7 November 2023

By email: CSAGSecretariat@dss.gov.au

DCA response to Issues Paper: A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector

Dear Secretary, Department of Social Services, Ray Griggs

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We have over 1,300 member organisations, reaching more than 20% of the Australian labour market.

Our vision is to create a more diverse and inclusive Australia by encouraging and enabling Australian organisations to create diverse and inclusive workplaces. Government support for a strong, diverse and sustainable community sector is critical to help ensure all Australians are afforded opportunities to actively participate – and thrive - in the Australian workforce.

There is ample evidence, including data cited in this Issues Paper, highlighting key areas of disadvantage calling for priority reform: The National Agreement on Closing the Gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, people with disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. DCA welcomes the government's acknowledgment that different approaches may be required to ensure diverse workforces and culturally competent, appropriate and safe practices, and priority groups are properly resourced.

DCA's focus is on the workplace and we have produced a number of research products and resources that are relevant to this discussion. In particular, we refer you to:

- Race: Racism at Work - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au) is an evidence-based guide providing an organisational framework for anti-racism action to help Australian organisations effectively address racism.

- Culturally and racially marginalised women: CARM women in leadership - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au) focused on the intersections of race and gender and how they operate in workplaces to lock CARM women out of leadership.

- Gender inequity: She's Price(d)less - 2022 update report - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au) is the fourth in a series of reports using economic modelling applied to data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia to unpack the factors that contribute to the gender pay gap.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience: Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au) documented the workplace experiences and recommendations of over 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) Gendered Insights - Diversity Council (dca.org.au) followed up

with an analysis by gender.

- Social class: [Class at Work - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#) surveyed over 3000 workers showing class is most strongly linked to workers' experience of inclusion at work.

In addition, DCA's submissions to government reviews, strategies, inquiries and legislative reforms are also relevant:

- Early Childhood Education and Care: [ACCC Childcare Inquiry - Diversity Council Australia](#) and [Early Childhood education inquiry - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#)

- Cultural diversity: [Multicultural Framework Review - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#)

- Gender equity: [National Gender Equality Strategy - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#)

- [Employment White Paper Response - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#)

- [Submission on the Respect at Work Bill 2022 - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)](#)

- [Work and Care Inquiry Submission - Diversity Council Australia](#)

A note on language:

Australia has shown longstanding reluctance to focus on race;[1] preferring to use terms like ethnicity and culture,[2] evident in the use of terms such as non-English-speaking background (NESB), culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), 'multicultural' and 'harmony'. As discussed in DCA's *Racism at Work*[3] guide, Australia's reluctance to focus on race means we often struggle to talk in an informed, thoughtful, and transformative way about race, and to identify and respond to racism.

Our research[4] tells us that language such as 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) and 'multicultural' are no longer useful terms to describe the experiences of people who experience cultural and racial marginalisation in Australia.

In our recent work, *Culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) women in leadership*, we have deliberately shifted away from these terms, offering the alternative language of 'culturally and racially marginalised' (CARM) in recognition of the significance of race and racism in people's lives, and encourages the Department to consider language that more accurately reflects the present-day experiences of these communities.

A note on intersectionality:

DCA recommends an intersectional approach when considering innovative approaches to grant funding to support the Australian community sector. Intersectionality refers to how some people experience compounded discrimination due to multiple marginalising and interlinked characteristics.[5] An intersectional lens on the lived experience of disadvantaged and marginalised people requiring community services will add significant value to inform the recommendations to government.

Comment:

DCA welcomes the government's commitment to all five focus areas outlined in the Issues paper and can make general comments only as they relate to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

1. Giving the sector the voice and respect it deserves through a meaningful working partnership

DCA is a strong advocate for centring the voice of marginalised and disadvantaged people. This refers to the process of prioritising, elevating and acting on what people with lived experience are telling us. Often the voices of marginalised people are ignored in Australian organisations and this may reinforce systemic discrimination and prevent effective change within organisations.

Meaningful partnerships ought to reflect the diversity of the Australian community. Community sector organisations should also reflect this diversity, whether in terms of representation and/or cultural and racial literacy. DCA strongly supports the use of co-design principles to recognise the lived experience of disadvantaged and marginalised people.

2. Providing grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services.

DCA has no comment.

3. Providing longer grant agreement terms.

DCA is supportive of measures to allow longer-term funding for the community sector placing organisations in a better position to be innovative and achieve effective change, particularly in terms of research, advocacy and policy development. DCA also notes and supports funding flexibility to support and encourage sector innovation.

4. Ensuring grant funding flows to a greater diversity of CSOs.

DCA strongly supports this area of focus to ensure funding for organisations that support specific disadvantaged and marginalised communities. The Issues paper refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability and people from 'CALD' backgrounds. DCA suggests identifying 'CARM' communities as they have unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. DCA also strongly supports the consideration of intersectionalities and how best the community sector can be supported to understand and cater to people with multiple marginalised identities. DCA agrees that flexible and non-traditional approaches may be more effective to ensure diversified workforces, culturally competent, appropriate and safe practices, and targeting resources for priority groups.

DCA suggests that in order to build capacity of the community sector to address poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation, tailored and accessible communications and information should be readily available to a range of community organisations, large and small, including those that can provide services to intersectional communities.

5. Partnering with trusted community organisations with strong local links.

DCA is supportive of partnering with local communities to address entrenched disadvantage.

Please feel free to contact myself or Jacqueline Braw, Senior Advocacy and Government Relations Manager, on jacqueline@dca.org.au should you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Office

[1] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.

[2] P Mousaferiadis, "Beyond CALD: what lies behind the labels." Diversity Atlas, 13 July 2020, https://www.diversityatlas.io/beyondcald-2/.

[3] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.

[4] Diversity Council Australia (Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. and O'Leary, J.) *Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up To and End Workplace Racism*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2022; Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O'Leary). *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.

[5] Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O'Leary). *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.