ANTISEMITISM IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

MONASH INITIATIVE FOR RAPID RESEARCH INTO ANTISEMITISM (MIRRA)

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This report from the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism (MIRRA) examines how antisemitism is affecting Australia's cultural and creative industries (CCIs). Based on interviews and workshops with artists, leaders and philanthropists, it reveals that many Jewish stakeholders now feel excluded, unsafe and professionally at risk. While recent global events have intensified these experiences, the findings also point to deeper structural issues across the sector.

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Finally, we would also like to acknowledge all Traditional Owners from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands on which we conducted interviews, focus groups and workshops.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

In this report, we use the abbreviation “CCIs” to refer to the cultural and creative industries. Throughout the document, we use the terms “arts and cultural sector” and “cultural and creative industries” interchangeably to describe the same field. Additionally, we use the term “stakeholders” to refer to research participants who contributed to this study. The views expressed reflect participants’ individual experiences and do not represent entire communities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ANTISEMITISM IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (CCIs)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism (MIRRA) has been established to better understand the nature and depth of antisemitism in Australia, and to develop best practices to combat it. This inaugural report presents the findings from research examining antisemitism within Australia's cultural and creative industries (CCIs).[1] Drawing from conversations with 64 interviewees and 31 attendees of workshops co-hosted with the Centre of Jewish Artists (COJA), including artists, philanthropists, arts industry leaders and representatives from major arts organisations, this research reveals significant challenges facing Jewish stakeholders in the sector following the Hamas attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023.

This research draws on literature and studies examining contemporary antisemitism globally and in Australia, including in the CCIs, to inform its analysis of how definitions of antisemitism are shaped and applied in research reporting (see: Lange et al. 2018; Campaign Against Antisemitism 2020; Gandel Foundation 2022; Mattsson et al. 2024; Union of Jewish Students 2024). In addition, relevant national anti-racism and sector-specific frameworks were reviewed to understand how antisemitism is currently recognised in practice (see: Australian Human Rights Commission 2024; Creative Australia 2023; Nexus Task Force 2024).

The research uses the concept of "ambient antisemitism" to better understand the issue within the CCIs. This term refers to a climate marked by anti-Israel hostility that, while not necessarily inherently antisemitic, creates an environment that feels unwelcoming and unsafe for many Jewish stakeholders (Boyd 2024). The research documents a dramatic shift in the cultural landscape, with one stakeholder noting: "I've never known this sector to be this divided and fractured" (Stakeholder A35). Although the landscape after 7 October was implicitly referenced and detailed by the majority of Jewish research participants as a catalyst for negative experiences in the sector — and remains the focus here, as evidenced by stakeholders' experiences — we acknowledge that some of these issues reflect longer-standing structural issues within the sector.

This research addresses key gaps in the study of contemporary antisemitism in Australia, which has been largely dominated by quantitative analysis, such as survey-based data. By capturing impact through in-depth conversations and documented stories from stakeholders across the sector, this qualitative approach enables a deeper understanding of antisemitism and its impact on Jewish artists, and in the CCIs more broadly.

KEY FINDINGS

Jewish voices are often absent from diversity and inclusion efforts, with anti-Zionist discourse and online harassment contributing to ambient antisemitism. Many Jewish creatives have withdrawn from former networks or public roles, citing a sense of cultural homelessness. The report calls for stronger sector-wide recognition of antisemitism and clear, consistent strategies to support cultural safety for Jewish communities.[2]

SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION FROM DIVERSITY FRAMEWORKS

The research reveals that despite the cultural sector's stated commitment to diversity and inclusion, Jewish stakeholders feel systematically excluded from prevailing diversity frameworks. This sense of exclusion exists within a broader context of structural inequities, rooted in long-standing patterns of exclusivity along race, class, gender and able-bodiedness, which have not only been experienced by Jewish stakeholders but also acknowledged by non-Jewish cultural leaders as issues that have persisted for years.

Recycled antisemitic narratives regarding perceived proximity to wealth, power and White privilege have contributed to perceptions among many Jewish stakeholders that they are not viewed as deserving of cultural sensitivity and care.

Jewish stakeholders report feeling betrayed by a sector they have historically supported and in which they have participated as artists, supporters and audiences. Many expressed that the sector's selective application of anti-discrimination ethics has amplified feelings of exclusion and hostility, with one stakeholder noting: "whether consciously or unconsciously, we feel left out of organisations' efforts to be more inclusive and diverse" (Stakeholder A1b).

ANTI-ZIONISM AND POST-COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Anti-Zionist discourse has become deeply embedded within the sector's post-colonial framework.[3] This discourse resonates strongly within arts communities committed to decolonisation, and the centring of Indigenous voices and marginalised perspectives. Commentary has increasingly shifted from critiques of Israeli policy to framing Israel as "a white colonial project in the Middle East" (Stakeholder A10). This creates a hostile environment where Jewish stakeholders with diverse views on Israel find themselves collectively demonised.

[1] Our use of the term "CCIs" in the context of this report and its findings encompasses diverse practices and organisations that span the performing arts, such as theatre and comedy; music; visual arts; graphic design and architecture; print publishing and digital media; cultural heritage sites; galleries, libraries and museums (GLAM); television; film-making; festivals; creative research; government and philanthropic funding bodies; as well as researchers who deliver policy recommendations in this sector.

[2] We use the term "cultural safety" in line with its common usage within the sector, as seen in the work of organisations such as Diversity Arts Australia and the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), while recognising the labour, knowledge and leadership of First Nations peoples in shaping and advancing this concept, particularly in addressing the systemic issues they continue to face in the CCIs. Our use of the term is not intended to dilute or distract from the pressing need for dedicated First Nations policy that supports and empowers a First Nations workforce in Australia.

[3] Anti-Zionism is a spectrum of ideas and attitudes towards Israel. Historically, within the Jewish world, it was opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state as the solution to antisemitism. After the establishment of Israel, anti-Zionism was often characterised by opposition to the centrality of Israel in global Jewish life. In the eastern bloc, anti-Zionism was used to justify a veiled attack on Jews by communist regimes. In more recent times, anti-Zionism typically denotes that Israel as a Jewish state ought to be abolished. The reasons for this are varied and complicated. Antisemitism can certainly intersect with anti-Zionism, although the latter is not inherently or necessarily antisemitic. The post-colonial shift in the arts and cultural sectors has led to a deeper reflection on White privilege and the impact of colonisation on First Nations people in Australia. It includes calls to "decolonise" the sector by centring Indigenous, minority and non-White migrant voices in storytelling and arts programming.

The timing of these tensions, with the 7 October attack occurring just one week before the Voice to Parliament referendum, created what stakeholders described as an emotionally charged environment where disappointment with the anticipated referendum result was channelled into an intensified focus on Israel. Many Jewish stakeholders feel that, with this shift, they are being held collectively responsible for the Israeli Government's actions, regardless of their personal political views.

Stakeholders identified a connection between the arts sector and academia, with several noting that higher education institutions serve as ideological incubators for anti-Zionist or anti-Israel views that then permeate the CCIs.[4]

CULTURAL ACTIVISM AND ONLINE HARASSMENT

The research documents how social media platforms have become sites of political mobilisation and harassment within creative communities. Unmoderated digital environments have enabled the "amplification of hatred" (Stakeholder A7a), with calls to boycott Jewish-affiliated organisations and individuals gaining momentum online. Additionally, doxxing, threats, abuse and harassment have become the norm online.

Arts organisations report being overwhelmed by rapidly growing online campaigns that threaten employees, programming and operations, and they often lack the appropriate resources to withstand online harassment. In response, Jewish philanthropists withdrew funding to reduce potential risks, such as coordinated online harassment and doxxing, both to the artists they supported and to themselves as funders in this space.

A notable finding is that, within the sector, the line between artistic expression and political activism has become increasingly blurred, surfacing tensions over where the boundaries of artistic freedom lie within institutional contexts. This has created particular challenges for institutions balancing artists' political activism with their duty of care to staff, audiences, board members and funding partners. The challenge lies in "giving people spaces to express themselves" without enabling harm (Stakeholder A1b).

