

3

Shaping the Discourse of Arts in a Multicultural Australia

Since the 1970s, the discourse of Australia's multicultural arts policies has been shaped through interactions of government, government agencies (principally the Australia Council), arts bureaucrats, artists and cultural practitioners. This discourse has generated several Arts in a Multicultural Australia (AMA) policies and bursts of intense productive activity. However, the history of positioning non-English speaking background (NESB) artists and multicultural arts content within the Australia Council has been characterised by frictions that are often generated by issues around 'trust' that can limit any traction. This characterisation suggests that there are limits to multicultural arts policies, and questions whether the processes and debates within the Australia Council are able 'to go well beyond the instrumental' (Blonski 1992, 3). This chapter discusses barriers to policy effectiveness and locates the last two AMA policies of 2000 and 2006 within those histories of productive moments and the longer embattled and fractured narratives that characterise the arts in a multicultural Australia.

Policies and Their Problems

The aims of government policy are to responsibly address issues in their spheres of influence by articulating problems through research and agenda-setting, and offering solutions with key players and adequate

resources (Rowe et al. 2016, 12). As a statutory agency of the Australian Government, the Australia Council is expected to develop arts-focused policies that relate to priorities set by the government. The need for a multicultural arts agenda is evident in the low levels of grant allocations to, and employment of, NESB artists, their lack of representation in the arts, and their increasing perception that their ethnicity can impact negatively on their arts careers. That these issues persist despite several decades of multicultural arts policies suggests that they may not be 'solvable' at the policy level alone and/or that policy implementation to date has been flawed. The leadership characteristics that contribute to effective development and implementation of the multicultural arts agenda can be found in cross-cultural competencies, relational and transactional leadership styles, and the capacity to activate networks.

Rittel and Webber's (1973, 155) typology of problems differentiates between those that are 'tame' (solvable) and those that are 'wicked' (intractable). A tame problem is complicated but can be addressed by research, strategy and 'established techniques and processes' and solved by management responses (Grint 2005, 9). In contrast, a 'wicked' problem is complex, 'novel, embod[ies] no obvious resolution point ... depend[s] on the viewpoint of the stakeholder and is embedded in another similar problem' (Grint 2005, 9). Wicked problems are often 'ingrained' social problems, 'ill-defined' by government as a consequence of relying upon 'elusive political judgement' and considered unsolvable: 'at best they are only re-solved—over and over again' (Rittel and Webber 1973, 160). The paradox between these types of problems is that multiculturalism is often perceived as a managerial approach to diverse populations when perhaps a wider consideration applies.

According to Rittel and Webber (1973, 155), wicked problems appeared after the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century because of the increase in the diversity of populations, the causes of their mobility and a wider range of group allegiances. While the arts are not viewed as an 'ingrained' social 'problem', the concept could apply when issues of the arts in a multicultural Australia are considered:

Wicked problems often crop up when organisations have to face constant change or unprecedented challenges. They occur in a social context; the greater the disagreement among stakeholders, the more wicked the problem. In fact, it's the social *complexity of wicked problems as much as their technical difficulties that make*

them tough to manage ... confusion, discord, and lack of progress are tell-tale signs that an issue might be wicked. (Camillus 2008, 4, emphasis added)

Socially complex multicultural arts policy has received technical attention, which can be measured quantitatively, and is usually limited to the distribution of funds. However, from a purely creative perspective, the objectives of art are measured qualitatively. This is a challenge for a government arts agency, as success is always considered from a perspective other than the creative outcomes used by artists (Macdonnell 1992).

The other challenge facing the arts is that Australia currently has no national cultural policy. The two policies that had been developed and published were short-lived due to changes of government. *Creative Nation*, developed under Prime Minister Paul Keating in 1994, promoted a broad approach to culture that included film, media, libraries and heritage. Framed by this creative pluralism, the policy recognised Indigenous and migrant cultures as central in shaping Australia's domestic and exported identity. Twenty years later, *Creative Australia* muted this recognition:

Creative Australia contains very limited reference to multicultural arts, and outlines no policies explicitly directed at expanding the participation of migrant or ethnic communities in the nation's arts and cultural sectors. Instead, cultural difference in the arts is referenced obliquely within a broader category of 'diversity'. (Khan et al. 2013, 1)

The use of 'diversity' as a catch-all phrase reinforces political ambivalence about the need to support multicultural arts practice and signals a retreat from particular consideration for it. The history of the arts in a multicultural Australia has a pattern of advocacy, progress, retreat and repeat.

Traversing the History of AMA

Those wanting to encourage arts practices that engage with Australia's multicultural society seek articulate and influential leadership. The Australia Council has, at times, expressed fierce internal resistance to the idea that migrants, ethnics or NESB artists (depending on the terms of the day) need 'special treatment' (Blonski 1992; Hawkins 1993; Bowen 1997; Sammers 1999). The history of AMA policies appears as either

an abrasive or a lubricated continuum, often generated by the associated absence or presence of 'trust'. This ebb and flow of trust can lead to frictions in various areas: for example, in the engagement with federal government policies on multiculturalism; in the levels of arts funding by government; among the various and dynamic migrant constituencies; in the different ways in which complex identities can be creatively presented; in producing arts organisations' knowledge about the range of multicultural arts practices; and in the creative perceptions of, and by, NESB artists.

Cultural researchers (Blonski 1992, 1994; Hawkins 1993; Rowse 1985; Gunew and Rizvi 1994) and government sources (Gardiner-Garden 1994) have documented the historical signposts of AMA up to the mid-1990s. Blonski's chronology elucidates the development of 'multicultural arts' policy and is prefaced with an account of its historical value. Blonski (1992, 3, emphasis added) interprets these hard-won and -lost debates and negotiations as:

A far more complex and difficult process of redefining culture within the bureaucratic context of at least one cultural agency in terms of interconnectedness rather than exclusion or oppositions. This suggests that the administrative processes and the debates within Council have to go *well beyond the instrumental*.

Ideally, the shifts in attitude required of the Australia Council could be more than just 'grafted on' programs that have the potential to go 'beyond the instrumental' (Blonski 1992, 3). Arguably, there is a need for transformational and relational leadership styles. To go beyond quantitative statistical 'access and equity' monitoring requires systematic and systemic change to understand the broader qualitative effect of multicultural artistic production and its subsequent potential to alter Australia's cultural landscape.

It is difficult to assess any broad impacts of AMA policy initiatives across and beyond the arts. The Australia Council has been criticised for endorsing policy programs that are neither measurable nor accountable in terms of outcomes (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 3). One way to identify effectiveness may be to analyse whether the AMA's policy outcomes have gone 'beyond the instrumental' to generate longer-term change across the arts sector. The following discussion of the intentions, results and issues of the 2000 and 2006 AMA policies identifies productive moments within a set of fractured narratives, locating the multicultural arts discourse

within the broader project of ‘redefining the culture’ (Gunew 1994, 1). Issues of leadership in navigating this complex context are paramount and generally tend to rely on charismatic approaches; however, the capacity for relational leadership skills may be seen to produce a durational effect that can slide over into the next phase of policy or strategy development.

The AMA Context

The role of the Australia Council is to support and fund contemporary art practices in Australia, including multicultural arts. This remit highlights the paradox whereby the vast majority of funds and, subsequently, institutional reverence are directed towards major performing arts companies that produce and present what are frequently termed ‘heritage’ arts (Blonski 1994; Eltham 2015; Pledger 2017). There is still a view that multicultural arts practices are lacking in contemporaneity because they are pigeonholed within community arts and cultural development (CACD) (Khan et al. 2017, 19). The view that CACD is not contemporary may stem from its association with ‘cultural maintenance’ and its claims of producing ‘social cohesion’, suggesting that the role of community arts is to lubricate and cohere, rather than be shaped by equally critical sparks of creativity.

