

SBS SUBMISSION TO ABS 2025 MINOR REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF CULTURAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

20 May 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Special Broadcasting Service (**SBS**) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (**ABS**) 2025 Minor Review of the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (**ASCCEG**) consultation.

For 50 years, SBS has played a crucial and unique role in Australia. The history of SBS dates to 1975, when the Australian Government established radio stations 2EA and 3EA to inform Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds about Medibank. Since then, SBS has evolved to deliver services across multiple platforms, broadcast and online, and we have grown our language portfolio to more than 60 languages, so that all audiences have free access to trusted news and high-quality entertainment.

Today, SBS News is the most trusted news source in Australia, and SBS has been awarded Australian podcast publisher of the year for three consecutive years. National Indigenous Television (**NITV**) is Australia's leading platform for First Nations storytelling and home to the only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander television news service. The SBS network delivers exceptional programming by and for Australia's diverse communities and in doing so, supports civic, social, and economic participation, and social cohesion in Australia.

SBS' USE OF ABS CENSUS DATA

The data provided through the Census is an essential tool for SBS, helping to inform the delivery of our Charter-led services. Comprehensive data on languages used and recentness of arrival in Australia, in combination with a range of other data points, are critical to ensure that SBS's services continue to meet the needs of diverse communities across Australia over time. This data is considered every five years by SBS, in line with the Australian Census, as a part of its Language Services Review.¹ SBS's in-language news and information services are relied on by individuals who speak a language other than English for accurate information on key issues such as the recent Federal Election and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Reflecting the importance of this data, SBS has previously provided feedback to the ABS supporting the collection of information on the languages individuals use regularly (including second, third, fourth languages and so on), the use of languages outside of home, and individual's capability of using these languages.

Census data on cultural and ethnic diversity can further support analysis of SBS's operating context. This Census data provides a picture of the rich diversity of communities across the

¹ SBS, *SBS Language Services Review*, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/sbs-language-services-review>



entire country, and how this picture is evolving. SBS can use this data in its research, planning, programming, and monitoring activities to understand audience needs and help guide our multi-platform services to ensure these resonate with communities over time.

As an example, in the *SBS Commissioning Equity & Inclusion Guidelines*² SBS sets targets designed to remove barriers and increase the representation of people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ and women. This is reflective of our commitment to ensuring that all Australians see themselves and their stories reflected on screen, and that we are leading the way to a more inclusive future for our industry. The data made available from the ABS on cultural and linguistic diversity can help inform these targets for on-screen and off-screen talent, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the Australian population and achieve population parity.

Further, as Australia's multicultural and First Nations broadcaster, SBS has a responsibility to our audiences, communities, and employees to ensure that our workplace reflects the rich diversity of communities we serve, and that our culture exemplifies our purpose of contributing to an inclusive and cohesive society. Census data on cultural and ethnic diversity can be used to inform how SBS's workplace diversity measures up compared to the Australian population.

In summary, any measures taken by the ABS to enhance the data available in relation to Cultural and Ethnic Groups would be welcomed.

THE VALUE OF COMPREHENSIVE DATA AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The SBS welcomes the ABS undertaking this minor review of the ASCCEG to ensure that it reflects the needs of communities across Australia today. We encourage the ABS to engage broadly with communities across Australia to ensure this opportunity to capture accurate, comprehensive information on the cultural and ethnic diversity of the nation is not missed in the 2026 Census. The data collated provides important insight into the diversity of communities across Australia, and as highlighted above, is valuable to understanding the operating context of SBS and the delivery of its Charter-led services.

² SBS, *SBS Commissioning Equity & Inclusion Guidelines*, <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/diversity-commissioning/guidelines/>