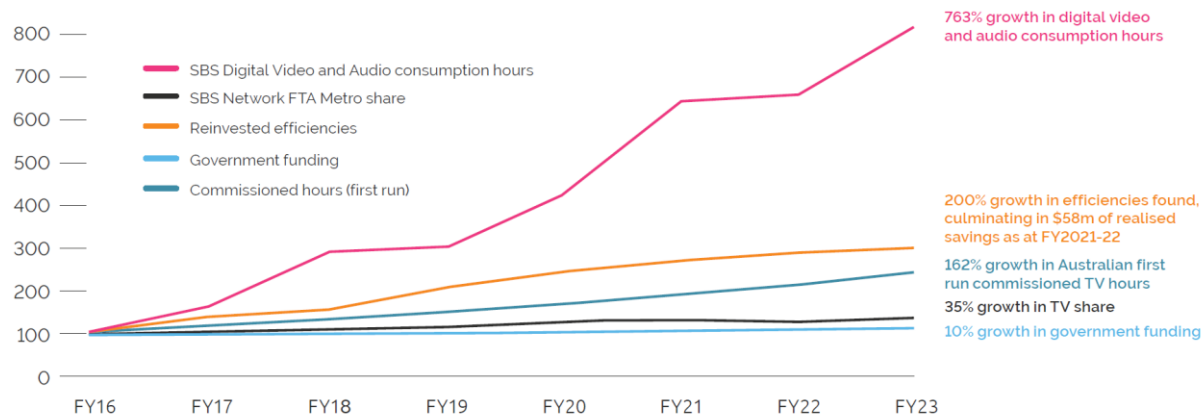


highly cost-efficient and effective, and has the additional benefit of reaching those who may lack literacy skills.

**Example 3** - The table below demonstrates SBS's growth in consumption, as well as the growth in efficiencies identified and reinvested into more content for Australian audiences.

**Comparison of SBS digital video and audio consumption hours, FTA TV metro share, first run commissioned TV hours, efficiencies reinvested and government funding**

(FY2016-23) Indexed (FY16 = 100)



Note: Digital Video and Audio consumption hours include methodology changes across the period as analytics capability and coverage improved such as video co-viewing from January 2020 onwards. Source: OzTAM VPM, Adobe Analytics; SBS internal data.

Source: SBS Annual Report 2022-23

As a publicly owned asset, with exceptional levels of effectiveness and efficiency and deep digital expertise in multiple languages, SBS can be further leveraged across government to assist in the delivery of policy and programs designed to enhance multicultural Australia, contribute to social cohesion and a vibrant, tolerant society (see SBS services and capabilities in [Appendix A](#)). SBS also regularly works with community and peak organisations in delivering positive outcomes.

SBS recommends that a broad perspective be taken when considering how best to leverage and enhance existing investment in SBS, in addition to considering how additional funding streams could be utilised to deliver better utility and increase the scope and reach of SBS's multilingual and multicultural services, recognising the efficiency and impact of SBS.

**SBS recommendation 1**

*A formalised and expanded role for SBS in the institutional, legislative, and policy framework will further deliver outcomes for multicultural Australia. The trusted position and unprecedented reach and connection of SBS, in multilingual communities, should be further leveraged to improve outcomes for both policy development and service delivery initiatives, both domestically and internationally.*

**(II.2) Inter-agency collaboration framework should be formally established**

There are clear and quantifiable benefits to policy and service development and execution arising from inter-agency collaboration. SBS has been actively exploring ways in which it can leverage government funding investment to assist in the delivery of cross-portfolio policy objectives in a way that does not infringe on its editorial independence. The absence of a clear framework or pathway for collaboration can lead to suboptimal outcomes. For example, considerable resources are acquitted before effective connections are made, or additional



government funds are spent on programs which may duplicate, or are inferior to, SBS services that have already been produced with Government funding.

There is therefore a real opportunity for an explicitly recognised cross-government approach that leverages existing taxpayer investment, including in SBS, rather than relying on agencies to find ad hoc opportunities to collaborate which could unnecessarily duplicate resources or lead to inferior outcomes.

Whether through the new Multicultural Act, or through other formalised arrangements, there should be clear requirements that relevant agencies across government portfolios take into account other agencies' work and initiatives, and work together collaboratively and efficiently under a unifying framework to enhance outcomes and avoid duplication. A clear structure of inter-agency relationships ought to be carefully constructed through consultation with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

The graphic to the right is a visual representation of the facilitative yet independent role SBS can play in connecting agencies and governments to the communities they serve.



As explored earlier, there is clear scope for SBS to have an expanded role in this framework beyond providing multilingual and multicultural broadcasting and digital media services. In particular, it is highly desirable that there be a mechanism to ensure that SBS is engaged in relation to policy development and service delivery for multilingual Australians (without impacting SBS editorial independence), with potential for additional funding as required.