JEWISH PHILANTHROPY

A significant finding concerns threats of cultural boycotts against Jewish philanthropic funding in the arts.[5] Antisemitic narratives about "wealthy Jewish families contributing 'Zionist blood money'" have circulated across creative circles, informed by harmful tropes about Jewish power, influence and control (Stakeholder A17). The research documents specific instances where Jewish philanthropists were forced to withdraw funding from cultural organisations and creative initiatives after being targeted by coordinated social media campaigns. These dynamics have created what one stakeholder termed "the weaponisation of generosity" (Stakeholder A35), where Jewish funders face a difficult choice between

[4] Anti-Israel attitudes tend to manifest not only as opposition to the government and its actions, but as opposition to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.
[5] The research also notes cultural boycotts where Jewish artists' work was cancelled or the marketing was significantly scaled back, representing a form of cultural erasure that impacts Jewish artists regardless of their political views.

withdrawing support and potentially reinforcing antisemitic tropes around Jews wielding financial power for nefarious ends, or remaining engaged despite hostility towards them.

Jewish board members have faced similar challenges, with some resigning or reporting heightened anxiety or discomfort after being targeted by online harassment campaigns or receiving inadequate support from their organisation. These resignations have raised concerns within the broader Jewish creative community about reduced representation in organisational governance structures.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL IMPACTS

The research documents the many negative professional and personal impacts on Jewish stakeholders:

Career ramifications: Loss of work opportunities, reduced networks and diminished motivation to pursue career development
Cultural safety concerns: Reluctance to attend performances or arts venues due to safety concerns
Identity concealment: Pre-emptive behaviours to hide Jewish identity or connections to Israel
Psychological distress: Heightened stress, feelings of professional homelessness and the impact of intergenerational trauma.

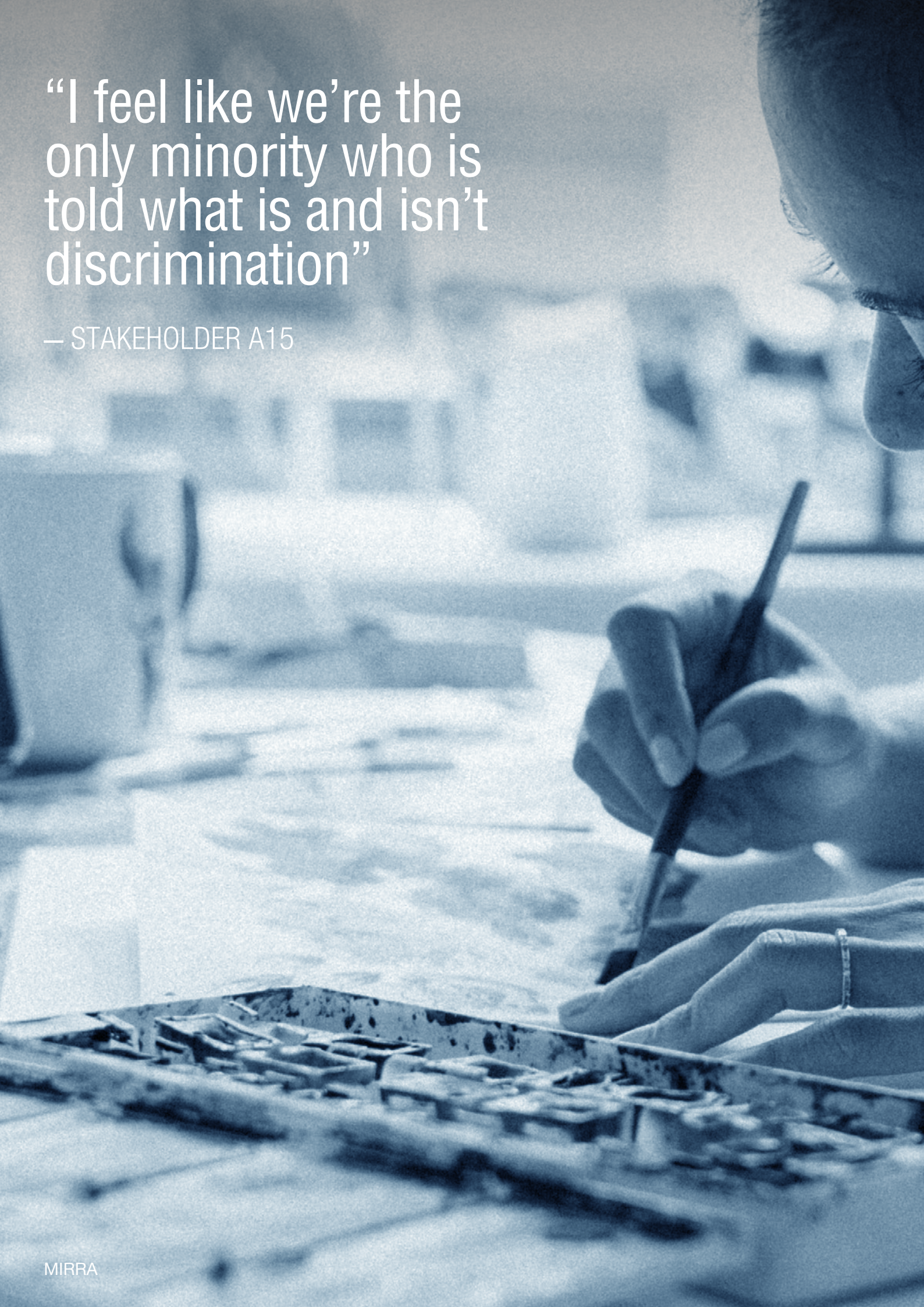
The research reveals specific instances of hostile workplace and professional network interactions. Many stakeholders described navigating “enemy territory” (Stakeholder A2b) and retreating from spaces that “once felt like home” (Stakeholder W1SN5.5). Some have pivoted entirely to Jewish cultural initiatives, creating tension between desires for safety and maintaining integrated relationships with the broader community.

DEFINITIONAL AUTHORITY

A critical finding concerns who holds authority in defining contemporary antisemitism. Jewish stakeholders report being told by non-Jewish colleagues what does and does not constitute antisemitism, with one noting: “I feel like we’re the only minority who is told what is and isn’t discrimination” (Stakeholder A15). This dismissal of Jewish experiences manifests in various ways, including instances where Jewish stakeholders were expected to justify their understanding of antisemitism to non-Jewish colleagues (educated professionals) in the CCIs.

STRUCTURAL ISSUES IN THE SECTOR

The research identifies how the sector’s structural challenges, including chronic under-resourcing, reliance on freelance and contract work, and limited organisational capacity, have amplified the impact of antisemitism on Jewish stakeholders. These precarious conditions have made Jewish independent artists and freelancers particularly vulnerable



“I feel like we’re the only minority who is told what is and isn’t discrimination”

— STAKEHOLDER A15

to professional exile and a reduction in their ability to sustain their practice and income.

The sector's fragmented structure, with complex relationships between governance, operational teams and contracted artists, has created vulnerabilities in managing indirect or remote relationships with artists. This has made it difficult for organisations to address harmful behaviour or provide adequate support to Jewish stakeholders when issues arise.

CULTURAL HOMELESSNESS

A significant finding is the feeling of cultural homelessness among Jewish stakeholders, with many expressing a sense of exile from their former networks and spaces. This has led to increased orientation towards Jewish cultural initiatives and community spaces. The language used by stakeholders often evokes historical Jewish experiences, with references to the "ghetto" or "shtetl" indicating anxiety about the creation of insular creative spaces as a result of antisemitism.[6]

IMPACT ON JEWISH CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

The research reveals how Jewish arts and cultural and cultural heritage institutions have been impacted, facing internal pressure from the Jewish community regarding programming choices while grappling with concerns about institutional identity and long-term viability. For Holocaust education organisations, for instance, the current situation has prompted critical reflection about the effectiveness of historical approaches to antisemitism education. Many have shifted to welfare provision and are increasingly called upon to lead anti-antisemitism education efforts. Security has also become a heightened concern for many Jewish cultural organisations.

IMPACT VS. INTENT

Given the harm felt by most participants, the findings and recommendations focus on impact rather than intent, acknowledging that even "ambient" or indirect antisemitism can have profound psychological effects, including negative impacts on emotional safety and wellbeing, equivalent to more direct experiences.

[6] Shtetl refers to a small town or village in Eastern Europe with a high proportion of Jewish residents. See: Shandler (2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are grounded in the lived experiences of those most directly impacted and shaped through meaningful consultation with stakeholders. This participatory approach ensures the strategies reflect the realities, needs and insights of the community.

These recommendations are intended to guide leaders across state and federal government, the sector and individual institutions and organisations.

RECOMMENDATION 01

DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABLE AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Antisemitism in the CCIs is often enabled by unclear policies, inconsistent responses and a lack of accountability. Effective leadership is essential for addressing antisemitism and fostering cultural safety within the sector.