The Australia Council struggles to demonstrate its claims regarding the centrality of difference in its funding decisions for multicultural arts organisations (see Table 4). Ahmed (2012, 29) describes this experience as the ‘gap between symbolic commitments to diversity and the experience of those who embody diversity’. The symbolic commitments tend to be limited to statements on webpages or paragraphs in annual reports. It is the NESB artist who experiences the gap in resources. Institutional staff can also embody diversity as ‘diversity workers’ (Ahmed 2012, 25). The unsettling nature of doing ‘diversity work’, either within or upon an institution, requires enormous persistence—particularly in uncovering those habits that are ‘not named or made explicit’ (Ahmed 2012, 25). The institution is irritated by the necessity to unpick and unpack the habituated status quo against diversity because, while ‘habits save trouble, diversity work creates trouble’ (Ahmed 2012, 27). This troublemaking is noticeable when considering multicultural arts policies and practices. Deciding what kind of trouble to make and how to make it forms the *modus operandi* for those developing multicultural arts policy. Most

people doing ‘diversity work’, therefore, have an almost impossible task: to decipher the hidden intricacies of the institutional machinations. These can be likened to a ‘black box’ phenomena, whereby habitual processes are so ingrained they occur with limited awareness from the ‘actor’ (Latour 1987). The ‘diversity worker’ must be able to identify those habits that inhibit institutional diversity and find leaders who will attempt to address them through the policy statements and initiatives that the institution agrees to adopt.

The Origins and Development of Multicultural Arts Policy, 1973–99

Historical accounts of the first few decades of the development of federal cultural policy in Australia (Rowse 1985; Macdonnell 1992; Johanson and Rentschler 2002; Craik 2007) refer to ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ arts but, other than Blonski (1992, 1994) and Hawkins (1993), rarely examine multicultural arts policies in any depth. Appendix B outlines a chronology of multicultural arts policy at the Australia Council until the present time. Craik (2007) proposes a timeline that captures the phases of Australian cultural policy development:

- pre-1900 settler culture emphasising nostalgia and a new beginning
- 1900–39 state cultural entrepreneurship
- 1940–54 the era of national cultural organisations
- 1955–67 organisational patronage (government funded specialist bodies)
- 1967–74 policies of growth and facilitation
- 1975–90 access and equity and community cultural development
- 1991–95 diversity, excellence, cultural policy and cultural industries
- 1996–[2007] the review cycle and a return to neo-patronage.

Craik identifies multicultural arts content appearing as part of the developing national cultural narrative from 1975 onwards. It is worth noting the exceptions to this, such as the establishment of the Musica Viva national chamber music organisation by Romanian/Austrian immigrant Richard Goldner in 1945 (Musica Viva 2018). As a cultured migrant who generated creative experiences in his new post-WWII home, Goldner represents the ‘potential’ rather than the ‘problem’ version of the migrant and the arts.

Ethnic ‘communities’ are positioned as a problem from the naissance of the Australia Council. The first executive officer, Jean Battersby, appointed in 1973, acknowledged the existence of, what was then termed, ‘ethnic minorities’ and, in step with the times, their right to uphold their ‘traditions’. Their place was firmly ‘other’. According to Rowse (1985, 52), Battersby saw ethnic minorities as a barrier to expanding connections to the arts alongside distance, complex bureaucracies and ‘indifferent attitudes to the arts’. He argues that, for Battersby:

Ethnic difference appears as part of a list of obstacles to be dealt with in the Arts’ reach out to the community. The term ‘community’ in her book embraces a great variety of policy issues. Collapsing ‘difference’ into ‘distance’ helped to preserve this misunderstanding. (Rowse 1985, 52–53)

These early dilemmas of where and how best to deal with ‘ethnic minorities’ reinforces their characterisation primarily as a ‘problem’, as opposed to a creative ‘potential’ within the newly formed federal arts agency (Blonski 1992, 3). The early and predominant structure of the Australia Council consisted of a governing board mostly made up of chairs from each of the artform boards that, in turn, were made up of expert peers. All members were appointed by government. Ethnic or multicultural arts did not have a separate section or board, but did have an advisory committee made up of NESB members usually from each of those artform boards.

Blonski (1994), in her aptly titled essay ‘Persistent Encounters: The Australia Council and Multiculturalism’, identified three durational phases in the development and retraction of the arts in a multicultural Australia between 1973 and 1994. The first phase (1973–82) identified ethnic artists through extensive fieldwork by an ethnic arts officer. Council dealt with the need for access through the establishment of a community arts committee as part of its structure (Hawkins 1993). However, it was widely considered, even by critics, that the small amount of funding allocated to community arts was insufficient. In 1975 community arts included some version of an ‘ethnic arts’ dialogue within its purview (Blonski 1992, 15). Despite persistent internal advocacy by Community Arts Director Rosalie Bower, and the brief appointments of an Ethnic Arts Committee and a Multicultural Arts Committee, there was no subsequent development of policy because it was ‘regarded as a low priority’ (Blonski 1994, 199). In 1978 the report commissioned by the federal government, *Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants* (also known as the Galbally

Report), recommended that the Australia Council initiate more active engagement with, and support for, ethnic communities and artists. The evaluation in 1982 by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs was highly critical of the Australia Council, which was subsequently goaded into action (Blonski 1994, 200).

The second phase (1982–86) saw a rapid change in multicultural arts policy. A council-wide policy resulted in major structural reform with dedicated staff to oversee the suite of changes. The internal changes specified lines of reporting and monitoring, use of incentive funds to be matched by artform budgets, and staff awareness of, and research into, multicultural arts policy development. Communication strategies included definitions of multicultural projects and ethnic artists, promotional publications and artist conferences. The results were increased staff confidence, clarity of roles and remits, increased recognition across all artforms for multicultural artists and a tripling of funding towards multicultural arts, even though it was a small fraction (3.1 per cent) of the Australia Council's annual expenditure (Blonski 1994, 201).

The third phase (1987–89) was one of hiatus and pushback by internal powerbrokers regarding multicultural arts. This was a period in which heated debate 'raged' about the Australia Council's grant funding criteria of 'professionalism, excellence and creativity'. The artform boards resisted calls to develop multicultural arts projects and advice on how to allocate funds, and instead successfully argued that council should abandon their centralised multicultural incentive funds. A recommendation from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs that the Australia Council increase its efforts to support multicultural arts did not occur due to funding cuts and a management review. However, attention to multicultural arts continued, and the term 'Arts for a Multicultural Australia' was first adopted at the end of 1989. This new branding was based on the view that the term 'multicultural arts was problematic and even meaningless' (Blonski 1994, 201–02), since 'multicultural arts' could refer to all arts practices, and not all NESB artists wished to be viewed as 'multicultural'.

A fourth phase can be distinguished between 1990 and 1996. This phase is characterised by rebranding, deeper institutional embedding and demonstrated relational leadership through closer working relationships with the states' arts agencies (Blonski 1994, 202). The AMA 1993–96

policy is distinguished by a period of national research and report writing, conferencing and the publication of what remains a definitive text, *Culture, Difference and the Arts* (Gunew and Rizvi 1994).

Blonski's retelling identifies lengthy periods of internal and external friction across many levels within the Australia Council, beginning with disagreements in the 1970s when each artform board was expected to specify their role in assisting migrant artists. Historically, these periods of friction have led to short productive phases of traction and change. Those phases have been characterised by trusting working relationships between program managers, Australia Council Multicultural Advisory Committee (ACMAC) chairs and the directors of either the community arts section or policy and planning section, depending on the location of the AMA policy work in the organisation. The supportive influence of the council chair and the CEO are essential. Key productive moments are associated with articulate and politically astute ACMAC leadership, members and staff who recognise the importance of artist involvement, and critical debate about multicultural issues within the arts.

