

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist; As an individual

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

That First Nations Artists in the theatre industry do not have true self determination or free agency as applies to other industry members.

That First Nations artists working in theatre continue to be involved in theatre as writers, directors, actors etc ONLY because their work is commissioned, produced and staged by Non-Indigenous theatre companies.

That First Nations theatre companies reflect this lack of agency and self determination in that their funding is mainly sourced from Non Indigenous philanthropic agencies. – and in some instances, Mining Companies.

That the Australian government, via the Arts Council, supports Non Indigenous companies to produce First Nations work is both an ongoing act of theft, cultural genocide - and the re-distribution of funds that could go to First Nations artists and companies directly... is going to Non Indigenous theatre companies that cherry pick the most palatable, non challenging Indigenous artists to collaborate with.

That any First Nations artists who criticise the industry, the arts council or the arts minister are subjected to exclusion, expulsion and for lack of a better term, 'black balling' from the industry.

This practice is not only happening today, but has happened since First Nations artists began working in Australian Theatre.

A Place for Every Story

That First Nations stories are only allowed on stage if they comply to certain colonial narratives – narratives that tend to paint Non Indigenous theatre companies and Artistic Directors as allies, simply for presenting a First Nations play.

Major theatre companies and Artistic Directors have now become the 'MISSION BOSSES' of Aboriginal artists – only allowing production and performance as a way to promote their standing as 'saviours', 'friends' and 'protectors' of Aboriginal People.

So, yes – there is a place for 'every story' but only if it presented through the White Australian filter of 'We are putting on a black play...aren't we gracious'

These stories usually happen in NAIDOC season.