

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

ANDREW JAKUBOWICZ



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I have been involved with the arts, cultural development and policy in multicultural Australia for over 50 years. I have served on the Australia Council committees on community cultural development and arts for a multicultural Australia, and as a Board member of SBS. I have been involved in digital story telling and documentary since the 1990s. Revive has been a failure in this sphere. Its Boards and Councils are absent of people of colour (apart from First Nations) and its perspectives are driven by the Charter groups with little appreciation of cultural diversity. It is only now that Shakti has been put on the Infrastructure Panel that anyone from an immigrant community less than 50 years in the country appears at the policy table. \,In my time\, it was a given that there would be people of diverse cultural backgrounds as a matter of course on all decision making bodies, from policy to funding. This sensible decision was abandoned by the 1996 Coalition and not corrected since. As a consequence we have seen the rapid spread of cancel culture, decision making by committees and officials that is ham-fisted and destructive, and increasing alienation and isolation. The arts should bring people together - but we have built an Arts sphere which drives people apart. Much of this can be sheeted home to decision-making cabals that are exclusive, with disdain or distrust of the broad diversity of Australian society, and a precious protectionism of their own world views. Researching for this submission I was astonished how insular are the people appointed by the government - many with records of appalling decisions left to fester and corrode the sector. Unless these issues - appointing a much more diverse range of advisors, developing game plans to cool down and resolve conflict rather than inflame and exacerbate it, and re-orienting the idea of community to focus on bridging social capital - our National Cultural Policy will condemn the arts to tensions and destructive isolation as has occurred elsewhere where government has failed to adopt policies such as those recommended years ago by the Multicultural Framework Review. What we have now does not work in this cultural sphere - and more of the same will make it worse.

So incorporate the relevant recommendations of the MFR into the operation of REVIVE and its associated elements; ensure a minimum of 2 people from non-Charter communities in addition to First Nations on relevant advisory bodies; review senior staff appointments to ensure an understanding and a commitment to multicultural principles and to diversify the make-up as recommended by the MFR in its critique of the APS.; appoint an adviser to the minister on multicultural arts drawn from communities less than 50 years in Australia.