The 1970–90s have been characterised by the Australia Council as decades of steady, increased inclusion, and there is little to suggest in the council's annual reports that this inclusion was a result of any external pressure. However, it is more realistic to portray these decades as a series of frictions caused, in part, by a lack of mutual trust. Mutual trust is multi-directional and needs to be reciprocated (Weltecke 2008). Therefore, trust needs to be evident between the council and the 'ethnic', 'migrant', 'multicultural' or NESB artist. When trust is evident between these parties, the increase in adequate traction can improve the multicultural arts milieu because a supportive environment should lead to more creative production.

Persistent Frictions

From the outset, a consistent friction was demonstrated by the ongoing structural issue as to whether 'ethnic arts' should reside solely in community arts (itself a cause of friction) or be integrated throughout the artform sections, and whether there should be special programs of support. The Australia Council has been described as a 'territory marked by competing cultural discourses' (Blonski 1992, 3) generated in debates between artform silos and institutional priorities, elite practice and community engagement, and the general public's and politician's awareness of the arts. This structural quandary underlined a lack of trust in the art produced

by the so-called ethnic artist. Providing access was often interpreted as a barrier to achieving excellence because it opened the way for amateur artists to have access to limited resources. The 'ethnic artist' role had been designated as upholding traditional arts and crafts, which in turn raised questions about their capacity to be artists with contemporary practices (Hawkins 1993, 120). These early days saw tensions established around issues of trust and leadership of ethnic arts both in terms of eligible creative endeavours and questionable aesthetic assumptions on the part of the institution.

The location of multicultural arts policy work within the Australia Council was also a cause for friction. Throughout the decades between 1975 and 1999, responsibility for AMA shifted back and forth between the community arts section and the more centralised policy section (when such a section existed). Historically, both sections had an agreed understanding of debates leading to policies for inclusion (Hawkins 1993, 87–88). When AMA was located in the Community Arts Board—or the Community Cultural Development Unit as it was variously known—it had strong advocacy at the council table through the chair, but limited influence across the entirety of the council. When AMA was positioned centrally within the strategy and policy division, it had greater leverage through access to the council chair and as a central area of internal structural influence. Throughout the 1990s, a semblance of stable structural positioning had been achieved for AMA through the role being positioned in the strategy section, even though this was seen by some as a rupture from the 'supportive environment of community arts' (Sammers 1999).

The annual reports of most government institutions present public narratives of 'achievements' without airing internal debates. Former Australia Council chair Hilary McPhee (1995) provided this account:

By 1982 a Multicultural Policy was adopted, a fund set up and the position Multicultural Arts Officer created. In 1988–9 this overall expenditure on multicultural arts was 3.7% of the Council Budget. In 1993–4 it was 11.6% and has all the hallmarks of being one of the most successful policy initiatives implemented by the Australia Council.

The Australia Council's policies incorporated the government's approach of disseminating multilingual communications about their programs, appointing NESB assessors and advisers as part of the institutional

workings and presenting staff awareness programs (Hawkins 1993, 87). Appointing NESB peer assessors and staff champions remains the main strategy of the Australia Council today. Internal statistics demonstrate their commitment towards institutional inclusion. The 1990s saw first (NESB1) and second (NESB2) generation NESB artists at levels of 16–18 per cent as grant assessors and 26–29 per cent of staff. Grants approved to artists and communities appear to have settled at the earlier target, which saw an increase from 3 per cent in 1986 to ‘a peak of 14 per cent in the mid-90s’ and 8–9 per cent in 1999 (Sammers 1999). However, these steps of progress were not adequate for multicultural arts to become ‘embedded’ across institutional practices. Significant downward trends occur in times of institutional stress, usually caused by reduced funding appropriations from government. When government appropriation is reduced, multicultural arts falls off the agenda (Blonski 1994).

AMA 1993 articulated the results of crucial debates about who determines ‘excellence’ and how best to encourage greater access to services and deliver equity of resources. It challenged prevalent notions by rejecting ‘narrow definitions of excellence, culture and artistic practice’ (Australia Council 1993, 3). This statement was made prior to the release of *Culture Difference and the Arts* (Gunew and Rizvi 1994) and can be seen as a reflection of the emphatic concern of consecutive ACMAC chairs Sneja Gunew and Fazal Rizvi. Gunew was one of the authors of *Access to Excellence: A Review of Issues Affecting Artists from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds* (Papastergiadis, Gunew and Blonski 1994). AMA 1993 considered issues such as the impact on mainstream arts companies, communication, access and equity, and highlighted the relationship between Indigenous and NESB artists (Australia Council 1993, 2). Discourses about ‘excellence’ and the creative potential arising from collaborations between Indigenous and NESB artists continued into the 2000 and 2006 AMA policies.

The 1993 policy also articulated the scope of characteristics of the NESB artist and what constitutes a multicultural arts project. These definitions are reproduced here in full, as they remain the most current definitions and attest to the array of options that could attract funds to art projects:

- by first generation artists—Australian artists born in a non-English speaking country and whose first language is not English;
- by second generation artists—Australian artists born in Australia of overseas-born parents from a non-English speaking background;

- that involve a majority of immigrant artists of non-English speaking background or second-generation artists;
- are ethno-specific arts projects of an ethno-specific group;
- are conducted by a multicultural arts organisation;
- are from non-arts ethnic or multicultural organisations whose primary objective is specific work on the multicultural nature of Australian society; and
- whose main objective is to promote cross-cultural awareness;
- target ethno-specific communities in general;
- whose content relates to the multicultural nature of Australia and where the art production involves a majority of artists or groups of non-English speaking background;
- that explore and enhance cultural links between Australia and other countries or regions, in particular the Asia-Pacific region. (Australia Council 1993, 7–8)

Another persistent issue has been the capacity to evaluate policy. Former director of the community arts section Christine Sammers (1999) criticised the lack of mechanisms to ‘coerce’ decision-makers as well as the accompanying lack of evaluation and accountability:

There is therefore little knowledge of the impacts of programs, targets, peer representation and other mechanisms on NESB artists employed, changing content of artworks audience access or other key objectives.

This lack of knowledge highlights debates over what works as a multicultural arts strategy and how best to make improvements. It also explains the sense of *deja vu* (Grint 2005, 15) experienced by so many NESB artists and cultural practitioners.

AMA 2000

The most recent Australia Council multicultural policies are those of 2000 (Australia Council 2000) and 2006 (Australia Council 2006a). AMA 2000 brought together tradition and innovation and profiled individual artists’ practices as well as their roles in the community. By taking this focus, the policy attempted to alter perceptions of multicultural artists as only being relevant in a community setting with its attendant low status in the arts world.

AMA 2000 coincided with Prime Minister John Howard's tenure between 1996 and 2007. Howard was known for his lack of investment in multicultural issues, epitomised by his lack of use of the 'm' word of 'multiculturalism'. The arts portfolio received limited attention under Senator Richard Alston; however, any budget cuts to the arts were foreshadowed and were in alignment with most other portfolios. Philip Ruddock was the minister for immigration and multicultural affairs between 1996 and 2003, during which time he oversaw the development of offshore refugee detention centres and had limited engagement with the cultural side of his portfolio. This period also saw the rise of Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party, built on a platform that claimed that Australians feared and mistrusted Asians (Marr 2017).