### ***SBS recommendation 2***

*The Multicultural Framework should comprise an explicitly recognised cross-government framework for inter-agency collaboration, rather than relying on ad-hoc collaboration opportunities.*

Existing examples of a framework for collaboration include those within the SBS Act—which contains a number of provisions for SBS to take into account work and circumstances of, and seek to co-operate closely with, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the **ABC**). Another example is in the *Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005* (the **ACMA Act**, which established the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the **ACMA**) in 2005). The ACMA Act contains a provision that the ACMA must consult the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (**ACCC**) before carrying out certain acts, including those that have a significant effect on competition or consumer protection (see section 17(b) of the ACMA Act).

There are a number of areas for potential collaboration involving SBS which could be realised by such a framework.

### ***(II.3) There is a clear opportunity for SBS to be embedded in the end-to-end migrant journey***

As illustrated in the graphic below, there is a clear collaboration opportunity for SBS to be embedded in the end-to-end migrant journey at each touchpoint between the individual and Government, using content that SBS has already produced and developed, at no extra cost to the Australian taxpayers.

Such a collaboration could commence at the relevant embassy or diplomatic mission overseas, with independent information produced in-language by SBS, about life in Australia, readily and



proactively shared with prospective migrants or visa applicants. SBS's coverage of changes to visa or migration frameworks can also be readily shared.

At the visa grant stage, new migrants could be provided with links to the [Australia Explained](#) and [SBS Learn English](#) services, which will serve to make the on-boarding journey easier, as well as demonstrate to prospective migrants that Australia is an inclusive destination that invests in providing independent information, news, and entertainment in multiple languages.

Once an individual arrives in Australia, information about SBS services in the preferred language can be further provided on arrival—these services support civic, social, and economic participation, as well as explain key information (such as surf safety, and avoiding floodwaters). Furthermore, SBS's content delivery technology can detect the default language that a smartphone is set to, and automatically provide news and information in that language (with further settings also available).

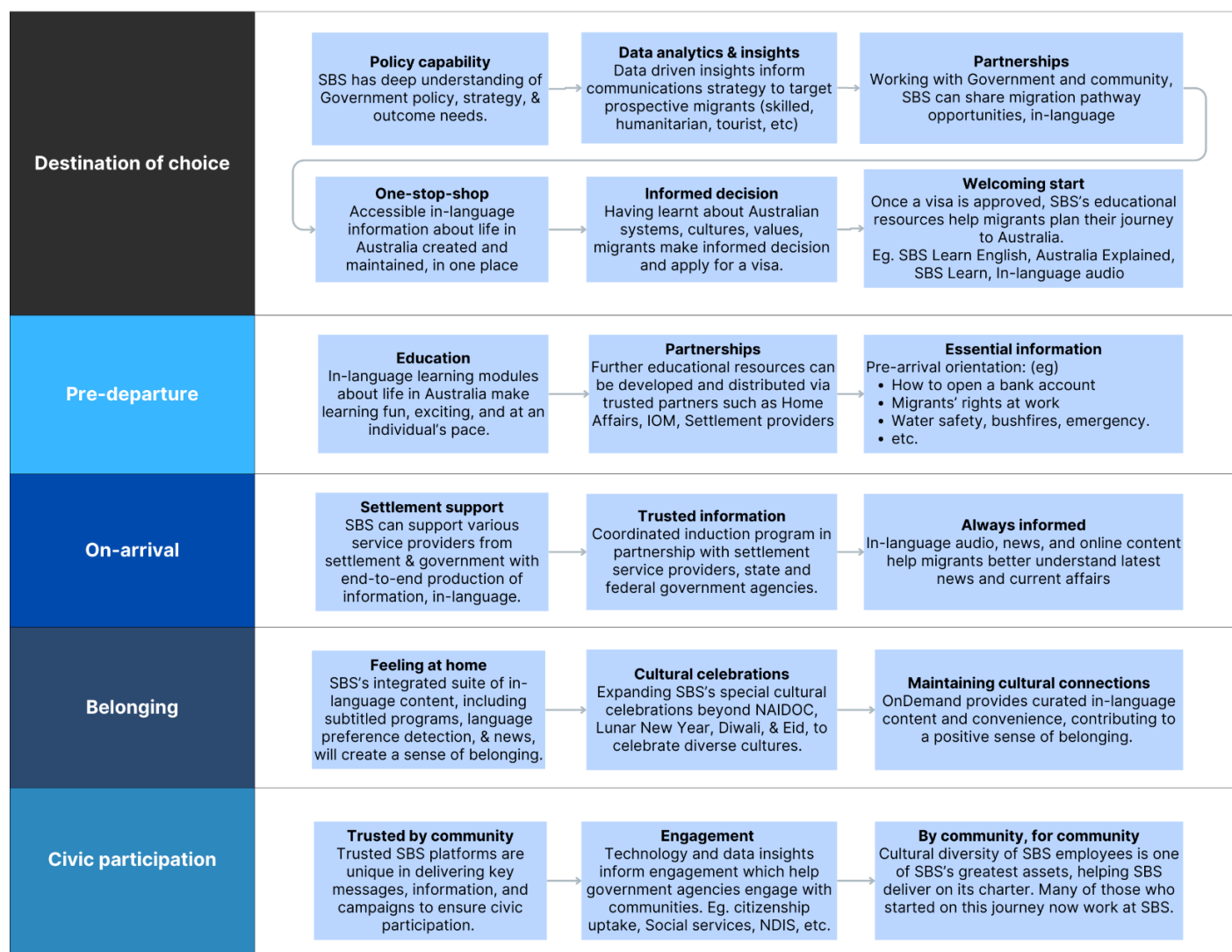
This early awareness of SBS's service offerings will also ensure that people can easily and immediately take advantage of the end-to-end content services that are provided by SBS as a public broadcaster, including its rich library of in-language content available through SBS On Demand service including Australian programming and news with subtitles in up to seven languages and closed captions in English. The graphic following provides an example of how SBS can be further utilised to support the migration journey.

