

Submission to the Consultation on Australia's Next National Cultural Policy

by National Council of Jewish Women Australia (NCJWA)

Introduction

NCJWA is the peak representative body for Jewish women in Australia. Founded in 1923, NCJWA is the oldest Jewish community organisation in Australia. It focuses on human rights, social justice and the advancement of all women and girls and its vision is an Australian society that is equitable and inclusive for all women and girls.

Background

Since 7 October 2023, mainstream Jewish Australian women have experienced increasing exclusion from parts of Australia's cultural and literary sectors. Several women who are established Jewish Australian creatives have publicly described exclusion from festivals, programming and cultural spaces, despite longstanding contributions to Australian cultural life (see Appendix). Exclusion of Jewish artists has significant impacts on their livelihoods and marginalises mainstream Jewish representation in the Arts and Cultural sector. This is particularly concerning in a sector that is meant to publicly champion women's representation, inclusion and safety.

At the same time, concerns have emerged regarding publicly funded institutions platforming artists and speakers associated with rhetoric widely regarded as hateful, conspiratorial or dismissive of Jewish experiences of violence and antisemitism (see Appendix for illustrative examples).

Issues

The widespread exclusion of mainstream Jewish Australian women from Australia's cultural sphere raises important questions for the next National Cultural Policy about public trust, equitable participation and the obligations of publicly funded institutions. Cultural organisations cannot credibly promote inclusion, social cohesion and social resilience while applying inconsistent standards to different minority communities or permitting ideological gatekeeping to shape participation in cultural life. It should be noted that Jewish Australian women have also reported self-excluding from cultural events as audience members, for fear of encountering artists who engage in hateful, vilifying, inciteful or conspiratorial rhetoric.

A genuinely inclusive cultural policy must ensure that publicly funded cultural institutions remain open to all Australians who wish to contribute to our national story. Cultural inclusion cannot mean celebrating diversity in theory while, in practice, excluding or marginalising mainstream voices from specific minority communities. This is particularly important to ensure that women from those communities are able to participate fully and authentically in cultural life without pressure to suppress or renounce core aspects of their identity. Publicly funded arts and cultural spaces should foster robust debate, creative freedom and democratic participation while maintaining clear and consistently applied standards against vilification, hatred and incitement.

This submission is not a call to limit freedom of expression or legitimate political debate. Rather, it is a call for publicly funded cultural institutions to apply principles of inclusion, safety and anti-racism consistently across all communities. Public funding should not be used to platform hateful, conspiratorial or vilifying rhetoric directed toward any minority group, nor should participation in cultural life become contingent on ideological conformity. Public funding should be used for the practical implementation of nation-building, intercultural participation and mutual recognition.

Recommendations

To strengthen public confidence in Australia's cultural sector and ensure genuine inclusion, we recommend that the next National Cultural Policy:

- establish National Ethical Platforming Guidelines for federally funded cultural organisations and festivals, including standards relating to racism, antisemitism, religious vilification, incitement and hate speech and their consistent application;
- require publicly funded organisations to undertake reasonable due diligence and risk assessment processes regarding artists, speakers and performers;
- ensure funding frameworks promote genuine diversity of perspectives, including within minority communities, and guard against ideological gatekeeping in cultural programming;
- recognise antisemitism, including exclusionary cultural programming practices, as a barrier to participation of Jewish Australian women in Australian cultural life; and
- support cultural environments where Jewish Australian women can participate fully, safely and authentically without pressure to renounce core aspects of their identity.

A truly inclusive cultural policy must ensure that “a place for every story” includes mainstream Jewish stories too. Australia's cultural future will be stronger when all communities are able to contribute openly, safely and with dignity to our shared national conversation.

Appendix – Illustrative Examples Relevant to Concerns Raised in this Submission:

The examples below are provided to illustrate broader concerns regarding inclusion, ideological gatekeeping and the platforming of rhetoric within publicly funded cultural spaces.

- ABC Religion & Ethics, “Cultural homelessness: Jewish artists are harassed, abused and isolated in Australia’s creative industries” (3 September 2025)
<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/cultural-homelessness-jewish-artists-creative-industries/105530308>
- The Australian, reporting on social media posts by Biennale artist Feras Shaheen comparing “Zionists” to “Nazis” [REDACTED]
<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/culture/sydney-biennales-future-under-threat-after-artist-compared-patron-to-a-nazi/news-story/e3d5186091708f8d4c4c145859c97cf0>
- The Guardian, “Chris Minns and Jewish groups condemn ‘horrid rhetoric’ from DJ at opening night of Sydney Biennale” (16 March 2026).
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/mar/16/sydney-biennale-dj-haram-chris-minns-jewish-groups-response-ntwnfb>
- ABC News, “NSW Police investigating DJ Haram comments at Biennale of Sydney” (18 March 2026).
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-18/nsw-police-probe-dj-haram-comments-biennale-of-sydney/106468154>
- The New Arab, “A critical look at The New York Times’ weaponisation of rape in service of Israeli genocide” by Randa Abdel-Fattah (30 January 2024).
<https://www.newarab.com/opinion/critical-look-nyt-weaponisation-rape>

The Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism, Antisemitism in the Cultural and Creative Industries:

https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/Antisemitism_in_the_Cultural_and_Creative_Industries_MIRRA_Report/30283582?file=58508062

Perhaps policy makers involved in writing Australia’s next National Cultural Policy could take guidance from strategies suggested by Andrew Jakubowicz and the Working Group on Multicultural Australia Beyond Social Cohesion:

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/royal-commission-beyond-social-cohesion-multicultural-australia/106628396>.

These examples are not presented to limit legitimate political expression or debate. Rather, they illustrate concerns regarding the consistent application of inclusion, anti-racism and public accountability standards within taxpayer-funded cultural institutions.