Despite this federal government's retreat from the earlier pluralist version of multiculturalism, this was nevertheless an extremely active period for AMA policy. Actor Lex Marinos completed his term as deputy chair of the Australia Council and chair of the Community Cultural Development Board (CCDB) and ACMAC, which, in 1998, led to the newly elected Coalition Government's appointment of television scriptwriter Deborah Klika as chair of CCDB; she subsequently also chaired ACMAC and Youth Arts.

The Structural Prominence of ACMAC

For over a decade since its establishment in 1989, the role and composition of ACMAC had been stable. The committee's role was to develop and monitor the implementation of the AMA policy:

To make recommendations to Council on any issue which may affect the full expression of cultural diversity in the work of the Australia Council. This long-standing Advisory Committee is made up of members from each artform Board as well as three members appointed by Council who are external to the workings of Council. The Chair of the Committee is a Council member. (Australia Council 2002, 12)

Between 1998 and 2002, ACMAC consisted of 25 retiring and newly appointed members, which demonstrates the awareness of NESB artists by both the federal government (which appointed them to artform boards) and the Australia Council (which invited them onto ACMAC). It is also a salient reminder that the source of influence and leadership of ACMAC was due to its composition and focus, whereby peers from each artform

section came together to discuss AMA policy issues, both broadly and in reference to their areas of expertise. ACMAC minutes from 1999 record the intention to, in their words, ‘re-vision’ the AMA policy to give it a more strategic focus, and to improve the relationship with NESB artists, having identified the ‘strong need to re-establish trust with the sector and Council leadership on AMA’ (ACMAC n.d.-a).

In 1999 the development phase of AMA 2000 saw NESB artists being asked what their expectations were from an AMA policy. There had been some fragmentation of the sector caused by the CCDB’s removal of funding for multicultural arts officer positions in local councils and the NSW multicultural arts organisation, Multicultural Arts Alliance, in 1998. This had resulted in a sharp decline in NESB artists’ level of trust in the Australia Council’s interest and ability to include them as part of the arts in Australia (Positive Solutions n.d.). Policy development, therefore, occurred through a range of communication channels including national consultation in the form of surveys, forums and face-to-face interviews with artists and cultural practitioners engaged in multicultural activities across a range of artforms.

Arts consulting firm Positive Solutions was engaged in 1999 to better understand the professional development needs of NESB artists. The responses included the view that the development of the arts in a multicultural Australia should be taken up widely across all arts sectors (Positive Solutions n.d., 17). Issues about leadership were also expressed, ranging from state government agencies that saw multicultural arts as ‘too disparate’, to individual artists who did not agree that there was a ‘multicultural arts sector’ (Positive Solutions n.d., 27). Several issues resonated with NESB artists who articulated the need for networking opportunities along with the recognition of prior experience and broader arts participation:

I want professional development opportunities and am pretty clear about what I want and need. I would like it very much if someone took it upon themselves to provide opportunities which are not bogged down in ‘community arts’ models or targeting ‘beginners’.
(quoted in Positive Solutions n.d., 17)

Such comments highlight NESB artists’ sense of disenfranchisement and reflect the lack of inclusion and recognition of their abilities. They also show that NESB artists expect professional development opportunities

that take into account the complexities and changes in their working environment, which may otherwise be overlooked by large bodies such as the Australia Council.

A survey circulated to Australian artists requested feedback about the proposed aims and strategies under consideration before AMA 2000 was finalised. ACMAC members must have felt somewhat beleaguered at times, as their November 1999 minutes record that they were encouraged by the openness of the respondents who expressed surprise that council would even be interested in their comments. The themes articulated by artists went beyond the usual issues of funding to include such matters as communication, relationships and critical discussion:

- a desire and need for direct human contact with the Council
- a desire for information and material from the Council about AMA
- strong support for greater liaison with the state and territory arts agencies
- the need to promote, fund and encourage work
- the need to promote critical discourse with all parts of the sector including major organisations. (ACMAC n.d.-a)

The research for AMA 2000 focused on NESB artists and the broader arts sector. It was developed over two years through consultations internally with ACMAC members and staff, and externally with artists and arts organisations. In 2005 the Australia Council engaged consultants from Effective Change and Victoria University to undertake a national evaluation of the policy. This full policy cycle from consultation to strategy to implementation and evaluation is one of the intense periods of focus that reinvigorated the AMA policy.

Policy Intentions and Their Results

Eighteen months of research, consultation and strategic planning by ACMAC, as well as regular reports to the Australia Council and executive staff, resulted in a commitment of AU\$2.08 million between the financial years 1998–99 and 2003–04 to deliver the policy objectives. As ACMAC chair, Klika had successfully navigated the process for improvements in activities, communication and trust between the multicultural arts sectors and the Australia Council, demonstrating relational, charismatic and transactional leadership to influence and negotiate this outcome.

My challenge was to deliver the raft of strategies with one other full-time staff member and the cooperation of other areas across the Australia Council. As Gunew (1994, 1) notes, the ‘uneven’ implementation of multicultural arts policy often frustrates the ‘arts bureaucrats and artists themselves’. In this context, having two full-time staff members enabled time for the relational model of leadership to develop excellent relationships with the arts sector, especially those committed to multicultural arts who were essential for generating the momentum needed to implement the suite of initiatives. It also demonstrated distributed leadership by injecting funds into the multicultural sector to deliver the range of initiatives.

AMA 2000 developed a framework approach to deliver long-term strategies through skilling, promoting and engagement that could operate across the Australia Council’s objectives. While the term ‘multicultural arts milieu’ was not used at this time, those three areas—skilling, promoting and engagement—aimed to positively influence the environment in which NESB artists worked.

The Multicultural Arts Professional Development (MAPD) program, managed by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and Kape Communications, partnered with RMIT University to deliver the ‘skills’ platform, which began in 2002 and ran until 2011. The executive program delivered an annual, national, accredited and creatively focused program on modest funding (\$86,476 in its first year) from the Australia Council (Australia Council 2002, 113). The scope of MAPD has yet to be matched in its content and approach to multicultural leadership. Those attracted to the program included:

Cultural managers, arts marketers, community arts specialists, producers, curators and artists who desired to build their skills in utilising cultural diversity for audience development, community partnerships, marketing and targeted communications: project development and international collaborations. (Kape Communications 2011)

Skilling and promotion were enabled by initiatives to produce and present high-quality and well-profiled artistic practice and content through Cultural Diversity Clusters (CDC) with Flinders University and kultour (a touring network formed by state-based multicultural arts organisations). ACMAC only ever ventured directly into the creative space once through the CDC. Making creative opportunities was a priority of the committee, but much harder to negotiate with senior arts development management, as it was seen

as a form of creative ‘interference’. ACMAC’s approach was, therefore, to infiltrate the edges of creative production, and to form alliances that would inevitably engage in hybrid artforms through the acceptance of multicultural arts practices. The aim was to bring a number of NESB professional artists from different disciplines together to have their collaboration facilitated by experts with access to production infrastructure. The intention was to move beyond an approach of one-off projects, and to generate relationships that would lead to ongoing platforms:

The aim of the Clusters concept was to stimulate relationships between well-resourced organisations to form partnerships for creative research and development which would lead to ‘flagship’ works which are multicultural in content. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 32)



Image 4: Hossein Valamanesh, *Practice*, 2006

Saffron on paper, 20 parts 375 x 375 cm overall
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Photographer: H. Valamanesh

A partnership with the Australian Performance Laboratory at Flinders University Drama Centre was supported over several years, partly because of the potential to influence curriculum in tertiary education about devising multicultural content. Nine established artists mentored a group of emerging artists and worked with a team of researchers considered experts on 'intercultural and intracultural arts practice' (Australia Council 2005, 55). United by the theme of 'death', the artists worked intensively on their individual and combined arts practice. The artists included comic Hung Le, set designer Mary Moore, digital puppeteer Wojciech Pisarek, media artist Rea, dancer Yumi Umiumare, sculptor Hossein Valamanesh (see Image 4), photographer William Yang and performer Anna Yen (Australia Council 2005, 55).