The outcome would be that Australia is seen as a destination of choice; potential migrants understand Australia, and once arrived—are supported to participate in all aspects of life—this in-turn promotes sense of belonging and drive social cohesion for the benefit of all Australians.

In a similar manner, SBS's expertise in multilingual digital content delivery and technology can be harnessed to assist government and other agencies with the delivery of beneficial services that are currently under-utilised, such as the NDIS's or offerings from the Department of Social Services. Mechanisms include both paid services (such as translation, and in-language advertising), or in-kind collaboration, such as the provision of advice and support—via consumption preferences of particular in language audiences, based on SBS expertise and research.

# Welcoming future Australians

Successful settlement & onboarding of prospective migrants - An example of SBS capability



## (II.4) SBS supports a Multicultural Act

SBS supports a Commonwealth Multicultural Act (the **Act**) to formalise the legislative, and policy settings, including the vital role of SBS, to meet the current and future needs of multicultural Australia.

As explored above, and in the background material of the Review, Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity will continue to deepen, given immigration settings and trends. Now is an important opportunity to enshrine key guiding principles and policy settings that will guide and strengthen support for Australian multiculturalism.

Benefits of a Multicultural Act were earlier considered by the [Senate] [Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism](#) (the **Committee**) and its submitters in 2017. The Committee's report considered a formalised Act could have the following benefits:



- Invigoration of public commitment to<sup>31</sup>, and prioritisation of<sup>32</sup> multiculturalism;
- Policy settings that keep pace with modern Australian society; as new communities have entered [the] Australian society<sup>33</sup>;
- Scaffolding that truly supports multicultural Australia—enshrining the principles of multiculturalism in legislation at the federal level has added advantages in terms of symbolism and leadership. A national multicultural act would demonstrate multilateral support for Australian multiculturalism. It would symbolise political will at the highest level to support and embrace the multicultural ethos.<sup>34</sup>

The Committee also outlined in its final report (in Chapter 5, emphasis added),

'[t]he Committee endorses the view that there is a need for strong leadership on the meaning and importance of multiculturalism in Australia. **A Federal Multiculturalism Act that enshrines the values of multiculturalism and establishes mechanisms to ensure implementation of these values is worthy of further consideration.** In this regard, the committee notes that a large number of submitters and witnesses highlighted potential models to guide the government's deliberations.'<sup>35</sup>

[...]

The Committee's Recommendation 9 in the final report corroborates this, by stating that

'[t]he committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with relevant government, non-government and community bodies, **consider developing and implementing a Federal Multicultural Act** to enshrine agreed principles of multiculturalism to support and frame multiculturalism in Australia'.<sup>36</sup>

Further in the report, it is also important to note that

'the committee considers that it would be more effective to **establish a representative national body**, with clearly defined responsibilities and adequate resourcing, for multicultural matters.'<sup>37</sup>

The establishment of a Multicultural Act, with clear and defined policy objectives, and a framework to achieve those objectives, would provide a strong foundation to support a cohesive multicultural society, with the associated social, civil, and economic benefits. The Act should be designed and developed in close consultation with key stakeholders and multicultural communities.

### ***(II.5) SBS supports establishment of the Department of Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (or DoICMA)***

The Department of Home Affairs is a very large and broadly constituted Department, comprising a number of complex policy and service areas, ranging across cyber and infrastructure security, counterterrorism, foreign influence, immigration, and multicultural affairs. These settings may amplify perceptions that multicultural policy is principally concerned with border protection and national security.

<sup>31</sup> According to the Australian Multicultural Council, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=66e0a503-537a-4237-8e73-11ac61697e9b&subld=511240>

<sup>32</sup> According to the Edmund Rice Centre, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=70175211-eb7c-4edc-bfef-cd930c103b60&subld=511199>

<sup>33</sup> According to Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Lim, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=fb28c49f-1481-4783-b9e5-23ce6073bfec&subld=511165>

<sup>34</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=d18d9e18-27eb-4b14-900d-ba58800e445a&subld=511511>

<sup>35</sup> Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism – Final Report, Chapter 5, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Strengthening\\_Multiculturalism/Multiculturalism/Final%20report/c05](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Strengthening_Multiculturalism/Multiculturalism/Final%20report/c05)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid





A standalone Department dedicated to the inter-related matters of immigration, citizenship, and multicultural affairs would help ensure appropriate prioritisation of these matters, support the development of policy specialists in the field, and may also assist in ensuring sufficient resourcing and funding.