1.1 Acknowledge past harms and gaps in leadership and frameworks

1.1.1 Meaningfully acknowledge the harm evidenced by Jewish stakeholders' experiences

1.1.2. Develop clear and consistent guidelines for cultural safety that include Jewish experiences of antisemitism

1.1.3. Provide reassurance through visible commitment to addressing antisemitism within the CCIs

1.2 Rebuild trust through dialogue and collaboration

1.2.1 Leverage the creative community's skills to facilitate nuanced, empathetic conversations about the issue of antisemitism in the CCIs and its impact on stakeholders

1.2.2 Establish collaborative forums and cross-sector debriefs for sharing expertise and effective practices for addressing key challenges, including antisemitism, in the sector

RECOMMENDATION 02

EMBED CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN SECTOR-WIDE RESPONSES TO ANTISEMITISM

Building cultural competency around Jewish identity is vital for fostering safe, inclusive spaces. In progressive and artistic settings, antisemitism often appears subtly, requiring community-specific, trauma-informed approaches to address it effectively.

2.1 Build trauma-informed, sector-specific responses to antisemitism

2.1.1 Establish accountability mechanisms for addressing stakeholder harm, including training senior management in direct outreach approaches and ensuring serious consideration of concerns raised by Jewish employees, colleagues, partners and stakeholders

2.1.2 Use concrete examples of incidents that have occurred in the sector to demonstrate impact on Jewish stakeholders, rather than focusing on definitions of antisemitism

2.1.3 Implement educational programs that capture cultural specificities, including religious and historical connections to Israel, diversity of views on Zionism and intergenerational trauma of the Australian Jewish community

2.1.4 Address specific forms of antisemitism emerging from the CCIs, including doxxing, exclusion, harassment and targeting Jewish individuals, organisations and institutions

2.1.5 Develop educational workshops tailored to arts and cultural departments in universities, building on existing campus-based interventions with department-specific content

2.2 Train for culturally safe and inclusive creative spaces

2.2.1 Implement or revise cultural awareness training for leaders, organisations and institutions on the Australian Jewish community's diversity and practices, ensuring cultural competency training reaches all levels from governance to contracted artists

2.2.2. Address the particular sources and subtle expressions of antisemitism that emerge in progressive creative, arts and cultural spaces

2.2.3 Implement or revise training that emphasises how to respond when Jewish stakeholders share experiences of trauma or harm

2.3 Consult on resource development and access

2.3.1 Draw on existing databases, support networks and training resources for Jewish creatives and professionals experiencing discrimination

2.3.2 Consult Jewish arts and cultural organisations — such as the Centre of Jewish Artists (COJA), the Shalom Collective and the Sydney Jewish Museum — to effectively guide Jewish colleagues, staff and team members to appropriate resources and support

2.3.3 Consult diverse Jewish stakeholders to expand or adapt existing initiatives and training resources such as the Creative Equity Toolkit (Diversity Arts Australia) and Creative Workplaces (Creative Australia)

RECOMMENDATION 03

STRENGTHEN SECTOR RESILIENCE THROUGH STRATEGIC POLICY REFORM

Strategic policy reforms are key to ensuring consistent, accountable responses to antisemitism across CCIs and clarifying responsibilities for fostering inclusive, culturally safe environments.

3.1 Strengthen institutional accountability and governance

3.1.1 Outline clear remits and responsibilities for all stakeholders at every level of cultural institutions and organisations — from board members to contractors — through explicit policies, guidelines and frameworks

3.1.2 Develop adaptable templates for policies and frameworks that can be tailored accordingly

3.1.3 Ensure internal alignment between different teams and management levels in institutional approaches and responses

3.2 Revisit cultural safety guidelines

3.2.1 Establish or expand cultural safety guidelines to encompass emotional safety and trauma-informed approaches to Jewish experiences of antisemitism

3.2.2 Outline the responsibilities that accompany creative freedoms and ensure that principles regarding political discourse and expression are applied consistently

3.3 Manage digital platforms

3.3.1 Address the growing influence of social media in shaping institutional responses by developing strategies to manage rapidly growing online campaigns that threaten employees and operations

3.3.2 Create or update policies that promote thoughtful engagement in online spaces, supported by training and education to implement long-term cultural shifts regarding online interactions

3.3.3 Develop or enhance organisational guidelines and social media policies for managing online discourse

RECOMMENDATION 04

CENTRE JEWISH LIVED EXPERIENCE AND DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Building cultural competency around Jewish identity is vital for fostering safe, inclusive spaces. In progressive and artistic settings, antisemitism often appears subtly, requiring community-specific, trauma-informed approaches to address it effectively.

4.1 Elevate Jewish lived experience in sector response

4.1.1 Ensure Jewish voices are at the heart of creating solutions to the issues and experiences that they encounter in the sector, rather than applying outside approaches that may not reflect their experiences

4.1.2 Acknowledge the emotional and cultural load for Jewish participants who design, contribute to and deliver education programs on antisemitism

4.2 Embrace diversity within Jewish communities

4.2.1 Build awareness about the diversity within Jewish communities regarding Israel, Zionism and responses to antisemitism

4.2.2 Create space for differing viewpoints while maintaining commitment to safety and inclusion

4.2.3 Ensure diverse representation in decision-making teams and processes, including in interpreting what constitutes harm[7]

[7] This should be informed by broader diversity and inclusion frameworks, aligned with ratified or legal definitions of antisemitism, and consistent with an organisation's overall cultural values and mission

CONCLUSION

The research reveals that antisemitism in Australia's CCIs is a systemic issue, exposing contradictions in the sector's values around cultural inclusion, diversity and the importance of lived experience. Many stakeholders attributed their experiences to "unconscious antisemitism", which is a lack of understanding that certain views are harmful or damaging, resulting in the perpetuation of harm without anticipating the consequences[8]. This framework does not preclude conscious hostile intent, but emphasises that the focus should be on addressing impacts experienced by Jewish stakeholders rather than debating motivations.

The findings emphasise that addressing antisemitism requires both acknowledging Jewish stakeholders' capacity to define their experiences and implementing practical solutions that create genuinely inclusive environments. As one stakeholder noted: "If someone is offended and hurt and upset and feels that [something] has happened to them, then that has happened to them – it's about impact, not intent" (Stakeholder B24).

The creative community's capacity for empathy and nuanced dialogue positions it well to lead constructive responses to these challenges. However, this requires sustained commitment to trauma-informed approaches, meaningful community consultation and recognition that creating truly inclusive spaces means ensuring Jewish stakeholders feel safe, valued and heard.

Success will be measured not only by policy changes but by whether Jewish artists, creatives and cultural professionals can participate fully in Australia's cultural life without fear, concealment or professional ramifications. The sector's response to these findings will determine whether it can fulfil its stated commitment to being a place for every story and ensuring every Australian can contribute as creators of culture.

[8] See: Mattsson, Andersson Malmros and Sager (2024)

FULL REPORT

ANTISEMITISM IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (CCIs)

MIRRA

OVERVIEW OF FULL REPORT

Established by the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation (ACJC) in late 2024, the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism (MIRRA) is a quarterly series of studies that seeks to understand the causes of antisemitism in Australia, and how it harms Australian Jewry and Australian society more broadly. Each study aims to provide a root cause analysis of why antisemitism occurs so that governments, institutions and individuals can better understand the roles they play in minimising its impact. This first report stems from the inaugural MIRRA project focusing on the arts and culture sector, with an eye to developing strategies that effectively address contemporary antisemitism in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs).

One of the pressing challenges facing Australia's cultural and creative arts sector is navigating the heightened tensions following the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 and Israel's subsequent assault on Gaza. In that time, the sector has experienced a notable strain in relationships between institutions and their artists, and supporters and internal leadership, as many arts organisations attempt to manage their various stakeholders who have a range of attitudes and relationships to Israel and Palestine. As one interviewee for this project notes: "I've never known this sector to be this divided and fractured" (Stakeholder A35).