I recall that some artform managers at the Australia Council worried that the CDC project would fail because it was stimulated by ACMAC and did not come from artists' expressed desires; however, given that ACMAC was itself made up of artists, this was a curious concern. The artists invited to CDC were challenged to collaborate across unfamiliar art disciplines. The result was that each made a separate contribution that flowed together as a visual and performance work, *Undiscovered Country*, which premiered at the inaugural OzAsia Festival. The piece did not aim to 'invoke a disparate display of multicultural art practices, but a resonance with the universality of feelings and memories invoked by death' (Adelaide Festival Centre 2007, 16). Working in 'laboratory' mode is now a reasonably common approach for artistic collaborative processes, and working directly with better-resourced arts organisations has since been taken up by NESB artists and groups as a successful model.

To improve engagement with NESB artists, forums were held in conjunction with other Australia Council or arts sector events, and regular electronic *AMA Bulletins* were issued. Within broader arts institutions, engagement also took the form of invited presentation events. One such event was held in November 2004: all CEOs and chairs of major performing and visual arts companies were invited to a presentation by Richard Kurin, director of the Smithsonian Institute, Boston (Kape Communications n.d.). Kurin, who also presented public lectures across Australia as part of the broader MAPD program, introduced the term 'cultural broker' to NESB artists and multicultural arts practitioners. In so doing, he effectively gave a name to the complex work undertaken by NESB artists, locating and endorsing it within a broader, international context of parallel activity.

In partnership with arts organisations and universities, ACMAC funded two significant conferences. The first was held in 2001 and was entitled Globalisation, Art + Cultural Difference—On the Edge of Change. The second conference, held in 2004, Empires, Ruins and Networks: Art in Realtime Culture, built on the momentum of the first. Both resulted in publications that were supported by ACMAC: *Complex Entanglements: Art, Globalisation and Cultural Difference* (Papastergiadis 2003) and *Empires, Ruins + Network: The Transcultural Agenda in Art* (McQuire and Papastergiadis 2005). These remain not only the most recent, but also the most substantial Australian publications dedicated to multicultural diversity and the arts.

An evaluation of the 2000 AMA policy, begun in late 2004 and completed in May 2005, found that the conferences were the most recognised initiative, followed by kultour. The level of recognition achieved by the two 'boutique' conferences reflected the cutting-edge focus of the field, concepts, presenters, and opportunities presented for discussion and networking. These conferences differed greatly from the type of conference events usually supported by the Australia Council (e.g. annual marketing summits). The benefits for artists included rare international and national networking opportunities and the possibilities of increased peer support that flow from these. Both conferences sought to open up perceptions of multicultural arts practices and to support such understandings with critical publications.

Issues Arising from the Policy Review

The challenge of how to measure cultural change was foremost in the consultants' evaluation (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d.). The 2005 evaluation of AMA 2000 used triangulated research via a survey that was sent to 1,000 members of the arts sector drawn from every third grant applicant over a certain period, 200 interviews conducted nationally, and analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and confidential Australia Council data. The degree of equitable distribution of resources is one measure of a policy whose aim is to increase cultural production. At the Australia Council, in the 1990s and during AMA 2000, the grants to NESB artists and multicultural arts organisations hovered at 8 per cent, matching the nominal target set for a few years in the early 1990s (Sammers 1999; Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d.).

A continuation of the AMA policy was strongly endorsed by 73 per cent of respondents. The relevance and need for the policy was supported by 41 per cent of respondents who thought the arts more ‘[adequately] reflected multicultural Australia’ than five years prior. However, 31 per cent thought there was still ‘a long way to go’ (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 23):

There is strong support for an AMA policy from artists, arts organisations and policy makers. The support is ‘altruistic’ and across the board. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike agree on this issue. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 6)

AMA 2000 was considered by some to be groundbreaking because it:

Represented a shift in how the arts in multicultural communities were viewed. It has long been recognised that the arts play a significant role in promoting social cohesion, social policy goals, economic growth, and shaping a nation’s sense of identity. However, prior to the introduction of this policy, multicultural arts were typically seen as involving cultural retentive activities which had their roots in expressions of migrant cultural traditions. The introduction of the policy heralded the beginning of an era in which culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) Australians were seen as integral to the fabric of the Australian arts sector. (Rentschler, Le and Osborne 2008, iv)

These comments position the 2000 policy as an attempt to go ‘beyond the instrumental’ and to articulate the complex, cultural perspectives often associated with NESB artists.

Despite this positive commentary, the evaluation concluded that the AMA policy appeared to be ‘tinkering at the edges’. The authors argued that NESB artists were not accommodated outside the grant process of the artform boards: there was no specific multicultural arts board, no targets for artform boards to meet and no expectation that they develop specific AMA initiatives (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d.). The review identified a distinct perception of the need for, and value of, multicultural arts awareness across the arts:

The contention was that not only should there be an AMA policy, but that the policy should be ‘the umbrella policy’, acting as a central base from which policy and strategy formulation occurs. There was a strong concern that the policy had been marginalised over the years and that this trend, from the Australia Council, was continuing.

In contrast, the only forum at which the value or relevance of the policy was questioned was the focus group held with a selection of Australia Council members, managers and artform board representatives. A minority of participants were critical of the on-going need to pursue the policy, displaying what Professor Andrew Jakubowicz described as 'a bored air of frustration' in reference to film industry 'heavy hitters' resistance to arts and multicultural policies. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 30)

Crucially, and paradoxically, according to the consultants, the NESB artist was not found to be central in the AMA 2000 policy initiatives:

One of the gaps found in the policy and its implementation is the lack of a broad brush approach to support the greater participation of artists. The evaluation repeatedly heard stories of NESB artists frustrated by their lack of success in securing Australia Council funding. The demographic analysis highlights that NESB artists, particularly first generation NESB artists, are under-represented in the group of grant recipients. The data is complex and indicates some variations in the experience of first and second generation NESB artists and variations across the artform boards. Taken together, the results highlight that there are some structural barriers to accessing funds. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 4)

Using ABS data from 2001, the consultants found that:

NESB artists were adequately represented in only two of the artistic occupations, viz. designers and illustrators, and visual artists and craft professionals. Authors and media presenters had the lowest NESB representation, at just over half the percentages expected. NESB musicians, who fared better, were still under-represented. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 26)

Table 2 compares expected and actual levels of representation of NESB artists in 2005.

The gap between the expected and actual levels of representation of NESB artists is significant in light of the points made in Chapter 2 regarding the lower levels of professional representation across professions that are language-based as well as the impact on arts-related incomes.

Table 2: Expected and actual levels of representation of NESB artists in 2005

Category	Expected level of representation %	Actual level of representation %
Designers and illustrators	14.0	15.0
Visual artists and craft professionals	14.0	14.6
Photographers	14.0	11.7
Artists and related professionals n.f.d	14.0	10.9
Film, TV, radio and stage directors	14.0	9.4
Musicians and related professionals	14.0	9.2
Actors, dancers and related professionals	14.0	8.8
Journalists and related professionals	14.0	8.5
Media presenters	14.0	7.5
Authors and related professionals	14.0	7.5

n.f.d (not further defined)

Source: Keating, Bertone and Leahy (n.d., 26).

