



## Strengthening Multiculturalism

### SBS Submission to Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism

#### June 2017

#### *Key Points*

- Building connections between the many different cultures that make up Australia is at the heart of what SBS does. SBS seeks to inspire greater understanding between diverse communities and contribute to the health of our vibrant and cohesive multicultural society.
- The Prime Minister recently highlighted SBS on the world stage as the media organisation in Australia that is “interpreting and celebrating our multicultural society and the values of mutual respect to the whole society.” SBS seeks to increase awareness of the contributions that the many cultures of Australia make to the development of the Australian community as a whole.
- SBS provides an extensive range of programs and services to support migrant settlement in Australia, including through its many in-language radio programs, and particularly its practical in-language Settlement Guides. These services connect people to Australian news, life and values in their own language, enabling greater participation in community life.
- SBS is a key source for international and national news and current affairs on television and online in English as well as 35 other languages, helping migrants keep in touch with news directly from their country of origin. In providing these services SBS strengthens and preserves Australia’s diverse cultural society.
- SBS engages directly with migrant communities through partnerships with organisations and projects for young people, and is constantly seeking out ways to strengthen these relationships.
- SBS stands ready to play an even greater role in the preservation of culture should funding permit – for example, by expanding the number of languages in which Settlement Guides are provided, and by further integrating our services with Government settlement programs.

## ***Introduction***

SBS welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Select Committee's inquiry into ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion.

SBS is distinctive and innovative in the Australian media environment. Its primary function is to deliver multilingual, multicultural and Indigenous radio, television and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society. SBS's purpose is to inspire all Australians to explore, appreciate and celebrate our diverse world and in doing so, contribute to a cohesive society.

In executing its Charter, SBS is strongly supportive of, and provides services that meet the communications needs of Australia's multicultural society, with the aim of encouraging participation of all cultures in Australian civic and economic life. This is both an immediate and a long-term need: migrants need immediate assistance in establishing a life in Australia, while also requiring long-term support in language development and maintenance, cultural understanding and cohesion, and links to their home country. The broader Australian community also benefits from being supported to feel at ease with, and in many cases to embrace, the diversity that comes with Australia's multicultural experience. Achieving this balance means that all Australians can enjoy a multicultural and socially cohesive society.

In late 2016, Prime Minister Turnbull addressed the UN, stating that:

At a time when global concern around immigration and border control is rising, the need to build community support for migration has never been clearer

As just one example, there is SBS, founded nearly 40 years ago, the public broadcaster, not only broadcasting in dozens of languages, but interpreting and celebrating our multicultural society, and the values of mutual respect to the whole society.

Diversity is an investment against marginalisation and extremism. It helps our community unite rather than be divided.

## **TOR 2 – The adequacy and accessibility of settlement and social inclusion services and resources available to individuals and communities**

### **SBS Settlement Guides**

Building on SBS Radio's long history of providing balanced and impartial news and information to migrants, SBS Settlement Guides were launched in 2016, with 30 SBS radio language programs broadcasting settlement features.

These features include 'need-to-know' facts about settling in Australia, comprising of information about the facets of daily life, local culture, history, and government services – such as voting or accessing medical services. Each Settlement Guide is produced in-house as an audio feature for radio, a text article for online and a 'listicle' for sharing on social media.

Settlement Guides relate directly to SBS's purpose of informing, educating and inspiring all Australians, and by so doing encouraging social cohesion. They are available online, on radio and on mobile in Bangla, Filipino, Gujarati, Hindi, Indonesia, Korean, Malayalam, Nepali, Punjabi, Sinhalese, Tamil, Urdu, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Kurdish, Spanish, Amharic, Dari, Dinka, Persian, Khmer, Pashto, Swahili, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Hmong and Somali.

More than a million visitors have engaged with the Settlement Guide on our website. SBS regularly displays postcards promoting the Settlement Guide at events and which are also distributed to key stakeholders.

### SBS Radio Programs

SBS is the world's most linguistically diverse broadcaster, bringing over 70 radio language programs and dedicated digital music channels to the close to five million Australians who speak a language other than English at home. Migrants entering Australia through the Humanitarian program receive information in their welcome packs in relation to services offered by SBS. Postcards in each language promote the relevant SBS radio service and how to access the content.

