

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am writing as a long time arts manager and contemporary artist.

A National Cultural Policy needs to ensure that artistic expression is not constrained by knee jerk responses on the part of government departments, public institutions, arts companies, presenters and venues in the face of complaints from the public at large, or particular interest groups. Artistic expression has a long history of being a form of protected speech. However, in the face of complaints and assertions of antisemitism, a risk assessment approach seems to be adopted whereby artistic work is self censored or, censored rather than being defended on its merits.

Just as the ABC and the SBS has now rejected the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism so must a national cultural policy protect artistic expression, and the arts and cultural sector more broadly from baseless assertions of antisemitism. Antisemitism is abhorrent, but so is an ill-informed reaction to assertions of antisemitism that are no more than an attempt to silence voices that draw attention to the genocidal actions of Israel and its ongoing dispossession of Palestinians.

A key tenet of the previous National Cultural Policy was the centrality of the artist. This requires a level of commitment to freedom for expression so as to enable artists to create their work and display their work without fear of being censored in ways that do not recognise the scope of legitimate political debate and freedom of expression. Australian cultural expression strives to represent the diverse cultures that make up our population. This requires a National Cultural Policy that facilitates art-making that embraces a range of world views.