For similar reasons, it would also be preferable for the relevant federal Minister responsible for immigration, citizenship and multicultural affairs be elevated to Cabinet, given the portfolio is directly relevant to the experiences of approximately half of Australia's population (who have at least one parent born overseas).<sup>38</sup>

### ***SBS recommendation 3***

*SBS supports the establishment of the Department of Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs.*

### ***(II.6) SBS supports establishment by the Multicultural Act, of a representative national body (or a Commission) within DoICMA—with SBS being an ongoing advisory member***

SBS also supports establishment by the Act of a representative national body (or a Commission) for Australia's multicultural matters, as a key part of the institutional arrangements.

The establishment of a standalone body, with adequate resourcing and clearly defined responsibilities, would have benefits across a range of relevant policy objectives. Not only would such a body provide a clear delineation of multicultural policy as a key priority area for Government, it would ensure increased visibility of this policy area and could provide a means for centralised and consultative distribution of funding.

Specifically, the body should also have a role of overseeing the Multicultural Framework and implementing recommendations of this Review, and providing reports—including those in relation to any targets—back to the Government and the Parliament. (As an example, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) provides implementation and reporting functions in the area of gender equality in Australian workplaces. (WGEA is part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.))

Measurement and reporting of the Framework's outcome ought to be evidence-based, this empirical work could be in conjunction with Australia's universities (for example RMIT, The University of Sydney, and Western Sydney University are active in the area of multiculturalism research).

Importantly, SBS recommends that the body be buttressed by an advisory committee, comprising relevant individuals and entities, including SBS.

As outlined above, SBS engages deeply with and understands Australia's multicultural communities it serves; therefore, SBS's almost five decades of expertise should be further leveraged in this way by having a key advisory role to the body—having a seat at the table—assisting the body in the design of both policy and service delivery initiatives, as the body implements the Multicultural Framework.

### ***SBS recommendation 4***

*Under new federal legislation, the Multicultural Act, SBS's role should be formally recognised as an ongoing member of an advisory committee of a national body established under the Act for Australia's multicultural matters.*

There are precedents for bodies being established in a similar manner, including:

<sup>38</sup> According to the 2021 Census, <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2021-census-nearly-half-australians-have-parent-born-overseas>





- the recently inaugurated Creative Australia<sup>39</sup>, established under *The Australia Council Amendment (Creative Australia) Act 2023*, which sets out high-level frameworks and funding, and works with other bodies within and relevant to it, including state-level creative bodies (or entities); and
- the former National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE)—established in the late 1990s to promote and coordinate the use of new information and communications technology to deliver Government policies, information, programs and services. Later, in April 2004, NOIE was superseded by the (then) newly established Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO).<sup>40</sup>

The immediately above example of NOIE demonstrated that a body not established under federal legislation was susceptible to being supplanted upon the decision of the Government of the day.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, a legislative basis would be a preferred option to ensure additional stability.

Below are examples (among others) of formal advisory committees established to work with their relevant bodies.

- SBS's statutory Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was established pursuant to section 50 of the SBS Act. Its duties include 'advising the [SBS] Board on community needs and opinions, including the needs and opinions of small or newly arrived ethnic groups, on matters relevant to the [SBS] Charter'<sup>42</sup>; and
- The Indigenous Advisory Council, which works with an executive agency, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) (both of which are part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet).

***(II.7) There is an opportunity for more investment in SBS to produce more content that reflects and celebrates the diversity of Australia, as part of the delivery of the National Cultural Policy***

Further investment in SBS content has significant benefits in driving economic outcomes in the content production sector, and in broadening the skill and representation base in a way only SBS can.

There is an opportunity for SBS, as the home of every Australian story, to be further funded through the National Cultural Policy (NCP), to deliver outcomes through screen content. Examples of this content include the production of more premium, Australian drama that reflects the diversity of Australia, or purposefully inclusive First Nations children's programming, in-turn promoting social cohesion and sense of belonging.

Not dissimilar to recent results from the University of Canberra's *Sense of Belonging among Multilingual Audiences* research<sup>43</sup> (outlined in [Appendix A](#)), when represented on screen, multicultural Australians build a sense of identity, cultural continuity, and wellbeing, as well as feeling an increased sense of belonging—a key component of social inclusion and cohesion. This is especially true when Australian audiences are increasingly consuming overseas content offered by international streaming services, making representation of Australian stories on our screens more important than ever.

Additional content produced by SBS reflects the stories of a truly multicultural nation and drives genuine inclusion, delivering value for taxpayers and multicultural policy outcomes, and, at the same time, supporting the Australian independent production industry, see [Appendix B](#) – SBS leads the way in diversity, equity and inclusion.

<sup>39</sup> <https://creative.gov.au/creative-australia/#>

<sup>40</sup> Information in relation to NOIE and AGIMO can be requested through the National Library of Australia, <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/739095>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.crn.com.au/news/noie-disbanded-14520>

<sup>42</sup> See section 50 of the SBS Act [http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/sbsa1991254/](http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/consol_act/sbsa1991254/)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/centres/nmrc/nmrc-news/sense-of-belonging>



This Australian content also has significant export value—financially, and societally in relation to Australia's cultural standing in the world. Moreover, the content can also be translated into multiple languages, in line with SBS's end-to-end multilingual content strategy.