Through grassroots initiatives, notably open letters, social media posts and campaigns, artists from various creative industries came together to declare their support for Palestinians and their condemnation of Israel in the days after 7 October before Israel launched its campaign in Gaza. Many Jewish creatives, artists and cultural professionals were "reeling" (Stakeholder A12b) from the news from Israel, receiving reports from friends, family members and loved ones about the unfolding situation. Initial distress was soon followed (compounded or at times eclipsed) by intense feelings of shock and confusion as colleagues, peers and friends, including individuals who run or work in arts organisations, posted their reactions online:

> And then it happened…this tsunami feeling of being completely overwhelmed [and] thinking: "Oh my god" (because of the pogrom nature of [the Hamas attacks]) and because by October 8th everyone said: "Oh, they had it coming to them." (Stakeholder A12b)

For some, the silence or apathy exhibited by certain industry peers in the aftermath of the attacks was made all the more jarring by the context in which the violence occurred:

> I just remember when I heard about it – [the Hamas attacks took place] at a music festival…I just couldn't believe that the music industry was silent. (Stakeholder A15)

In the days that followed, there were hints that polarised discourses surrounding Israel-Palestine would emerge on a much larger scale, not only confined to online spaces, but playing out visibly across Australia's creative arts and cultural landscape. On 9 October 2023, hundreds of demonstrators waved Palestinian flags to protest a decision to light up the Sydney Opera House in the colours of the Israeli flag in a statement of solidarity.

> People were waving burning Israeli flags at the [Sydney] Opera House and chanting. And whether it's: "Fuck the Jews" or "Gas the Jews" [or "Where's the Jews?"] is immaterial – it's violent. (Stakeholder A9)

This protest signalled how these arts, cultural and creative spaces have become arenas where discourses surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict are performed and contested. When deciding whether to issue public statements or internal communications regarding the unfolding situation in the Middle East, or when responding to positions taken by those within their networks or institutional settings, many arts and cultural organisations entered reactive crisis management mode, convening emergency or after-hours board meetings. These, at times, took place with key decision-makers absent or overseas, or without consulting community representatives from the impacted parties.

> I think a lot of organisations made statements quite reactively…without necessarily considering the wording very carefully. That wording led to a lot of pain in the Jewish community – organisations that artists had dedicated ten years of their life to working towards, all of a sudden, without consulting anyone in the organisation (let alone any of the Jews that they work with) [made statements]. (Stakeholder A1b)

> The impression you get is boards coming together at 10[pm] at night, panicking… scrambling to try and get their position right. And they went from one extreme to the other extreme and, in the process, they hurt everyone. (Stakeholder A22b)

The recent reversal of the decision by Creative Australia to reinstate artist Khaled Sabsabi as Australia's Venice Biennale representative after concerns about two of his previous artworks resulted in his contract being rescinded, along with the ongoing legal repercussions faced by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for cancelling a performance by an artist after they made onstage comments about the war in Gaza, highlight that risk management in the arts sector has been a major challenge for leaders and institutions trying to balance the often-competing needs of their different constituents effectively (see: Cmielewski 2025).

As creatives, artists and staff in the cultural sector engage with discourse around Israel, Gaza and Palestine, institutions are balancing freedom of expression with creating culturally safe and inclusive spaces in their venues, workplaces and board meetings.

> There's a lot of pressure…[cultural and arts organisations are] getting smashed from all sides, in terms of the positioning on Israel, on Jews and on artists, and how to separate art from artists, and how to deal with people getting up on stage, making political statements, upsetting people and creating unsafe environments. (Stakeholder A5b)

Such points of tension have seen Jewish board members and philanthropists stepping away from arts-cultural organisations in response to programming decisions, and to the institutional handling of calls for boycotts and online harassment of Jewish artists, funders and arts workers. Internal and public backlash to key incidents has resulted in significant organisational strain, as well as career ramifications and severe personal tolls on artists and those in positions of leadership. As one stakeholder noted: "I started getting death threats. I was not used to getting that kind of attack. I'm not a politician. [I'm] someone who was managing an arts organisation" (Stakeholder B23). These organisational impacts provide an important contextual foundation for the findings of this preliminary report, which focuses predominantly on the impacts of the sector's management of discourse surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict. This engagement has created conditions that have led to the emergence of antisemitism and anti-Jewish hostility, often linked to anti-Israel discourse, with significant consequences for Jewish stakeholders within the CCIs.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents urgent insights into the lived experiences of Jewish stakeholders as well as professionals and board leaders in the CCIs. We draw on their voices from interviews and focus groups with 64 participants, as well as a series of workshops with 31 attendees co-hosted with the Centre of Jewish Artists (COJA) to analyse key themes that highlight the causes and impacts of Jewish experiences of marginalisation and discrimination in the sector and evidence of impact. Our aim is not to label any specific incident as antisemitism or not, but to better understand the implications of Israel-Palestine discourses within workplace and sector-wide contexts. This benefits not only Jewish stakeholders who are the focus of this report but also prompts reflection on what it means to foster an inclusive and culturally diverse arts and creative sector.

The qualitative findings of the project raise broader concerns about how discrimination is recognised and addressed, particularly when antisemitism falls below the threshold of overt exclusion or is otherwise unquantifiable, yet is articulated strongly through stakeholders' testimonies. While the quantifiable impact of reduced creative output by Jewish artists is yet to be measured, the findings presented in this report highlight the urgency for an empathy-led and trauma-informed approach, one that focuses especially on impact, not only intention, to address the experiences outlined by Jewish stakeholders in the CCIs.

This research addresses a critical gap in the study of antisemitism that is dominated by quantitative analysis and survey-based approaches. While some recent work has explored cultural responses to antisemitism — often focusing on media narratives or prominent Jewish figures (e.g., Sutcliffe 2024 on the UK) — there remains a lack of attention to grassroots, affective expressions within Jewish creative communities. This study takes a different path by centring the lived experiences and voices of independent Jewish creatives and artists. In doing so, it not only acknowledges their perspectives but places them at the heart of our analysis and recommendations for moving a divided sector forward.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH AIMS

The project's research aims were to:

- explore how antisemitism manifests within Australia's CCIs
- identify the conditions that contribute to the emergence of antisemitism within these settings
- investigate how the experiences of Jewish artists, creatives and cultural professionals with antisemitism can inform the adaptation of existing frameworks and resources in the creative and cultural sector to more effectively address antisemitism.

Conversations with research participants were guided by the project's overarching research aims, with indicative or guiding interview questions for Cohort A and B centred on the following themes:

- how participants understand and describe antisemitism
- if, how, when and where participants experience antisemitism (i.e., the settings and instances where antisemitism occurs)
- the personal and professional impacts of antisemitism on those who experience it, including their behavioural or emotional responses
- how participants perceive and interpret the current strategic priorities of their organisation or institution related to cultural diversity, equity and representational practices
- how participants understand antisemitism is currently being addressed at both organisational and individual levels
- recommendations for strategies and/or frameworks to identify and address antisemitism in the creative and cultural industries.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The selection of stakeholders for this research project was guided by the dual aim of exploring Jewish experiences in the arts and cultural sector and identifying practical solutions to address antisemitism within this industry. Our selected stakeholders span a wide range of creative, cultural and arts spaces, including institutions that sustain Australian arts, culture and heritage, providing a comprehensive perspective on the intersection of antisemitism within the creative and cultural industries. In alignment with the spirit of Australia's national cultural policy, Revive, and its commitment to recognising the "contributions of all Australians as the creators of culture" (2023: 18), this project uses a broad definition of the CCIs. Our use of the term "CCIs" encompasses diverse practices and organisations that span the performing arts, such as theatre and comedy; music; visual arts; graphic design and architecture; print publishing and digital media; cultural heritage sites; galleries, libraries and museums (GLAM); television; film-making; festivals; creative research; government and philanthropic funding bodies; as well as researchers who deliver policy recommendations in this sector. Our stakeholders have been selected to represent two distinct but interconnected cohorts:

Cohort A: Jewish artists, creatives, cultural industry professionals, organisations and philanthropists
Engaging with this cohort is key to developing a deep understanding of the challenges Jewish stakeholders face in their workplaces, networks and creative-professional settings, including the impact of the sector's engagement with discourses related to Israel-Palestine.

Cohort B: Representatives of Australian creative bodies, cultural spaces and institutions (not explicitly identified as Jewish)
Engaging with this cohort ensures broad representation across creative sub-sectors to better understand both the impact and conditions of the sector's engagement with Israel-Palestine discourses. These stakeholders – representatives of creative organisations and cultural institutions not explicitly identified as Jewish – are selected because they may benefit from greater support in addressing antisemitism, having been involved in or impacted by recent incidents. This engagement provides an opportunity to help organisations better incorporate antisemitism awareness into their frameworks.