SBS radio programs also provide news and feature content with an Indigenous focus, introducing migrants to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and communities and building cross-cultural understanding. Three times each week, SBS radio also presents *Living Black* which aims to connect, inform and inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the nations through news, current affairs, and community information.

Each SBS Radio language program is supported by an online presence, and the programs are also available for podcast so they can be accessed by listeners at any time. This has proven incredibly popular, with more than 1.5 million podcasts of SBS language programs every month.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection's 2016 report, *Australia's Migration Trends 2014-15*, stated that the second most common language for which an interpreter was requested during the settlement process was Arabic.<sup>1</sup> In March 2016, SBS launched SBS Arabic24 for Australia's Arabic-speaking community – a new 24/7 multi-platform service on mobile, online and digital radio. SBS Arabic24 offers Arabic-speaking Australians a balanced and impartial destination that is focused on life in Australia and a touch point to the rest of the Arabic-speaking world.

SBS Arabic24 features Australian-produced content and offers its audience a selection of the best programming from SBS partner BBC Arabic, broadcast live from the BBC's Dubai news centre. Within its first week, SBS Arabic24 became SBS's second most listened to radio station (after SBS Radio 1) via the SBS Radio app and is the most listened to SBS news and information station online. The number of visitors to the SBS Arabic24 website in January 2017 was up more than 1,000% on January 2016. The trial of Arabic24 has been extended until the end of 2017.

SBS is currently carrying out a review of its radio services.<sup>2</sup> During the review, SBS will refer to factors including population changes measured in the 2016 Census. Subject to SBS's limited funding envelope, SBS will determine when and how its radio language services will be delivered (for example, via AM/FM, digital radio, digital television, online and/or podcast). In this regard, it is relevant that, increasingly, migrants are engaging with SBS online (through its webpages, social media and on-demand television and radio broadcasts).

### SBS Content

A range of SBS content tells the story of the experiences of migrant communities in Australia. By promoting understanding of these experiences and normalising diversity, this content can lead to a greater sense of social inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Immigration and Border Protection, *Australia's Migration Trends 2014-15*, 2016, page 98 – available at <https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/statistics/migration-trends-14-15-full.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> More information about SBS's Radio Services Review is available at <http://www.sbs.com.au/radio/consultation>.

For example, SBS Radio's *Dear Homeland*<sup>3</sup>, launched in late 2015, was a series of short video and audio features that explored the emotional journey that many migrants experience after arriving in Australia, seeking safety and a better future. The purpose of the programming was to bolster all Australians' understanding of different migration experiences by providing an insight into the lives of people settling in Australia. It featured new arrivals from Syria, Somalia, Iraq and Italy.

Recognising the importance of the wider Australian community understanding the experiences of migrants, SBS also broadcast the third season of *Go Back to Where You Came From* in 2015. It was a program that provoked a national debate about how Australia seeks to respond to refugees and asylum seekers. Six Australians retraced the steps of those seeking asylum to some of the most dangerous places in the world – including Indonesia, Iraq, Burma, Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Syria.

SBS uses its multi-lingual capabilities to provide subtitled versions of some of its key programs on SBS On Demand. Last year the award-winning *First Contact* was subtitled in Chinese and Arabic, and the critically acclaimed comedy/drama *The Family Law* was subtitled in Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese. This is enabling more Australians to engage with SBS shows in their own language.

In its drama content, SBS delivers against its Charter by telling distinctive and diverse stories, such as the very popular SBS series *The Family Law*, season two of which has recently premiered. This was the first drama on Australian television to focus on a principal cast of Asian background.

Later in the year, SBS will be airing *Sunshine*, an commissioned Australian drama set in Melbourne's outer-west and follows the life of a young, aspiring South Sudanese-Australian basketball player. This project has had strong engagement and participation from the South Sudanese community, including as part of the SBS Diversity Talent Escalator, which is detailed below.

#### National Indigenous Television (NITV)

SBS also has a particular focus on Indigenous content, as it is the home of National Indigenous Television (NITV), a channel made by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The channel is focussed on commissioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. NITV's commissioned content spans a broad spectrum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, sharing extraordinary and often untold stories through documentary, factual, lifestyle and entertainment programming.