***(II.8) There is also an opportunity for more investment for SBS to produce more First Nations children's content***

Similar to the immediately above argument in **II.7**, through the NCP, there is also a potential opportunity to increase investment in SBS—for it to produce more First Nations children's content.

The ACMA's recent report has demonstrated a steep decline in local children's content aired on Australian commercial free-to-air networks—95 hours in 2022, a significant drop of more than 500 hours, from 605 hours in 2019—before the implementation of the revised Children's Television Standards (ACCTS) framework.<sup>44</sup>

Further investment in SBS through NITV, could deliver additional First Nations children's content against this decline; support First Nations screen production industry and its practitioners; and help to preserve First Nations languages—as the content will be dubbed in multiple First Nations languages for increased accessibility.

***Example 4 – 'Little mob making a big impact' case study of the impact of multi-award-winning Little J & Big Cuz First Nations children's series***

- *Little J & Big Cuz* has been delivered in **13 Language versions** across **27 Language episodes**, including in Gija, Noongar, Torres Strait Creole, Palawa Kani, Warlpiri, Wiradjuri and Djambarrpuyngu languages.
- ***Little J & Big Cuz* has had high recognition amongst generations** across Wiradjuri Country and the Torres Strait Islands for their Language episodes in Wiradjuri and Torres Strait Creole (Yumplatok).
- *Little J & Big Cuz* has provided educational material for lesson plans and educators. **Parents and educators have used Little J and Big Cuz in their teaching and curriculum**, with parents using Language episodes in their cultural curriculum during home schooling.
- ***Little J & Big Cuz* connects young audiences with NITV**
  - 15 per cent of audiences are 17 and under, compared to 5 per cent for NITV
  - 25 per cent of audiences are 39 and under, compared to 12 per cent for NITV

Source: OzTam, RegTam, Yarn with the Audience 2022, First Nations Language research interviews 2022.

Similar to earlier discussions, increased representation of First Nations children on Australian screens would also contribute to a positive sense of identity, cultural continuity, sense of belonging, and ultimately social and emotional wellbeing, whilst simultaneously providing all Australian children an opportunity to engage in these First Nations stories. *Little J & Big Cuz* animation is an example of First Nations children's content watched by a wide range of audiences across Australia, significantly promoting social cohesion.

<sup>44</sup> <https://tvblackbox.com.au/page/2023/08/01/500-hour-drop-in-australian-childrens-tv-content-since-2019>



#### **SBS recommendation 5**

*The Multicultural Framework should recognise the value in further investment in SBS to achieve priority policy outcomes, for example the objectives of the National Cultural Policy could be met by increased funding to SBS for more production of multilingual Australian drama series or purposefully inclusive First Nations children's programming, in-turn promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging.*

### **III. CONCLUSION**

SBS welcomes the Government's commitment to reviewing the institutional, legislative, and policy settings which support a successful multicultural Australia. This represents a critical opportunity to consider the essential role of key existing institutions, such as SBS, and how that role can be reinforced, formalised and further leveraged to maximise the effectiveness and the achievement of policy objectives across governments.

As Australia is rapidly becoming more multicultural and diverse, SBS's role is more vital than ever. This submission, therefore, also argues for the formal recognition of SBS as part of the Multicultural Framework, and for SBS to have an expanded role in supporting agencies across all governments.

As a primary recommendation, SBS supports a Multicultural Act that formalises the role of SBS and seeks to establish a national body (or Commission) for Australia's multicultural matters—which should include SBS as one of its ongoing advisory members.

Australia's Multicultural Framework ought to also comprise an explicitly recognised cross-government framework for inter-agency collaboration that includes SBS, rather than relying on ad-hoc collaboration opportunities. SBS welcomes further collaboration, potentially through the abovementioned new collaboration framework, with governments and agencies across Australia, working together to deliver on key policy objectives and outcomes.

SBS's world-class efficiency and effectiveness, together with its well-established infrastructure and digital service delivery capability, means that such collaboration effected through SBS would deliver superior marginal utility, with benefits flowing directly back to Australian taxpayers.

The Multicultural Framework is a desirable mechanism to help increase investment in SBS, via its new role of supporting other agencies across all governments. For example, in supporting the National Cultural Policy, SBS could be further funded to produce more premium multilingual Australian drama series that uniquely reflect multicultural Australia. SBS recommends that a broad perspective be taken in assessing the ways in which SBS can help deliver policy priorities across government.

SBS also encourages settings that promote workforce diversity across all agencies and entities. SBS possesses first-hand experience and expertise in how workforce diversity assists organisations in better understanding, reflecting, and serving the increasingly diverse Australian population.



#### IV. APPENDIX A – SBS SERVICES HELP TO DELIVER ON POLICY PRIORITIES, AND WE CAN DO MORE

This appendix provides an overview of relevant SBS services which demonstrate the critical role of SBS in the multicultural policy arena. It also outlines how these services could be further leveraged across governments to assist in the delivery of policy priorities.