These categories are intended as guiding frameworks rather than fixed classifications, reflecting the fluid and complex realities of the sector, including the diverse roles and practices of its many stakeholders. For example, many representatives or leaders of arts organisations also maintain a personal creative praxis. In some cases, Jewish stakeholders participated in the research as representatives of arts or cultural organisations categorised under Cohort B (i.e., institutions not explicitly identified as Jewish). Conversely, we also engaged with non-Jewish representatives working within Jewish cultural spaces. By focusing on these two cohorts, this research aims to bridge the gap between the lived experiences of Jewish creatives and the institutional structures that shape these experiences within the broader arts and cultural sector.

The views and experiences of Australia's Jewish community are diverse, and we have attempted to capture that diversity in our research. To this end, we sought to speak to a broad cross-section of artists and institutions that reflect these different understandings of antisemitism and its impact on the CCIs. These include Jewish artists who feel that antisemitism has deeply affected their livelihood and artistic practice, and others who see antisemitism as not a serious phenomenon in the arts community or in Australian life more broadly. Among this group are artists and creatives who see public discourse around antisemitism as a distraction from the more urgent task of advocating on behalf of Palestinians and other marginalised groups.

> With all due respect, this project is a distraction because there's no antisemitism in the arts. There's a lot of structural issues within the arts and for artists — queer artists, Black artists, Brown artists, non-white artists, Jewish artists, white artists, all sorts of artists — to access things, but that's not a problem of antisemitism. (Stakeholder A8b)

> I've seen a lot of racism, sexism, transphobia – but I haven't seen antisemitism. (Stakeholder A19a)

This research endeavours to capture the complexity of the structural issues involved in understanding how antisemitism emerges and operates in the sector, focusing on its impact on Jewish stakeholders, while also considering how these dynamics intersect with broader systemic challenges within the creative and cultural sector.

RECRUITMENT

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Potential stakeholders were approached to participate in this project through an email invitation, with contact information solicited from a public domain source or from the participants themselves. The project also used a snowballing approach to recruitment. Many stakeholders gave referrals by recommending other people in their networks who they thought might be interested and suitable to participate in the project. Potential stakeholders were invited to a one-hour interview, either in-person or online. With informed consent (confirmed verbally before the commencement of conversations), these interviews were recorded (for in-person, audio recording; for online, audio-video recording) for transcription and subsequent analysis. Interviews and focus groups took place between mid-March and early June 2025.

WORKSHOPS

As part of this project, we partnered with COJA to capture the voices of the Jewish creative community. To this end, we invited COJA members, recruiting participants through the centre's community networks and channels, to participate in a group workshop exploring shared experiences of antisemitism in their professional lives as creatives and artists. We hosted three workshops in total (one online and two in-person) in early April 2025.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

This project takes a qualitative approach through interviews, focus groups and workshops to explore how our research participants interpreted and articulated their experiences within the context of the CCIs. In Australia, researchers have previously used qualitative methods to investigate the Jewish community's experiences of antisemitism and their opinions on its sources and solutions (see: Creese 2018). By applying this approach to the creative and cultural industries, this research uses a qualitative methodology to understand how stakeholders interpret their lived experiences and articulate their thoughts and feelings about antisemitism in their own words.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

In-depth, semi-structured conversations are often used by researchers to engage with their research participants on a deeper level, to understand their "experiences, opinions, attitudes…behaviours or predictions" (Rowley 2012: 261-2). In light of the sensitive subject matter, we approached these interviews as "contextualised conversations" to build rapport, adopting an "informal and emergent" style that contrasts with more formal ethnographic interviewing (Stage and Mattson 2003: 97-8).

WORKSHOPS

Inspired by methodological approaches in contemporary qualitative research (see: Baker, Cantillon and Evans 2023, 2024), workshops were structured around activities to encourage conversation in response to the project's overarching research questions. Workshop attendees were provided with physical and virtual materials (e.g., paper, e-documents and sticky notes) to record their responses to activity prompts from the workshop facilitators. These materials were requested or collected (with consent) for data analysis. These activities aimed to help participants process their thoughts and articulate themselves, while providing the project with qualitative data. As one workshop attendee commented: "It's a nice way to process – it can be really cathartic" (Stakeholder W3A1.5). The workshops were designed with remedial intent, providing participants with what one attendee described as an opportunity to "offload the burden" (Stakeholder W1A1.3) in a safe environment that encouraged candid self-expression.

Through group activities and informal conversation, this participatory and collaborative approach aimed to capture participants' lived experiences, inspire dialogue and reflection between attendees, and foster a sense of community. A key outcome of the workshops was a participant-created manifesto on cultural safety and inclusion, outlining how to create culturally safe and inclusive spaces for Jewish artists in Australia based on their experiences and perspectives. The recommendations of this report draw from these collated suggestions.

DATA ANALYSIS

We used thematic analysis (see: Clarke and Braun 2006) to transcribe and code interview, focus group and workshop data to identify recurrent themes and narratives. Once organised into themes and subthemes, stakeholders' articulated experiences revealed patterns that could be broadly categorised as causes (or conditions) and impacts, helping to distil key discussion points for the preliminary report.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In line with procedures outlined by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC), all stakeholders received an explanatory statement and consent form ahead of their participation. The former outlined potential emotional and reputational risks, including discomfort for Jewish stakeholders (Cohort A) recounting personal or professional experiences, and concern among cultural sector representatives (Cohort B) regarding public perceptions of their organisation's responses to antisemitism.

Potential participants could choose (via the consent form) whether they, as an individual and/or representative of an organisation, and their affiliated organisations were named in the publication of the research data and findings. Where anonymity was preferred, names and organisational identifiers were removed and/or referred to generically. Potential participants were informed that, although full anonymity

could not be guaranteed in all cases, every effort was made to de-identify individuals and organisations in the project's outputs. For this preliminary report, all participant quotes have been de-identified to ensure consistency and ease of reading. Organisations discussed or referenced by participants are identified generically, and participants are cited using generic "stakeholder" designations to protect their identities while maintaining the integrity of their contributions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

AMBIENT ANTISEMITISM

For many stakeholders, 7 October 2023 created a shift in how they understood their place in the arts and creative landscape, namely their placement and navigation of its networks and spaces, while marking a definitive turning point in how they view the prevalence of antisemitism in Australia. As one stakeholder (A35) explained: "I thought that I lived in a world that was largely free of antisemitism." Referring specifically to antisemitism in the arts, another noted: "I was one of those glass-half-full people who thought: mate, no way – it doesn't exist" (Stakeholder A23). The post–7 October landscape was referenced by the majority of Jewish research participants as a catalyst for negative experiences in the sector and remains the focus here.

Stakeholders were asked to define or describe antisemitism in their own words or as it pertains to their own experiences. A Jewish creative working in an arts advisory organisation (Stakeholder B10), noted that antisemitic incidents can be mapped on a "spectrum" from "microaggressions to full-out violence". Adapting typology created by Keller and Galgay (2010: 249), microaggressions might include the "denial of antisemitism experience", which occurs when personal experiences of antisemitism are minimised or denied, often described by many Jewish stakeholders as a form of gaslighting (see: Johnson et al 2021). Notable incidents of antisemitic violence in Australia since 7 October 2023, including the firebombing of the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne and the arson attack on a Jewish child care centre in Sydney, demonstrate that antisemitism continues to pose a deadly threat to Jewish individuals and communities.

In the context of the CCIs, the evidence presented in this report focuses on experiences of antisemitism that do not cross the "threshold" into physical violence and criminality (see: Sengul and McSwiney 2024). Much of the reported antisemitism is unquantifiable, yet it is strongly conveyed through the lived experiences of stakeholders. These observations raise broader concerns about how antisemitism is recognised when it is abstract or difficult to measure, or when its impacts are felt in embodied ways as "a mild sense of unease that's sitting in my system" (Stakeholder B10) or "a constant sense of being discriminated against and whether it's reality or not, I just don't know" (Stakeholder A15).

As creatives, artists and professionals in the arts and cultural sectors engage with discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict, many Jewish participants described antisemitism as difficult to disentangle from anti-Israel sentiments: "A lot of antisemitism is directed at Israel at the moment" (Stakeholder A12a) and "instead of Jew-hating, it's Zionist-hating" (Stakeholder A21). According to the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (UK), "ambient antisemitism" is characterised by incidents such as "defacing or tearing down posters of Israeli hostages, that, whether strictly antisemitic or not, create a broader milieu that feels threatening and hostile to many Jewish people" (Boyd 2024). The current climate of anti-Israel hostility within the sector, although not necessarily or inherently antisemitic, has created an environment that feels unwelcoming, unsafe or unsettling for many Jewish stakeholders interviewed for this project. As one stakeholder (A37) explained: "I didn't actually feel anyone was going to attack me, but I felt attacked so deeply to the core of who I am [which] is being Jewish." Such concerns speak to the concept of cultural safety – principles of which are outlined

in various reporting on creative and cultural engagement, especially for racialised and minority groups (see: A New Approach 2024; Australian Human Rights Commission 2024) and the creation of spaces free from "challenge or denial of identity" (see: Diversity Arts Australia 2019 and Victorian Government 2024 on cultural safety for First Nations people).

