

17 September 2026

To the Queensland Arts Project Fund Assessment Panel,

Re: Letter of Support – Menaka Thomas

I am pleased to write in support of Menaka Thomas and her application to the Queensland Arts Project Fund for the creative development of a new immersive performance work in collaboration with composer, sound designer and producer Guy Webster.

I am the National Arts and Culture Manager for BEMAC and SSI, with a professional background spanning arts administration, curation, programming, cultural competency and community engagement. Through my work, I have supported artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and the development of contemporary intercultural practice within Queensland.

Menaka has a longstanding relationship with BEMAC and has contributed to its artistic and cultural life over many years. She has participated in and contributed to BEMAC artistic events and is currently a member of BEMAC's Artistic Advisory Panel. Through this relationship, I have come to know Menaka not only as an established artist, but also as someone who contributes thoughtfully to broader conversations about artistic practice, cultural diversity and the development of Queensland's arts sector.

Menaka has developed a distinctive artistic practice grounded in her South Indian Carnatic musical foundations while engaging with contemporary songwriting, collaboration and performance. Her different influences are not treated as separate artistic identities, but form part of an evolving contemporary language through which she explores her experience and artistic identity as an Indian-Australian artist.

I see this proposed development as an important progression in that practice. Menaka is seeking to move beyond a conventional music performance and expand the ways she makes and presents work by bringing together voice, movement, breath, sound and technology. Her intention to revisit her background in Bharatanatyam alongside her ongoing yoga practice, while developing new skills in live looping and vocal manipulation, creates an opportunity to integrate aspects of her artistic practice that have not previously been fully explored together.

The collaboration with Guy Webster is a strong component of the proposal. His experience across composition, sound design, theatre and dance brings a complementary practice to Menaka's musical and embodied background. Importantly, the artists are allowing time for experimentation and exchange rather than beginning with a predetermined outcome. This creates space for a genuinely interdisciplinary performance language to emerge.

From my experience working within intercultural arts, I see particular value in supporting artists to develop contemporary work that is informed by culture without being limited by expectations of what culturally diverse work should look or sound like. This project allows Menaka's Carnatic and Bharatanatyam foundations to remain an authentic part of her artistic vocabulary while creating space for experimentation, technology and new approaches to performance.

The project's exploration of the relationship between performer and audience is also compelling. Through audience proximity, spatial sound and opportunities for simple forms of participation, Menaka and Guy will

Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre Limited (BEMAC)

A subsidiary of Access Community Services Limited and Settlement Services International Limited (SSI)

ABN 80 964 149 832 | bemac.org.au

investigate ways for audiences to experience music beyond a conventional concert format. The work's multiple musical, cultural and embodied influences offer different points of connection without requiring audiences to have prior knowledge of any particular tradition.

The intimate public showing provides an appropriate opportunity to test these ideas and gather audience and peer feedback. I can also see potential for the work to develop beyond this initial stage into a larger interdisciplinary presentation suited to contemporary performance, music, festival and other arts contexts.

I strongly support Menaka undertaking this period of focused creative development. Through her longstanding involvement with BEMAC, I have seen her continue to contribute to Queensland's intercultural arts community while evolving her own practice. This project demonstrates a willingness to take creative risks and move into new artistic territory while building authentically on the cultural knowledge, experience and artistic language she has developed over many years.

I believe this development has the potential to generate a distinctive new work and make a valuable contribution to Queensland's contemporary intercultural arts landscape.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Attwood

National Arts and Culture Manager

BEMAC and SSI