NITV also has close ties with the community, carrying out significant engagement opportunities. The aim of outreach to communities is to broaden the reach, depth and impact of NITV. Regular stakeholder meetings are held by SBS and NITV staff with local Indigenous leaders and industry representatives.

#### News and Current Affairs

In February 2017, AMES Australia, a national settlement provider for migrants and refugees, published a report on migrants' media consumption. It found that "eighty-eight per cent, or 123 respondents, said their news and information came from Australian sources while 12 per cent said it was from their home countries," with SBS

<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/arabic/en/content/dear-homeland>.

(as well as the ABC) being the most frequently used sources of broadcast news and information.<sup>4</sup>

SBS has long held a well-earned reputation for quality news and analysis on global events and stories and issues from across multicultural Australia. SBS News and Current Affairs has correspondents based in the UK, China and India, which ensures direct access to the most important stories from many migrants' home countries, as well as access to news contacts in many countries through staff working on our more than 70 radio language programs.

Wherever a story breaks in the world, our broadcasters can access, in language, the real stories from real people on the ground – and bring those stories to Australia, where we can also translate them into English to share with all Australians.

Our unique connections and experience with multicultural and Indigenous communities enable SBS to cover news and tell the stories of those communities with respect and dignity.

For example, SBS World News has produced news features such as the *First Day Stories*<sup>5</sup> which told of the initial memories of migrants and refugees arriving on these shores, while features on identity have revealed how cultural heritage has influenced the lives of some of our best known as well as lesser known citizens. Our *Small Business Secrets* program tells positive stories of small business operators across Australia from a range of cultural backgrounds. In 2015-16, an extensive review was carried out of NITV News and Current Affairs, resulting in a new working model and a comprehensive offering, featuring weeknight, prime-time series *The Point*, and an increase in digital reporting via NITV Online.

SBS endeavours to ensure that the most important stories have a life beyond a single platform. Key stories, entertainment and investigations are covered across radio, television and online.

For example, in late 2016, an exclusive investigation led by SBS Radio's Punjabi program revealed prohibited drugs available for sale in Australian South Asian grocery stores. This story was covered across the network, including on SBS World News and online.

SBS broadcasts international news bulletins under the WorldWatch banner in 35 languages other than English (**LOTE**). The bulletins are also available on SBS On Demand.

SBS also broadcasts international English language news bulletins, presenting a diverse daily news perspective from five of the world's leading broadcasters: Al Jazeera, France 24, Deutsche Welle, NHK and CCTV. SBS News and Current Affairs maintains significant program and content supply relationships with overseas broadcasters for its WorldWatch news services.

### Commercial services

SBS also offers a range of translation services for television and radio advertisements into over 70 languages. SBS has access to the most diverse collection of multicultural voice talent in Australia, and provides the cultural authenticity, tone and accuracy of the translated audio, specific to each language.

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<sup>4</sup> The study, available at <https://amesnews.com.au/latest-articles/migrants-media-consumption-mostly-domestic>, found that 67 per cent of respondents accessed SBS programs.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://www.sbs.com.au/topics/first-day-stories>.

SBS provides this service to Government departments and agencies, translating government messaging by accredited, local professionals. Messages are voiced by professional, native speaking voice talent in our SBS broadcast facilities. SBS has produced in-language federal campaigns for the Australian Tax Office, Department of Human Services, and the Bureau of Statistics through to more localised announcements relating to bushfire alerts, specific health events and elections.

## **TOR 7 – How to better recognise and value the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australian social and community life**

### SBS Content

SBS makes a vital difference to the Australian cultural and media landscape. The network's unique position in the industry allows it to present compelling, distinctive and thought-provoking content that no other Australian media organisation provides. Some of that content is targeted to the needs of particular groups or communities, whether by language or subject matter. Other content is of broader general appeal, delivering our Charter content to as many Australians as possible.

Through its wide ranging radio, television and online content SBS recognises the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australia, driving social cohesion through improved cross cultural understanding.

In the nightly *SBS World News*, SBS shares stories showcasing the achievements of those from diverse backgrounds in the arts, science, business, politics, sport and many other fields of endeavour.