The reported feelings of ambient antisemitism (as articulated by various stakeholders) help to contextualise and bridge the gap between their lived experiences of unease and the documented incidents of overt exclusion within the CCIs and violent antisemitism beyond the sector:

> Nobody has personally commented or said something directly to me… it's just more in the air… I can't say I'm experiencing direct antisemitism [but] it's probably been more than in the air because there've been real physical incidents. (Stakeholder A16)

For many Jewish stakeholders, their personal negative experiences in arts and cultural spaces are compounded by the circulation of anecdotes within the Jewish creative community. One stakeholder (A1b) noted: "I've heard a number of stories [that] has created a feeling in me that Jews [are] not receiving grants, prizes or things based on the fact that they're Jewish. [I] feel like I internalise that in some way." While one stakeholder described their experience of antisemitism as "all-consuming" (Stakeholder W1SN3.7), others drew attention to the implications of a "hyperfocus" (Stakeholder A32) on antisemitism within the Jewish community, which can intensify feelings of vulnerability and victimhood. This shapes how Jewish creatives and artists navigate their broader networks, often requiring the investment of significant emotional labour, while surfacing divergences in how Jewish stakeholders think and talk about antisemitism:

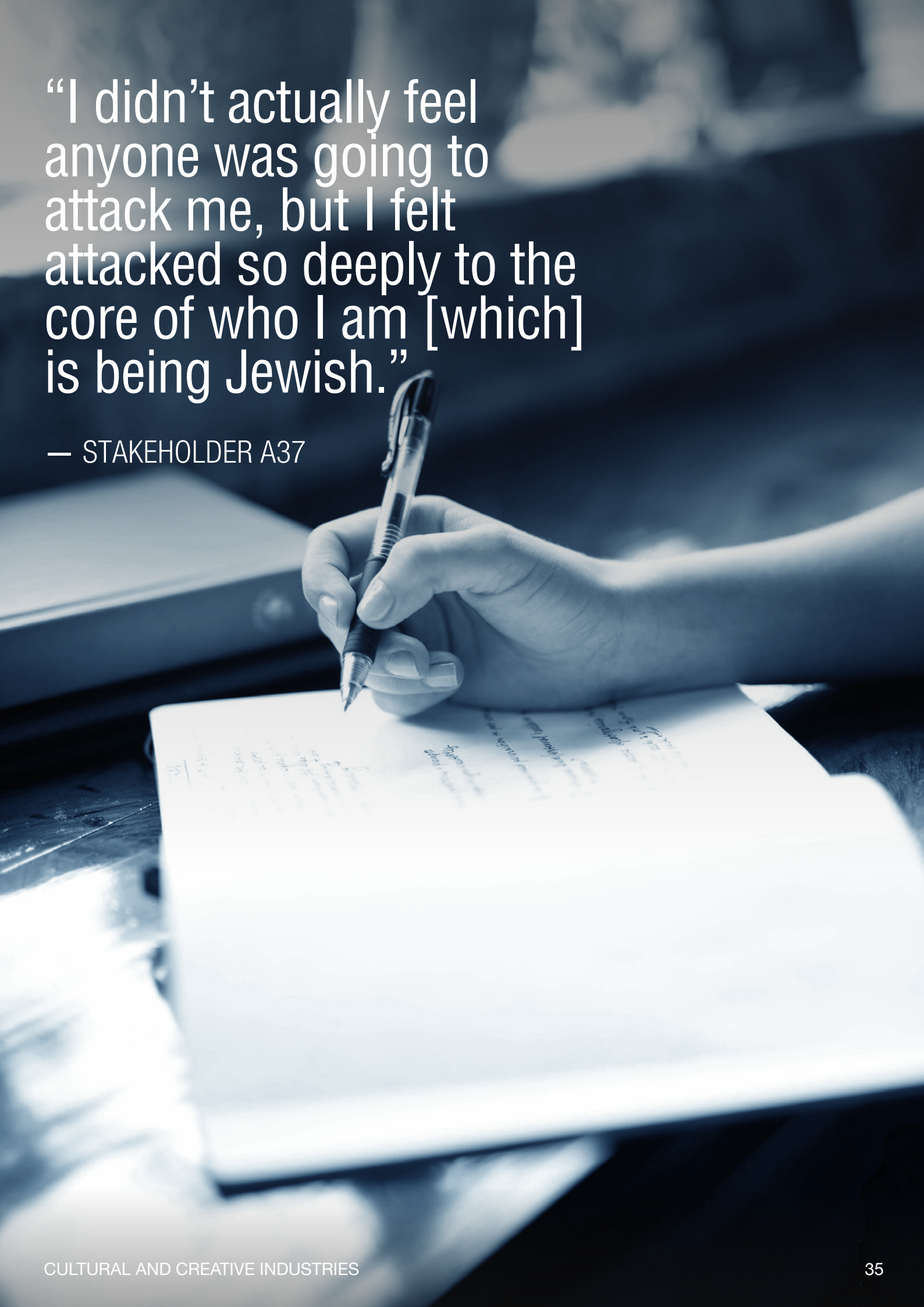
> I'm also worried that we — as a community — are spending too much energy worrying about antisemitism. We are allowing it to become the centre of gravity of our communal identity and existence. (Stakeholder A6a)

> I think that some commentators [on antisemitism] who have felt more intimidated, it is partly to do with their perception rather than the reality. I grant that [it] is legitimate, but I'm wary of creating a narrative that suggests that antisemitism is rife and violent and all-consuming. (Stakeholder A11a)

It is important to recognise that even when antisemitism is described by stakeholders as ambient, its psychological impact can be as profound as more direct experiences. One stakeholder (A28) noted: "I remember my psychologist said [to me] one time: 'It doesn't matter if something is real or imagined, the psychological impact can feel the same'." This captures a key tension in these discussions: the challenge of quantifying non-overt or indirect antisemitism. Other reporting on antisemitism within the CCIs similarly uses the term "indirect" to describe the experiences of Jewish artists and creatives who encounter hostility in their sector (see: Artists Against Antisemitism UK, n.d.). Stakeholders described various forms of this indirect experience. As another stakeholder reflected: "the antisemitism that I've encountered from organisations [is] very subtle and very covert, which only makes the feelings of ostracisation even more difficult to

deal with" (Stakeholder W3A1.10). Since its expression is often subtle or coded, such experiences are easier to deny, downplay or dismiss, reinforcing plausible deniability within the sector and enabling those unwilling to acknowledge its impact to dismiss these experiences more readily. Finally, to recognise an ambient antisemitism, consisting of indirect encounters with discrimination and general feelings of hostility, is not to discount the overt experiences of antisemitism reported by stakeholders. As one stakeholder (A12b) noted: "Well, maybe you haven't experienced [antisemitism] but other people are and it feels pretty real." At the heart of many of these conversations lies a growing concern among Jewish stakeholders that they are not entrusted with defining the parameters of antisemitism — what constitutes an act, incident or a statement that "feels very antisemitic if you're Jewish" (Stakeholder A9) — which raises critical questions about who holds authority in naming harm:

> I feel like we're the only minority who are told what is and isn't discrimination…the number of conversations I've had where I've been told "this isn't antisemitism and this is why." You can't tell a minority what is or isn't discrimination [against them]. (Stakeholder A15)



“I didn’t actually feel anyone was going to attack me, but I felt attacked so deeply to the core of who I am [which] is being Jewish.”