Alongside issues of income and representation, one of the controversial recommendations made by the evaluators was to decouple innovation from multicultural arts practice. While acknowledging that ‘cultural diversity is seen as a driver for innovation in the arts field’, they characterised the responsibility to innovate as an additional hurdle and burden for NESB artists to bear (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 6). In their view, the low levels of funding and arts workforce participation attested to the need to go back to ‘core principles’ of how NESB artists could be accepted into the arts in Australia.

Communication had improved between artists, multicultural arts groups and the Australia Council; however, many artists expressed concern that any criticism of the policy would be misunderstood and lead to its demise. Possibly because of this, few artists are directly quoted in the report, but their comments are analysed:

The experience of difficulties accessing funding [and] the difficulty of articulating culturally specific or exploratory work continues to be a hurdle for NESB artists. If the notion of innovation is rested on the shoulders of a group of artists already experiencing structural disadvantage, the policy will continue to struggle to be understood, implemented or enshrined. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 14)

State-based and funded multicultural arts advocacy and presenting organisations, such as NEXUS Arts (n.d.) in South Australia and Multicultural Arts Victoria (2018), which program and present performances or exhibit visual art, and which, in 2005, were still to be found in each state and territory, were noted as important access points into the arts sector for many NESB artists. They provided ‘a vital focal point for multicultural arts across the country’; however, as Keating, Bertone and Leahy (n.d., 4) observed, such ‘organisations are too often balancing on the financial brink for their potential to be reached’. This precarious environment for NESB artistic engagement has changed little over the years.

AMA 2000 Policy Evaluation Conclusions

The consultants who reviewed AMA 2000 found that, while it had overwhelming support ‘across the board’, it lacked an operational context; therefore, justification for the policy was assumed. This criticism was levelled at other policy statements released by the Australia Council as well (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 4). Successful gains had been made through the two conferences, subsequent publications and the touring initiative. Further:

Despite the complicated framework of the AMA policy, one of its greatest strengths is the policy development cycle which was followed through—including research base; the consultative development process and its suite of multifaceted strategies. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 6)

The consultants identified lower participation rates and incomes for NESB professional artists as being a serious problem. Danger also existed in the expectations placed on NESB artists in regard to innovation. A total of 94 recommendations were distilled down to a handful during the 2005–06 restructure of the Australia Council, and the council chose not to publish the evaluation report. The AMA policy was renewed in 2006, but the recommendation to strengthen the work and its position within the Australia Council was not supported.

AMA 2006

John Howard remained prime minister until the end of 2007, when Kevin Rudd was elected. The Australian Labor Party retained power for a further term when Julia Gillard was elected prime minister from 2010 to 2013. The ministers for the arts and sport during Howard's tenure were Senator Rod Kemp followed by Senator George Brandis, who remained in the post until 2007. Musician and environmentalist Peter Garrett was appointed Labor's minister for the arts and environment from 2007 to 2010. When the Liberal-National Coalition was elected in 2010 with Tony Abbott as prime minister, Senator George Brandis was re-appointed to the arts portfolio. The Gillard government's *Creative Australia* policy disappeared when Abbott came to power, in effect leaving AMA 2006 as the most recent, formal government statement on multiculturalism and the arts. In 2015, when Malcolm Turnbull took over the prime ministership, he promoted Senator Brandis to attorney-general and appointed Senator Mitch Fifield as arts minister to dampen the 'enthusiasm' Brandis had demonstrated for greater control over the arts budget (Eltham 2015, 2016).

Multiculturalism remained in ambiguous, bipartisan political favour during the post-Howard years. There was commitment to the policy but little attention was paid to it. Post-2014 saw the resurrection of the One Nation Party with four Senate seats. Leader Pauline Hanson claimed: 'I am back but this time I am not alone' (Marr 2017). From time to time, her party, which held the balance of power, was feted by the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition, neither of which spoke out against her anti-Muslim ideology, and some politicians claimed that One Nation had become 'sophisticated' (Marr 2017).

During 2005, the Australia Council and some of its artform boards were in turmoil as a result of an internal restructure begun in 2004. This upheaval included an unsuccessful attempt to end both the Community Cultural Development program and New Media Arts, and saw the dismantling of the policy, communication and planning section into a much smaller section of strategy (Australia Council 2006b, 13). Within this context, the council had to decide whether to endorse the next iteration of the AMA policy and accept the recommendations of the evaluation. My recollection is that, although soon to complete their appointments, then Australian Council Chair, lawyer, UNSW Chancellor and philanthropist David

Gonski, and CEO Jennifer Bott, both understood the importance of multicultural arts practices and both had ties to ethnic heritages that were important to them. It is also the case that the Australia Council's work as part of AMA 2000 had been acknowledged by international arts councils.

In the midst of this volatility within the agency and the arts sector, ACMAC Chair and music teacher Christine Pulvirenti steered the results of the evaluation through an 'unpredictable' Australia Council (Usher 2005). There was much negotiation over multiple drafts, recommendations and levels of expected expenditure. The need for such high-level, persistent fine-tuning with the council's executive, chair and deputy chair, and within the context of organisational upheaval, demonstrates that the policy had yet to become part of council's 'business as usual'. Ahmed (2012, 29) describes the work of 'diversity practitioners' as developing techniques to embed diversity or make diversity 'a given'; this requires 'institutional recognition of the value of diversity', which 'requires time, energy and labour'. Enormous amounts of time, energy and labour were expended by the Australia Council's 'diversity practitioners', with staff and the ACMAC chair working to ensure that AMA 2006 was endorsed, that financial commitments were made for the continuation of ACMAC, MAPD and kultour, and that an allocation of \$600,000 over three years was made to boost the scope of three multicultural arts organisations.

Businessman James Strong was appointed chair of the Australia Council in 2006 and Kathy Keele, previously from Telstra and Qantas, was appointed CEO in 2007. On completion of Pulvirenti's term as ACMAC chair, former BBC broadcaster and active regional arts advocate Nicola Downer AM was appointed. By June 2007, the short-lived strategy section had been absorbed into a governance section and my role (which now had to demonstrate more responsibility across AMA, arts and health, regional and other areas) was moved into the newly formed community partnerships section, developed from the politically strategic CACD sector response to the 2005 restructures. The AMA's role had come full circle back to a more expanded community section of the Australia Council and, by 2008, along with other 'social' policy areas, would become one of several areas folded under the umbrella of the Cultural Engagement Framework (CEF) (Australia Council 2016b).

The Structural Position of ACMAC

The evaluators of AMA 2000 identified challenges faced by ACMAC regarding the recruitment of members, compliance of artform boards and the capacity of board peers to represent AMA issues, and recommended that:

No case was found for disbanding the Committee. On the contrary, it was felt that the role of ACMAC should be strengthened, drawing in more Council members and external advisers. (Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d., 4)

Appearing to focus on only one component of the recommendation, the senior executive team removed ACMAC's networked peer base through the artform boards and adopted a new structure that drew only from external experts. In spite of the successful funding of ACMAC (and MAPD and kultour) for another three years, this can be seen as the event that led to ACMAC's eventual dismantling at the end of 2007 (Australia Council 2009, 48–49). It can also be seen as a precursor of other things: another institutional shift dismantled the artform boards in 2013.