Similarly, SBS's weekly *Small Business Secrets* program, produced by SBS's News and Current Affairs division, promotes a cohesive and progressive multicultural Australia by offering inspiration and informative stories about and for small business people, many from diverse backgrounds.

In producing content, SBS also seeks to promote diversity and draw on the expertise and experience of people from a wide range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The SBS Diversity Talent Escalator is a new national initiative focused on increasing the representation of Australia's diverse communities within the television production sector. Partnering with seven of Australia's screen agencies, the scheme aims to address the current lack of career development opportunities for emerging screen practitioners and freelancers from different backgrounds, providing clear pathways for progression at all levels.

SBS would welcome the opportunity to increase the amount of locally produced radio and television content to deliver on our Charter obligations.

### SBS Engagement

SBS is committed to the engagement of multicultural communities to foster connections and understanding between SBS decision makers, leaders and on-air personalities and those communities who are so important to fostering social cohesion in contemporary multicultural Australia.

SBS partners with community organisations to support events and projects with multicultural communities, such as Harmony Day, Refugee Week, Queensland Multicultural Month, and various forums including the Conference of the Settlement Council of Australia and the National Multicultural Women's Conference (an outcome of a partnership between the Federation Ethnic Communities' Council Australia and Settlement Services International).



In March 2017, SBS was the media partner to the NSW Service for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors Australia and New Zealand 'Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference', the first conference of its kind.

SBS, through its Outreach program also works closely with young migrants to provide opportunities for them to share their stories. Some recent examples of this include:

- In partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) and aMBUSH Gallery, SBS developed the Harmony Art Collective, which engages young Australians aged 15–24 years, in particular young migrants, in positive discussion around identity and belonging. This nationwide campaign was delivered through a series of eight workshops from renowned street artists. The project culminated in a large scale exhibition in Sydney during March and April 2017. The project was supported by an online hub promoting youth engagement through multimedia articles and teacher packs.
- In celebration of National Youth Week (Friday 31 March to Sunday 9 April 2017), SBS launched the second annual SBS National Youth Week Film competition, a collaboration with the Foundation for Young Australians and the DSS, to give young people the opportunity to share their story on national television. The five winning short films premiered on the SBS network on Friday 31 March, on SBS VICELAND, NITV and Food Network, and are also available to watch online. The film competition encouraged young Australians from across the country, aged 15 to 24 years, to submit a 30 second film pitch illustrating their unique identity. After several rounds of judging, five winners were chosen to attend a week-long filmmaking and storytelling workshop in Melbourne. At the end of the workshop, each winner turned their short film idea into reality.
- SBS Learn, SBS's online home of free educational and schooling resources, has also partnered with the NSW Department of Education to produce a school resource linked to the 2017 'Face Up to Racism Week' on SBS. Jan Fran, from SBS's youth-focused news and current affairs program *The Feed*, met up with the talented Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa to learn how to face up to racism through the art of spoken word poetry. High school students can join in by watching clips from the series and online video tutorials before sharing their own poems with SBS. The resources are linked to the English and Arts curriculums.

Finally, it is noted that in 2016 SBS held a highly successful National Languages Competition in conjunction with Community Languages Australia, where school students were asked what learning a language means to them. With nearly 20,000 entries received, representing 37 languages – and with six winners awarded – this competition showed how much students, including recent migrants and children of migrants, truly value the benefits of bilingualism. While showing that bilingualism can break down barriers, encourage social cohesion and provide career opportunities, the competition also importantly revealed how language maintenance also assists with maintaining connection with family members – especially relevant to those who had recently migrated and who may speak little or no English, and may be in the process of developing English language proficiency. In this way, SBS community initiatives like the language competition clearly assist the migrant settlement process. Given its success, SBS plans to run the competition again later in 2017.

**TOR 9 – The potential benefits and disadvantages of establishing a legislative basis for the Multicultural Advisory Council, or for an ongoing Multicultural Commission**

SBS is a strong supporter of programs to support multiculturalism in Australia. SBS would also be interested in exploring partnerships with government agencies, departments and with a potential Multicultural Advisory Council or Commission, to further improve the experience of multiculturalism in Australia.