SBS services are available to almost 100 per cent of the Australian population, across seven broadcast television channels<sup>45</sup> (via terrestrial and satellite delivery), eight radio stations<sup>46</sup> (via FM and AM transmission, digital television, and digital radio), and online—through live content streaming, a diverse suite of websites, SBS apps including SBS On Demand, social media, and multiple third-party media platforms.

SBS content is subtitled into multiple languages<sup>47</sup>, furthermore, SBS also provides closed captioning for deaf and hard of hearing audiences, as well as audio description for those who are blind or have low vision. These services also help to further visualise or make audible (thus increase the understanding of) SBS's content and its context—for those whose most proficient languages are not English, including multicultural audiences as well as many adults and children with certain health conditions.

##### ***(IV.1) SBS engages deeply with and understands the increasingly diverse audiences it serves***

SBS continuously reviews, assesses, and refines its services to ensure they continue to meet the diverse and unique needs of multicultural and multilingual Australians. A key part of this is an ongoing commitment to engage deeply with and understand the needs of our audiences.

SBS could help in setting up Australia's most representative panel for many purposes. For example, in 2020, SBS conducted a large-scale *Multilingual Research* project involving more than five-thousand participants from diverse backgrounds, exploring in-depth how various cultural and language groups consume media in today's rapidly changing landscape. The project helps ensure that SBS always serves its audiences in accordance with their preferences.

More recently, the University of Canberra's *Sense of Belonging among Multilingual Audiences* research<sup>48</sup> revealed that representation in news, trust in news, and confidence to participate in society—are strong levers in building a sense of belonging among these diverse audiences.

SBS is very proud that *SBS News* is Australia's most trusted news brand<sup>49</sup>, providing accurate, balanced, impartial, and independent news and information with rigorous editorial processes and control in place, including the overarching and robust SBS Code of Practice<sup>50</sup>. SBS helps ensure that as many Australians as possible are informed, educated, and entertained by its high-quality content, regardless of their preferred language or cultural backgrounds; while, at the same time, SBS also helps to dispel mis- and disinformation.

##### ***Example 5 – SBS On Demand is accessible by a wide range of audiences***

[SBS On Demand](#) is the first Australian-based video-on-demand service to provide preferred-language interface and content. The service currently provides users with Arabic, Chinese (Simplified, and Traditional), English, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese interfaces, as well as dedicated collections of in-language content, and content subtitled in these (and Punjabi) languages.

<sup>45</sup> SBS, SBS VICELAND, SBS World Movies, SBS WorldWatch, NITV, and SBS Food

<sup>46</sup> SBS Radio 1, SBS Radio 2, SBS Radio 3, SBS Arabic 24, SBS Chill, SBS Pop Asia, SBS PopDesi, and SBS PopAraby

<sup>47</sup> Arabic, Chinese (Simplified, and Traditional), English, Hindi, Korean, Punjabi, and Vietnamese

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/centres/nmrc/nmrc-news/sense-of-belonging>

<sup>49</sup> The 2023 Digital News Report: Australia by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and the University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre found *SBS News* is the most trusted (equal with ABC News) and least distrusted news brand.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/sbs-code-of-practice>



***(IV.2) SBS can be further leveraged, as it is the only national media network providing essential services in more than 60 languages across platforms***

SBS welcomes further collaboration and new funding streams, potentially through a new collaboration framework proposed in this submission, with governments and their agencies across Australia, working together to deliver on policy objectives and outcomes through increased services and content.

For example, SBS can play an essential role in supporting federal government agencies and bodies in fulfilling the requirements of the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy (which seeks to ensure that Australian Government programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds)<sup>51</sup>, which is referenced in the Review's Terms of Reference. This can be effected through greater and more uniform utilisation of SBS's suite of commercial and content services, including content creation and distribution, research and insights, in-language production, accredited translation, diversity and inclusion training, and settlement and educational resources.

Every five years, after each Australian Census, SBS reassesses the languages which it serves (through SBS's [Language Services Review](#) process, **LSR**) and re-calibrates its services, including [SBS Audio](#)'s dedicated and cross-platform in-language news and information services, to reflect Australia's changing diversity.

The results of the latest LSR was announced on 1 March 2023, with SBS welcoming Bislama<sup>52</sup>, Malay<sup>53</sup>, Oromo<sup>54</sup>, Tetum<sup>55</sup> and Telugu<sup>56</sup> language services to its audio offering. These new languages reflect the evolving ethnolinguistic communities in Australia. Notably, the majority of these new additions represent cultures from the Indo-Pacific region. This also demonstrates that SBS's work is in line with the Government's recent policy efforts—to enhance Australia's engagement with countries in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/access-and-equity>

<sup>52</sup> Used in Vanuatu

<sup>53</sup> Used in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia

<sup>54</sup> Used in Ethiopia and large parts of East Africa

<sup>55</sup> Used in Timor-Leste and West Timor

<sup>56</sup> Used in India

<sup>57</sup> The Prime Minister Anthony Albanese recently addressed of the ASEAN Indo-Pacific forum on 6 September 2023 in Jakarta Indonesia. His speech included the following.

