

I am director of The Cross Art Projects in Kings Cross, Sydney a project space for contemporary visual art and conversation that often works at the interface of issues of censorship and racism in the visual arts.

The [National Cultural Policy](#) (NCP) released in 2023 as [Revive](#) included a [list of actions](#) (the 5-pillars) but lacked an overarching statement of Political and Social Rights and lacked an anti-racism and anti-discrimination framework.

Artists are the moral compass of the nation, but too often they are the “precariat”, the poorest and most isolated workers dependent on casual work or exhibition opportunity. Over the past two-plus years since the adoption of the Revive policies, many artists and galleries have been targeted and accused of “antisemitism” by lobby groups and the media for criticizing the actions of Israel in Gaza, East Jerusalem and now Lebanon and Syria. Artists have been targeted, vilified, and sometimes lost their jobs and exhibition and performance opportunities.

The organized campaign has been relentless as if conducting a censorship war on all art forms. The campaign appears to be in response to the application by South Africa to the International Court of Justice alleging that Israel's actions "are genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group". Ironically, many of the targets in Australia are members of Arabic speaking minorities or artists acting in solidarity in support of their artistic rights. This suppression of critical voices is creating injustice and inequality.

We must ensure that freedom of expression and political independence are included in the next cultural policy. The Aussie “fair go” alone does not work towards justice, nor do assumptions about Australian moral virtue based on the fact of being a signatory of international treaties and charters. Fair go and virtue statements do not address horrific attacks for speaking out in support of international legal standards.

Our commitment to de-colonisation, anti-discrimination and the respect for civil and political rights and freedoms must be front-and-centre of cultural policy. Freedom from fear and exclusion can only be achieved if conditions guarantee civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. To act against censorship, political interference and racism in the arts our national cultural policy must be committed to decolonisation, anti-racism, anti-discrimination.

To be free from political interference, Australia Council (now Creative Australia) boards must be independent and arms-length and protected by fixed terms. Artform peer boards need to be re-instated and be weighted towards equal representation of regional and remote artists.

- **Commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination** (Pillars 1: First Nations First, 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination approach.
 - The IHRA definition of antisemitism must be removed from all arts, cultural and educational institutions and be replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values: “The UN asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in

dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin. It maintains that no state, institution, group, or individual should make any discrimination in human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

- **Artists are the moral compass of the sector** (Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)
 - The National Cultural Policy must support artists to continue to be ethical and values-driven leaders of the sector and broader community.
 - Artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters and participate in boycott actions without harming their reputation and livelihoods.
 - Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, and support, champion and care for the diverse conversations that artists bring to their programs, particularly those who have been targeted in the media for speaking out against injustices.
 - Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, the media and politicians.
- **Freedom of speech and artistic expression** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - Strong cultural infrastructure must be based on artistic freedom of speech. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (11.e “to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues and critique power and class structures.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, there must be an end to the culture of intimidation that prevents artists from expressing and creating art freely.
 - The National Cultural Policy must address the prevalence of censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who speak out against injustices, particularly in relation to nations that have been condemned by the UN for acts of apartheid, genocide and war crimes.
- **Freedom from political interference in the arts** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent and free from political interference.
 - The National Cultural Policy must ensure independent and ‘arms length’ funding processes across federal, state and local government. This includes ensuring that politicians at all levels must not influence or give advice that results in the provision or removal of funding support of a particular project or artist. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (article 14.2) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - A key action for the National Cultural Policy must be to implement an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including through donations and board membership and lobbying.
 - Donors must not influence arts organisations and institutions.

- Board members with connections to political parties or lobbyists must be removed. All funding must be strictly arms-length and boards must have statutory independence and defined terms of office.