



MEDIA RELEASE

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Political interference in artistic expression must stop

Artistic and creative organisations across Australia must reaffirm their commitment to freedom of expression following a series of interventions over the past 12 months which have resulted in artists being silenced or sidelined.

The latest case of the cancellation of Lebanese-Australian artist Khaled Sabsabi as Australia's representative at the 2026 Venice Biennale continues a disturbing trend of political interference in the arts.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance stands in solidarity with all Australians calling for the respectful treatment of all artists and the creative workforce and condemns political and industrial interference with rightful free speech and expression.

"The arts and freedom of expression are closely intertwined, and that relationship is essential to the creation of art in all its forms," said MEAA Chief Executive Erin Madeley.

"Art sheds critical light on our society and must challenge preconceptions, even if that makes some people uncomfortable. It is unrealistic to expect artists to leave their beliefs at the door.

"Any interference which seeks to prevent this must be unreservedly condemned.

"This is an industrial and workplace issue – one that goes to the very heart of the rights of artists not only as creators, but as workers."

MEAA is concerned about the way in which Sabsabi was dumped by Creative Australia just days after he was announced as Australia's representative for the prestigious Venice Biennale.

The review which has been announced by Creative Australia must fully examine not only the selection process for the Biennale, but the circumstances that led to the decision to drop Sabsabi, including whether there was any political interference.

The outcome of the review must be released publicly to ensure full transparency and accountability.

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