'The [Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040] strategy we outline today reflects an enduring truth: this is where Australia's economic destiny lies. And this is where our shared prosperity can be built. This is where, working together, the peace, stability and security of this region – and the Indo-Pacific – can be assured'.



#### ***(IV.3) SBS Media's comprehensive suite of services can assist in communications with Australia's diverse communities***

SBS Media can help government agencies or entities reach further into multilingual/multicultural communities with their messages or campaigns, including through multi-platform SBS advertising packages. For more information, see [sbsmedia.com.au](https://sbsmedia.com.au).

SBS Media is also raising awareness of the benefits of greater investment by agencies and brands in Australia's Indigenous media platforms with [Beyond 3%](#), an initiative designed to inspire, engage and encourage a long-term shift in the advertising sector.

SBS In Language services help governments and organisations reach communities in their preferred languages. As a federal government approved service provider, SBS In Language provides high quality NAATI-certified translation services for online, print, radio and video—with in-house capabilities for typesetting, subtitling, voice overs, re-narration, and full-scale audio-visual production that can meet short notices and tight timelines. SBS Cultural Connect service also provides advice and expertise in crafting culturally appropriate content as part of SBS's comprehensive service offerings. For more information, please visit [sbs.com.au/inlanguage](https://sbs.com.au/inlanguage) and [sbsmedia.com.au/cultural-connect](https://sbsmedia.com.au/cultural-connect).

#### ***(IV.4) The SBS Inclusion training program can support government and other entities by fostering cultural awareness and understanding***

The SBS Inclusion online training module can assist government and relevant organisations to navigate and maximise the benefits of cultural diversity by exploring topics including cross-cultural communication, addressing stereotypes and unconscious bias. The service is currently utilised by many entities including government entities.

The program can help create awareness of cultural and other diversity topics—including those relevant to First Nations peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, gender, disability, culture and age. These are relevant to all who work with Australia's multicultural communities or relevant programs.

The SBS [Cultural Atlas](#) was created as a supporting resource to the training program, providing a wealth of information for users to gain a broad understanding of the norms and behaviour of people in Australia from diverse cultures.

For further information, please visit [inclusion-program.com.au](https://inclusion-program.com.au) and [culturalatlas.sbs.com.au](https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au).

#### ***(IV.5) Examples of SBS's initiatives on content, which can be leveraged across government***

- **2023 Referendum coverage**—comprehensively in all SBS languages, leading up to the 14 October Referendum—SBS teams are breaking down information through video, article and podcast explainers including in Auslan, available via the [SBS Voice Referendum portal](#) (built after the highly successful [SBS Multilingual coronavirus portal](#)<sup>58</sup>), and the [SBS On Demand Voice Referendum hub](#). Among the content available is [The Point's Miss Information](#) quizzing well-known political figures.
- **[Uluru Statement from the Heart in Your Language](#)** – this collection re-expresses the statement in over 80 languages, including more than 20 Aboriginal languages from communities in the Northern Territory and north Western Australia, making it accessible to all Australians.
- **[Australia Explained](#)** is SBS's award-winning multiplatform settlement guide, supporting new arrivals navigating life in Australia. Weekly articles, podcasts and videos in more than 30 languages offer practical information and resources on employment, housing, health, education, emergency essentials and more, including explainers on the Referendum.

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<sup>58</sup> Which has seen more than 11 million unique visitors throughout the COVID-19 crisis),





- **[Mind Your Health](#)** – celebrating its one-year anniversary, this content portal curates content that informs and educates audiences about their health, mental health and wellbeing in the audiences' preferred languages with a specific section on First Nations health and wellness. *Mind Your Health* also provides information on professional referral services (many of which are available in-language).
- **[SBS News](#)** – SBS's cross-platform news brand most trusted<sup>59</sup> by Australians, offers information and reports from our correspondents located in all Australian states and major territories including our in-house produced **SBS عربي News** and **SBS 中文 News** live television and online news bulletins in Arabic and Mandarin languages. These bulletins have high awareness among their respective language communities<sup>60</sup>, and are also subsequently subtitled into English for SBS On Demand.
- ***SBS WorldWatch*** provides in-language news bulletins from our international correspondents and more than 45 major international media organisations across the world, on television and SBS On Demand.
- SBS current affairs programs are also available on television and online, including
  - ***Insight*** which covers the issues facing Australia through the perspective of everyday Australians who share their extraordinary experiences and different viewpoints in a respectful way; and
  - ***Dateline*** which provides compelling in-depth international stories produced by Australian crews which ensures the context is relevant for an Australian audience.

Both of these popular programs are subtitled into Simplified Chinese and Arabic, the most prevalently used languages in Australia other than English.<sup>61</sup>

- **[SBS Learn English](#)**, and **[SBS News in Easy English](#)** podcasts not only assist English language learners, children, and those with health conditions—but also provides context of the Australian life in an easy-to-understand manner, anytime and anywhere. They include the [Australian Citizenship series](#) created in 2023 by the *SBS Learn English* service, to assist those who are taking their Australian Citizenship test.