— STAKEHOLDER A37

AFFECT

Affect provides a productive lens for examining how antisemitism shapes both the personal and professional lives of stakeholders. Conversations with several research participants across both cohorts surfaced intense emotional responses. For many non-Jewish and Jewish stakeholders we spoke with, these issues and experiences are confronting and existential. They evoke strong emotional responses, not only to the rise of antisemitism globally and in Australia but also to its impact within their professional and personal lives. The ongoing violence in the Middle East further intensifies these feelings. These affective responses are often non-verbal (e.g., tearfulness or pauses to compose oneself) but can also be inferred from explicit references to emotions:

> [October 7th] had a massive impact on me, psychologically and emotionally. And, to be honest, how am I at the moment? I'm not sure. I feel like I'm going off the rails a little bit. (Stakeholder A2b)
> Look, I feel like crying. I'm absolutely devastated. (Stakeholder A9)

Affective frameworks, which emphasise the role of emotion and feeling (Reckwitz 2012), offer deeper insight into these impacts, such as the perceived shrinking of professional and creative networks or heightened feelings of marginalisation and "otherness". This conceptual lens affords "space and serious treatment" for the "personal, embodied and emotional" (Lowry 2019: 190), thus allowing us to identify instances of antisemitism that cannot be quantifiably measured. Through affective methodologies, this research centres lived experience and takes seriously the claims of antisemitism that emerge from our research because "all claims of antisemitism made by Jews, like all claims of discrimination and oppression in general, should be given serious attention" (Nexus Task Force 2024). In doing so, our methodological approach draws attention to and responds to a recurring sentiment expressed by many stakeholders, namely the trivialisation of their experiences within and by the sector:

> I can't think of a different community, whether it be religious, cultural, race (or whatever), where their lived experience isn't held at the highest regard…[whereas] my lived experience doesn't matter. (Stakeholder A15)

Waxman, Schraub and Hosein (2022: 1805) note that "the lived experience of people dealing with antisemitism matters. Perceptions of antisemitism are not a conclusive sign of antisemitism, but they must be treated seriously and not dismissed as mere bad faith: they are a crucial trigger for further investigation." As with any other aspect of cultural awareness, if someone experiences something as harmful, discriminatory or hostile, that experience should be acknowledged and taken seriously. Beyond serving as a valuable lens for examining the impacts of antisemitism (or hostility emerging from anti-Israel sentiment) on Jewish stakeholders within the CCIs, affect also provides a conceptual framework for analysing the emotional conditions that can give rise to such hostility, which are not necessarily underpinned by malicious or exclusionary intent. Alacovska and Bissonnette (2021: 135, 141) observe that creative workers engage in a "diverse array of practices of care arising from an affective concern with the well-being of [even unknown] others", such as expressions of solidarity with oppressed groups. Speaking to the affective impulses and

underpinnings of care within the creative and cultural industries, one stakeholder (A2b) noted that those who are drawn to the arts "care about the soul, they care about feelings, they care about equality".

Recognising the sector's orientation towards and capacity for "solidaristic affectivities" (Alacovska and Bissonnette 2021) helps to ease the often-perceived tension between art and activism — a recurring theme among many stakeholders interviewed for this project — by aligning with and reinforcing the sector's inherent or expected ethics of care. It is this expectation of care that is so often acknowledged as motivating many creatives' engagement with Palestinian advocacy, but is observed as absent when it comes to the Jewish experiences of suffering. Speaking to this perceived disparity, Stakeholder A21 observed their response to an unprogrammed statement made by actors on stage in November 2023:

> If the actors had come out with a sign that said "Peace in the Middle East" that would have been fine. But in saying "We support solidarity with Gaza," they are acknowledging the pain of one by completely denying it to the other. Those artists were being humane and showing their humanity for the Palestinian people, which is wonderful, but why is your humanity not extending to the victims of October 7th?
>
> [A response from one theatre patron was:] "before I take out my subscription, I want to know that we're going to feel safe and welcome here" and that's absolutely all that our audiences are asking for. And, you know, what Israel does to the Palestinian people is appalling, but [there is no acknowledgement that] October 7th happened. People were sitting in that theatre and they felt unsafe. "We don't care about what happened to you. We don't care about October 7th. We don't care about the hostages." (Stakeholder A21)

This particular anecdote reflects recurring themes voiced across several stakeholder discussions: The expectation of empathy from industry peers for the victims of 7 October, heightened by preconceived ideas about the sector's capacity for inclusion and cultural awareness; the emotional pain experienced by Jewish stakeholders when that empathy is absent, which often registers as exclusion, discomfort, and/or unsafety; and the recognition that arts and creative settings are inherently politicised, with many stakeholders demonstrating an expansive empathy that includes recognition of Palestinian suffering. As one interviewee observes, "all sides are in pain [but] the progressive artists are only taking one side's pain" (Stakeholder B30) – a perception that, for some, reflects not just a lack of empathy for the victims of 7 October, but a deeper sense that their peers lack care or concern for Jewish people who are struggling to process these events and their aftermath. It is arguably this observed "inconsistent concern for the suffering of others" (Arnold and Taylor 2019: 21) that better explains many participants' experiences of antisemitism – one that is not necessarily motivated by anti-Jewish hatred, but stems from a place of concern and care for Palestinians:

> The people that I encounter in this sector have deep concern with what's happening in Palestine and Gaza [and] it is horrible what's happening, but it has become really taken up by the sector in a way that other tragedies haven't. (Stakeholder A31)

Many of the responses reported by Jewish stakeholders, such as "one-sided statements" (Stakeholder B30) in the immediate aftermath of 7 October, reflected a sense of dehumanisation: "they never saw Jews as real people" (W3SN4.7). In the context of their interviews (or relaying of professional encounters), some have felt compelled to appeal for empathy — for others to simply recognise their humanity — not as a denial of the suffering experienced by other communities, but because such empathy is often perceived as not being extended to them. One stakeholder recounted being in a room among peers who work for a major arts organisation and "having to stand in front of them, very aware of the gaze, having to plead my innocence, having to do a little bit of Shylock, to try and bring our humanity back to an equal place" (Stakeholder A2b). Anecdotes like this one reflect deeper individual and communal perceptions of a persistent thread running through historical and contemporary forms of antisemitism, namely being "othered."

Using affect to consider the impact rather than the intention of these political discourses, we can better move from negotiating definitions and focus on the lived experience of antisemitism. This conceptual lens makes space for both the empathetic strategies of numerous individual artists and creative workers who have engaged in activism to support Palestinians, and the evidence from Jewish creatives, artists and cultural workers who are experiencing hostility, discrimination and exclusion. This approach also expands collective understanding of antisemitism to encompass expectations of empathy, safety and recognition of cultural sensitivities informed by identity and collective memory, including intergenerational trauma in Holocaust survivor communities in Australia, while not discounting the legitimate concerns and activism of those advocating for Palestinian rights, safety and self-determination.

FINDINGS

This section of the report is divided into an analysis of the conditions and impacts of antisemitism in the CCIs, as inferred or otherwise expressed in stakeholder discussions across both cohorts.

CONDITIONS

The first section on conditions (causes) presents key themes that emerged from discussions with stakeholders across both cohorts (A and B), highlighting the distinctive ways antisemitism manifests within the cultural, creative and arts sectors. These themes shed light on sectoral practices and responses that may have contributed to perceptions or experiences of anti-Jewish discrimination. They include perceived shortcomings in diversity and inclusion frameworks, the framing of anti-Israel discourse as part of a global post-colonial endeavour and the online cultural activism of artists and creatives beyond institutional control.

These challenges reflect a sector grappling with limited capacity, resources and competing priorities. Reactive approaches often reveal the fragility — or even absence — of clear and consistent due process, and the need for some organisations to re-evaluate the working relationships between governance, operational teams and artists. The implications for a sector reliant on contracted and freelance work resound loudly in conversations with stakeholders, some of whom have highlighted the difficulties of managing indirect or "remote" (Stakeholder A10) relationships between their organisations and artists. Others have reflected on whether the challenges their organisation faced might have been avoided through "better internal communications between our freelance work population and full-time employees" (Stakeholder B24), for example.

These issues highlight underlying vulnerabilities in a sector already described as "challenging at the best of times" (Stakeholder A2b), where organisations face constrained budgets and increasingly scarce resources (Stakeholder A35). As many organisations and independent creatives struggle to find opportunity in a sector that is chronically under-resourced, recurring concerns (especially among freelancers and independent artists) include financial insecurity or vulnerability (Stakeholder A14; A28) and the struggle for viability (Stakeholder B10) within a competitive sector. These structural issues form some of the precarious conditions of the sector that have heightened impact on Jewish independent and freelance artists through: (1) professional exile and reduced ability to sustain practice, livelihoods and income, and (2) the targeting of Jewish philanthropy in the arts sector.