Even though the external experts appointed to the artform boards were knowledgeable and articulate experts for the arts in a multicultural Australia, removing the NESB connection to each of the artform boards significantly reduced ACMAC's influence. The members in 2006–07 were theatre director Teresa Crea (SA), international cultural facilitator Professor Amareswar Galla (ACT and Queensland), state multicultural officer Walter Gomes (WA), arts centre director Kon Gouriotis (NSW), academic Professor Andrew Jakubowicz (NSW), multicultural arts consultant Fotis Kapetopoulos (Victoria) and local council officer Tiffany Lee-Shoy (NSW). Not all were experts in the area of grant assessments and the machinery of the Australia Council, and they were not given the opportunity to meet with other peers or Australia Council staff on a regular basis. Their power was diminished because they were not appointed by the government and their traction within the systems of the Australia Council was curtailed. The membership of ACMAC was now only by direct invitation from the Australia Council. This compared unfavourably to previous government appointments to artform boards. The final reference to ACMAC in the 2009 Australia Council Annual Report barely acknowledged the committee's role over four decades:

The committee comprised experts in areas of multiculturalism and the arts in Australia and internationally. In April 2008, the Council adopted a cultural engagement framework, of which the arts in a multicultural Australia policy is a part. As part of the framework, the Council agreed to convene advisory groups to assist in the development of initiatives and strategies as required. (Australia Council 2009, 48–49)

The Australia Council decided when, and under what circumstances, advice would be requested.

Policy Intentions and Their Results

The Australia Council's vision in 2006 reflected the view that 'Australia's dynamic cultural life and practices are embraced, celebrated and created by the diversity of our cultures' (Australia Council 2006a). Its stated commitment was to support and promote 'a strong arts sector that effectively reflects Australia's cultural diversity, by integrating the objectives of its Arts in a Multicultural Australia (AMA) policy through the delivery of its activities' (Australia Council 2006a).

AMA 2006 highlighted the council's vision of 'the diversity of our cultures' through the areas of leadership, participation and creative production, including between Indigenous and NESB artists. The first objective was to increase culturally inclusive leadership by ensuring governance as a culturally inclusive process, integrating multicultural aims into each of the council's activity areas, and increasing culturally diverse representation across the arts. The second objective enabled all Australians to participate in the arts by delivering specific audience and market development strategies, increasing awareness of, and access, to the council's programs, and brokering and engaging in partnerships. The third objective supported the development of creative content that reflected a multicultural Australia by encouraging cultural inclusiveness, supporting multicultural arts industry infrastructure and content development, and encouraging creativity that spanned the spectrum of tradition and innovation. The fourth objective encouraged creative interfaces between Indigenous and NESB artists by facilitating cultural exchanges (Australia Council 2006a).

A major focus of ACMAC was to demonstrate its national advocacy role and to broker partnerships to support infrastructure for multicultural arts. ACMAC had a clear link beyond the Australia Council to power and influence. Chair Nicola Downer's personal influence and positional

leadership enabled a day-long event, Multicultural Arts: Cultural Citizenship for the 21st Century, to be held at Parliament House, Canberra, in November 2007 (Australia Council 2007). The arts symposium featured heads of state arts agencies, cultural theorists and artists, and included live performances by a range of artists. The event received an unprecedented amount of political attention and was attended by a number of high-profile politicians including Assistant Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Teresa Gambaro, Arts Minister Senator Brandis, and former minister for foreign affairs Alexander Downer. To date, no other arts event has received this level of political attention. This strategic event publicly associated AMA with something highly valued by the Australia Council—political influence:

Organisations can be considered as modes of attention: what is attended to can be thought of as what is valued; attention is how some things come into view (and other things do not). Diversity work involves the effort of putting diversity into places that are already valued so that diversity can come into view. (Ahmed 2012, 29)

Ahmed describes how influential positioning can smooth the path to increase the profile of an issue. The word ‘effort’ is crucial here because it signals that the attention is unusual and not an everyday transaction. The location of the event and the access to influential parliamentarians such as Downer attracted high-calibre artists, arts bureaucrats, academics and commentators. Facilitated roundtables reinforced nationally relevant themes and concerns across the arts sector, including:

- ensuring the centrality of multicultural arts policy within the creative landscape
- improving the diversity of the governance of major cultural institutions
- increasing the capacity of the small to medium sector to build the creative capacities of diverse communities
- identifying the needs and trends in national multicultural arts research programs
- creating highly visible pathways across the spectrum of multicultural arts
- including NESB artists in cultural dialogue and decision-making
- developing strategic partnerships
- ensuring access to adequate funding (Australia Council 2007).

These objectives expanded upon and more clearly articulated those in the 2006 AMA policy. The language (active and specific) benefited from the focused consultation that relational leadership modes can provide. This process highlights the value of consulting members of the Australian arts community, academics and politicians when determining future AMA directions. Wide consultation was considered a strength of AMA 2000 and it also applies to the 2006 policy. In 2018 these objectives from 2007 remained on the Australia Council website as the only reference to the arts in a multicultural Australia.

Issues Arising from the Policy

Verifiable data assist in identifying trends in the policy landscape. An annual internal AMA report produced from the 1980s to around 2006 by senior policy staff at the Australia Council included successes and challenges as well as statistics on success rates from each section of the council. Internal debates about ‘coding’ (i.e. capturing data about grant applicants) to differentiate projects made entirely by NESB artists, or by more than 50 per cent of NESB artists, are present throughout these reports. The reports had multiple uses: they facilitated staff and board member engagement with AMA matters; they provided opportunities for institutional leaders at a range of staffing levels to display relational leadership capabilities with colleagues, artists and multicultural organisations; and they resulted in the enhanced coding of grant applications, to which I contributed as a staff member, through a new dashboard with streamlined coding processes for program staff who were able to generate the reports after each grant assessment meeting. However, as at 2018, no AMA reports have been made public by the Australia Council. The only longitudinal public data on NESB artists are contained in the Macquarie University Economics Department’s research into individual artist’s incomes undertaken every five years (Throsby and Hollister 2003; Throsby and Zednick 2010; Throsby and Petetskaya 2017). Those results corroborate the evaluation results of AMA 2000, telling a stark story of low participation rates and low arts-related incomes for NESB artists.

The diminution of the Australia Council’s support for AMA continued with the 2006 shift in the make-up of ACMAC and its subsequent disbanding in 2007. The rationale given by CEO Kathy Keele was that ad hoc consultations could be held on an as-needed basis (Australia Council 2009, 48). From 2007, the AMA’s navigational and advocacy leadership

roles at the Australia Council declined sharply. The Australia Council's lack of institutional commitment was signalled when the long-term structural prominence of ACMAC was reduced.

The Australia Council did not provide funds to support critical discourse within AMA 2006. In the absence of an updated policy that would have been expected around 2011, a useful comparison point for how NESB artists perceive their situation in the arts 'scene' generally can be seen in *Artlink's Multicultural Arts* (1991) and *Diaspora* (2011) special issues. The titles suggest a move away from the term 'multicultural' and can be seen as an attempt by the magazine and guest editors to re-position the discussion. The 2011 issue includes six articles that feature NESB artists and their art practices; the majority of the articles have an Indigenous or international art focus or align with geographically specific art projects (such as Minto in south-west Sydney).

The language is generally apolitical; however, articles in the 2011 edition nevertheless emphasise the importance of multicultural influences in various artists' works. For example, artist, curator and former director of the 4A Centre for Contemporary Art Aaron Seeto (2011, 25) highlights the continuing paradox of cultural difference within artistic production in a multicultural Australia, regardless of the incredible levels of activity:

To a large extent, experiences of cultural difference are either over-determined or entirely absent from contemporary Australian art discourse. Australian culture has yet to understand the impact that intercultural experiences have had on its evolution, and how the anxiety of locality—how we perceive, articulate and imagine the cultural histories which result from specific geography and history of this continent—impacts how we understand our art history and imagine its future.