#### ***(IV.6) SBS Learn welcomes further collaboration to support multicultural Australians***

SBS Learn<sup>62</sup> is an educational website providing teaching resources linked to SBS documentaries, drama series, children's programs, news and current affairs and other SBS network productions. These resources are professionally developed in accordance with the Australian Curriculum. SBS Learn resources are often written by professional educators who have particular subject matter expertise and/or lived experience relevant to the topic.

There is a potential for SBS Learn to further support formal and informal education of Australia's multicultural communities, including in relation to digital literacy.<sup>63</sup> SBS Learn resources could also be embedded in state or territory syllabuses, and shared as far as possible via systems that teachers frequently engage with. SBS Learn materials are also available in multiple languages including Wiradjuri, Arabic, Mandarin, Hindi, and Gujarati. Through SBS Learn, SBS is a partner of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence – Centre for the Digital Child<sup>64</sup>, and participates in knowledge-sharing forums and other activities via this unique study of young

<sup>59</sup> Reuters and University of Canberra [Digital News Report 2023 Australia](#); Ipsos Iris [news rankings](#) 2023.

<sup>60</sup> According to SBS In-language News Research 2022, 86 per cent of Arabic language users are aware of the *SBS عربي News* bulletins; while 74 per cent of Mandarin language users are aware of the *SBS 中文 News* bulletins.

<sup>61</sup> According to the 2021 Australian Census <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>  
<sup>62</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/Learn>

<sup>63</sup> The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission proposed a role for SBS in digital literacy initiatives in the *Digital Platforms Inquiry – Final Report*, page 21, published in July 2019 and available at <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Digital%20platforms%20inquiry%20-%20final%20report.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.digitalchild.org.au/>



people and the digital world. SBS Learn is also a member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA)<sup>65</sup>, whose members collate and cross-promote projects to enhance media literacy for all ages.

Further opportunities include but are not limited to providing, in the communities' preferred languages, critical teacher resources and student worksheets as well as other educational resources that may help address issues facing multicultural communities. For example, to coincide with SBS's drama *Dead Lucky*, SBS Learn produced resources in a number of languages for international students about their rights, protections and support systems in Australia. SBS Learn recently published its fifth resource celebrating National NAIDOC Week 2023, including resources supporting this year's theme *For Our Elders* available in Arabic, English, and Simplified Chinese.

From a total potential audience of just over 300,000 teachers in Australia, SBS Learn has approximately 250,000 website page views per annum and approximately 115,000 unique browsers.

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<sup>65</sup> <https://medialiteracy.org.au/>



## V. APPENDIX B – SBS LEADS THE WAY IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

SBS's own workforce diversity helps it to much better understand, reflect, and serve its increasingly diverse audience—the Australian population at large. SBS, therefore, encourages settings that promote workforce diversity across all other agencies and entities. (SBS also offers the SBS Inclusion training module to help foster this, see **IV.4** above.)

Moreover, SBS's industry-leading initiatives drive and support the advancement of diverse, multicultural, and First Nations practitioners across the sector in which SBS operates; and set out diversity, equity and inclusion targets—externally for its screen production partners, and within SBS itself as an organisation.

SBS is proud to have multiple [programs and initiatives](#) through which it directly supports the careers of diverse practitioners in the media and production sectors. For example, SBS's *Talent Escalator*<sup>66</sup> has created more than 30 career development opportunities for emerging and mid-level screen practitioners from backgrounds currently underrepresented within the Australian screen industry, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In February 2022, further to its internal initiatives and targets, SBS launched the [SBS Commissioning Equity & Inclusion Guidelines](#) which reflect SBS's unique place in the media landscape as Australia's multicultural and Indigenous broadcaster. They recognise our role in championing ongoing industry change—to be more representative and inclusive of our audiences, which also makes for entertaining, compelling and inspiring storytelling that connects with all Australians including multicultural Australians and First Nations peoples.

At the same time, SBS also introduced Cultural Safety Plans—an industry first measure to encourage our production partners to consider their frameworks to create inclusive environments, and work collaboratively with relevant communities to ensure everyone is respected and valued for their contributions. Lived experience and meaningful community collaboration are essential to achieve authentic and respectful portrayal. For certain programs which focus on under-represented communities, production companies must outline their plan to ensure cultural safety.

SBS measures and tracks diversity on all commissioned and internal productions, via up to three Equity and Inclusion contractual deliverables, including industry diversity measurement tool, [The Everyone Project](#), Cultural Safety Plans, and Equity, and Inclusion reports.

SBS is also the founding member of, and provider of Co-Chairs (from 2021 to 2025) for, the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (**SDIN**)<sup>67</sup> which aims to increase diversity in front of and behind the camera. The ongoing initiative of the SDIN—the abovementioned [The Everyone Project](#)—is an industry-wide tool to quantitatively measure and encourage diversity among the production industry's practitioners.

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<sup>66</sup> An initiative partnership with Film Victoria, Create NSW, Screen Queensland, Screen Territory, ScreenWest, South Australian Film Corporation, and the Tasmanian Government (through Screen Tasmania).

<sup>67</sup> Further details can be found on the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network's website <https://www.sdin.com.au/>