Here Seeto is echoing the 25-year-old call by Blonski (1992, 3) for the arts in Australia to go 'beyond the instrumental'. Seeto suggests that policies have been ineffective, as they have not had any broad impact on the main art galleries aside from a narrow interpretation of what might be accepted. He implies that questions of multiculturalism, identity and naming are unfashionable in the contemporary arts scene:

In more recent times, marked by fluidity, ease of cross border movements, communication and globalisation, when the terminology of multiculturalism arises, there's always a faint groan. Recently a young critic said to me that the term Asian-Australian was past its usefulness. (Seeto 2011, 28)

The idea that terms and phrases associated with multiculturalism are 'past [their] usefulness' is likely to be a prevalent perception, having accompanied discussions about multicultural arts policies since their development. While recognising that this is difficult policy terrain for young artists to navigate, Seeto (2011, 28) observes that the conditions that give rise to the need for such policies have not been erased:

It is not as if the issues of xenophobia and political parity have been addressed, or that cultural difference is well understood by the institutions that frame contemporary art in Australia.

This suggests that deeper engagement to address the ignorance of contemporary institutions is required. As is often the case, it is the artist who provides this deeper engagement, as the policies of institutions offer little beyond rhetoric or a narrow view of the politics of multiculturalism. Seeto (2011, 31) is critical of the strictures of policy formation around cultural difference and yet, more importantly in many ways, he suspects that 'art world structures in Australia are inadequate to interrogate and conceptualise art practice that arises from its own history of diaspora and migration'.

Other artists in the 2011 *Artlink* issue describe their fluid identities and mixed practices without addressing policy. In discussing the influence of cultural diversity, performance artist Brian Fuata describes his collaborative working mode with other artists. In becoming adept in this mode, which works across cultural understandings and iconographies, artists have become less constrained in how they interact with each other's practices, demonstrating their agency in the creative cycle. As Fuata (2011, 23) explains: 'In relation to a notion of identity and the cultural diversity thereof, such a project reflects a contemporary arts society that is inherently diversified and acknowledging of that'. This artist engages with one artist at a time, and generates his own peer support network in the process of his practice. The value of professional creative networks is consistently raised as an important need for NESB artists (Positive Solutions n.d.; Keating, Bertone and Leahy n.d.; Stevenson et al. 2017).

For others, the themes of freedom of expression and 'displacement and exile' continue to be present, as in the work of Iranian-Australian migrant artists Nasim Nasr and Siamak Fallah. Relinquishing her practice from her place of origin, Nasr makes:

Art from the unseen; from my memories. Living in Australia feels like I am in exile, this is something I cannot do inside my country. Now I've got my freedom I am happy, but there is a displacement between my past and my present. I am not really free from these things—they are always with me like a shadow. (quoted in Harms 2011, 46)

Melbourne-based theatre director and former Theatre Board and ACMAC member Bagryana Popov continues to draw on the relevance of storytelling as the mode for one of her works—an adaptation of the novel *Café Scheherazade* by Australian author Arnold Zable:

What makes it urgent? Melbourne is an extraordinarily diverse city, there are so many different ethnicities, histories, faiths, in our society. Yet there are still sometimes—bewildering to me—questions raised about the value of multiculturalism and diversity. The urgency is to celebrate the people and to listen—to the stories from different lands—and how they are integral to our experience of Melbourne. (quoted in Andrew 2011)

Christos Tsiolkas, one of Australia's most well-known and commercially successful 'migrant' writers, openly claims his cultural heritage and discusses his sense of responsibility as a 'migrant' (Tsiolkas 2013). It is this awareness of responsibility that carries forward the aesthetic and social leadership of the NESB artist.

AMA 2006 Conclusion

During the implementation stage of AMA 2006, the Australia Council concluded its sustained engagement and historical relationship with NESB artists as artform board appointments and expert policy advisers. Regardless of how fraught the relationship had been, ACMAC had been a mainstay of the Australia Council's work, enabling a space for complex creative discourse. As a conduit to the sector, ACMAC had contributed to the multicultural arts milieu. The last ACMAC chair Nicola Downer used her 'charismatic' and 'positional' leadership to host the highest profile event for both ACMAC and the Australia Council at Parliament House, Canberra. In 2018, the aims for multicultural arts policy developed at that event, but no other references to AMA, can be found on the Australia Council website.

Conclusion

The periods in which traction around the AMA policy are demonstrated are few and short-lived. Blonski (1994) suggests that any increased attention to access and equity issues regarding multicultural Australia as a result of government directives to the Australia Council is undermined when government reduces its allocation to the arts. The hypothesis is that the Australia Council's interest in multicultural policy waxes and wanes in line with the federal government's interest in multiculturalism (Sammers 1999). However, this is not necessarily borne out, as one of the most productive periods for the AMA (1998–2005) was under the Howard government. An alternate argument is that, when times are financially robust, multiculturalism in the arts may benefit, but when times are financially constrained, it falls off the agenda. This suggests that creative practice and infrastructure for multicultural arts are not considered 'core business'. To limit support for an ideal to times when there are 'surplus' funds is not leading, it is opportunism at the expense of long-term change. It also indicates that the Australia Council has yet to move 'beyond the instrumental' (Blonski 1992, 3) in relation to its NESB constituents. Effective leadership in this arena has been evident when the sources of friction are managed so that adequate levels of trust facilitate the subsequent traction for change.

The AMA 2000 and 2006 policies (and, to a large extent, those preceding them) have similar overall objectives to promote, support, engage with and develop arts sector capacity for the arts in a multicultural Australia. The sector, when consulted, has similar objectives (as seen in the roundtable outcomes from the Multicultural Arts: Cultural Citizenship for the 21st Century event). These issues have been in circulation since the 1970s. And there is little evidence to suggest that the withdrawal of support for the AMA policy under the guise of 'mainstreaming' has been either timely or of use.

This returns us to the issue of leadership. Directing policy processes within the Australia Council requires astute attention to the politics of policy formation. A wide range of leadership attributes are required and these need to combine charismatic, adaptive and relational modes. The skills of 'attunement'—listening and responding to signals—are an important element of leadership within an institutional framework. These are not

necessarily standard leadership repertoire, but when applied to the policy development processes of an agency, they have the potential to become a potent force that can cut through institutional lethargy.

There is a startling difference between support (from the Australia Council and the multicultural arts sector) for the genuine attempts to implement the ambitious wide-ranging strategies of AMA 2000, and the winding down of these continuing strategies that was overseen by executive staff at the Australia Council throughout AMA 2006. The removal of the structural significance and prominence of ACMAC signalled a slow and grinding diminution of any legacy for multicultural arts at the Australia Council.

Two more distinct phases can be now identified for the arts in a multicultural Australia that build on those discussed above. Significant investment in a raft of strategies that aimed to improve the conditions and capacity of multicultural arts between 2000 and 2005 can be described as a fifth phase. The sixth phase, which began with the release of the 2006 AMA policy, has an indeterminate end, but could be placed at 2007 with the dissolution of ACMAC, or at 2008 with the introduction of the CEF. In addition to the winding down of ACMAC, the sixth and final phase has witnessed the gradual diminution of structural influence and the end of major initiatives such as AMA conferences, MAPD and kultour.

The leadership for arts in a multicultural Australia has now shifted away from the Australia Council and into the arts sector. None of the AMA policies remain on the Australia Council website. The sole reference to multicultural arts that remains is to the 2007 event held at Parliament House. Consequently, artists and creative leaders who have taken on the mantle of leadership for creative multicultural diversity have had to develop other strategies to ensure creative production and longevity and to widen the sphere of partners and supporters beyond the Australia Council.

This text is taken from *Creative Frictions: Arts Leadership, Policy and Practice in Multicultural Australia*, by Cecelia Cmielewski, published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/CF.2021.03