THE LIMITS OF INCLUSION IN DIVERSITY FRAMEWORKS

Strategic priorities in the creative arts and cultural industries are largely centred on improving representation, recognition and accessibility for minoritised groups and communities – and creating safe work practices towards this end. There is broad, collective recognition of the need to make creative workplaces, spaces and programming more inclusive through cultural diversity and safety initiatives. Despite the rhetorical commitments of many key organisations, bodies and leaders in the sector, some note a disconnect between diversity, equity and inclusion frameworks in theory and in practice. This disconnect is particularly evident in the reflections of Jewish stakeholders who have worked within major cultural institutions and later recognised that "those policies, policies, policies meant nothing on the ground" (Stakeholder A14).

Several participants framed antisemitism in the sector as both stemming from and contributing to the exclusion of Jewish people from prevailing diversity frameworks. Jewish individuals can feel excluded from inclusion efforts within the sector, as one interviewee explained: "whether consciously or unconsciously, [we] feel left out of organisations' efforts to be more inclusive and diverse" (Stakeholder A1b). Another stakeholder reflected on this sense of misrecognition: "We don't belong. We're 'other' in the wrong way. [We don't have] the right kind of 'otherness'" (Stakeholder A16).

This exclusion is underpinned by recycled antisemitic narratives about Jews' perceived proximity to wealth, power and White privilege, which have led the majority of stakeholders to believe that the sector does not view Jews as a "subjugated minority" (Stakeholder A2b). Consequently, in a sector that is "all about supporting the underdog" (Stakeholder A21), Jewish stakeholders feel they are not afforded the same cultural "sensitivity or care" shown to other minorities (Stakeholder A18), specifically because they are "[seen] as a successful minority" in Australia (Stakeholder A23). These perceptions are further reinforced by persistent antisemitic tropes within the arts community itself. Stakeholder A12b, for example, recounted anecdotal evidence of a former employer (a non-Jewish leader of an arts and cultural organisation) who repeatedly referred to a so-called "Jewish art mafia."

Despite antisemitism being a long-standing topic of concern among many non-Jewish practitioners and professionals in the CCIs — "since October 7, I don't think there's a day I haven't had a discussion about [antisemitism]" (Stakeholder B33a) — many Jewish stakeholders express a general sentiment that governing bodies, organisations and sector leaders remain reluctant to address it directly. This reluctance is often framed as a matter of "risk management" (Stakeholder A1b), tied to concerns that prioritising Jewish concerns, particularly when not explicitly linked to other forms of racism or discrimination, might be perceived as coming at the expense of other communities. Some have encountered these attitudes first-hand in their workplaces or during efforts to engage in outreach within the creative sector:

> Every single time it comes up at the board meeting [that] we need to reach out to our Jewish community… how the company needs [a] strategy to [welcome back] the Jewish community, [one of our board members says]: "Well, what about the other communities?" (Stakeholder A21)

> I've had lots of questions like…"Why isn't there a Palestinian version of [what you are doing]? How can we run a Jewish cultural safety seminar if we're not doing one about Palestinians?" (Stakeholder A1a)

A critical tension lies in the expressed sentiment among stakeholders that a sector that actively champions diversity in lived experience and identity has failed to adequately address (or, at times, listen to) the concerns of Jewish artists, creatives and arts professionals. It reveals feelings of betrayal and accusations of the sector's hypocrisy: the fact that the arts are rhetorically positioned as a progressive sector, inherently and primarily committed to anti-racism and anti-discrimination

ethics. This is what one stakeholder (B30) referred to as “the irony of the arts.”

Many Jewish stakeholders feel they have been integral to the perceived success of multiculturalism in the arts, often serving as representatives of cultural diversity by “diversifying” (Stakeholder A3a) the teams and settings they have worked in. For example: “I was the only Jewish [board member], right? At the time, I saw it as great and I think everyone else saw it as great” (Stakeholder A3b). The sector’s selective framing of its commitment to not tolerating exclusionary practices against minority groups or individuals amplifies the felt effects of exclusion and hostility that many Jewish stakeholders have encountered.

ANTI-ZIONISM AND POST-COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Many participants recognise that anti-Zionism, as a means to advocate for the rights of Palestinians, is considered an accepted and acceptable discourse within the arts and cultural sector. This discourse resonates strongly within the arts owing to the sector’s ideological commitments to decolonisation (such as reflexivity regarding White privilege and interrogating the colonial legacies of European settlement on First Nations people in Australia) and calls for symbolic decolonisation by centring Indigenous, minority and non-White migrant voices in creative storytelling and arts programming.

In a sector where such ideas are normative (see: Grieves 2025), commentary within the artistic and creative community about Israel-Palestine has increasingly shifted from a critique of Israeli military policy to focus on “Israel itself as a white colonial project in the Middle East” (Stakeholder A10) and the “sentiment that Israelis [are] colonialists” (Stakeholder A16). While criticism of the nation-state as a concept (not limited to Israel) forms part of a broader critical discourse surrounding colonial structures, some stakeholders have identified the particular hostility reserved for Israel within this discourse as a contemporary expression of historical patterns of discrimination against Jewish communities: “whatever is most hated at the time, that is ‘the Jews’. And I think the thing that is most hated now is colonisation and therefore that’s what Jews are” (Stakeholder A21). This shift facilitates the targeting (typically online) and exclusion of many Jewish creatives and artists and their work from arts spaces, peer networks and workplaces based on their ethnicity, cultural background and assumptions about their political positioning.

The 7 October attack occurred just one week before the Voice to Parliament referendum, creating what some stakeholders noted as an emotionally “fertile” (Stakeholder B24) environment in which disappointment over the anticipated referendum outcome intensified focus on Israel as a colonial-settler project.

In discussing the application of a blanket “coloniser narrative” (Stakeholder B26) to Zionism, several stakeholders have noted a connection between the arts and academia in Australia. The sentiment expressed by many stakeholders is that higher education institutions, namely universities and their organisations, serve as ideological incubators for anti-Zionist or anti-Israel views under the guise of

decolonising pedagogy and political activism. As one stakeholder observed: “all the anti-Israel rhetoric and politics is growing and growing and growing within universities” (Stakeholder A2b). Another stakeholder reinforced this perspective, noting: “it all comes from academia” (Stakeholder A35).

This report surfaces a conflation — or at times a symbiotic relationship — between antisemitism and anti-Israel or anti-Zionist discourses in the CCIs, where, as one stakeholder (B26) observed: “No one would acknowledge they were being antisemitic.” For many stakeholders, however, anti-Israel discourse or anti-Zionism registers as an inherently anti-Jewish discrimination (i.e., it targets them in their identification as Jewish).

> We’re one and the same, a lot of us – when you’re talking about Zionists, you’re talking about Jews. (Stakeholder A22)

> If you’re anti-Israel, that’s one thing, but if you’re anti-the-people-who-are-for-Israel – well, that’s me, because I’m a Jew. (Stakeholder A1a)

What many participants seem to be saying is that they are being targeted because of their connection to Israel, which, for many Jews, forms a core part of their sense of Jewishness. They are, they feel, being held collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli Government, whether or not they support that government. Some Jewish stakeholders, however, do not equate Zionism with their sense of Jewish identity and, as such, have claimed to not have experienced antisemitism in their creative circles and workplaces; for example, “I am not Zionist [and] I have not seen a whiff, a gust of wind of antisemitism. I’ve never seen anything that would be problematic at all [and I’m] incredibly Jewish” (Stakeholder A19a). Stakeholders’ anecdotes are revealing of blanket assumptions (or stereotypes) whereby Jewish individuals are treated as a monolith, leaving little conceptual space afforded for nuanced or critical perspectives on Israel or Zionism:

> I think when you’re lumping a group of people together and making an assumption about them, you’re in slightly dangerous territory… There’s generalisations that happen to the point of a feeling of exclusion. (Stakeholder A16)

The reality is that, like any community, Jewish stakeholders hold a wide range of political views and should be understood as individual political actors, not as representatives of a single position or view. Across the sector, antisemitism is often detected in interactions where Jewish individuals feel obligated to assert their positionality or distance themselves from presumed political stances or affiliations. Several stakeholders noted that this particular scrutiny plays out in their professional settings, where employers seek to assess the validity of online claims about the perceived risks of employing Jewish arts and creative professionals; for example, suspicion over whether they might show bias and exclude pro-Palestinian voices from their programming:

> There was a level of social media critiquing me (as a Jewish Australian) making decisions about programming [in the arts organisation]. I can only view it as antisemitic because I have never

> publicly discussed my views on Israel's action in Gaza since October 7th. (Stakeholder A10)

> [When our organisation announced] our program, there was this huge, huge, huge undertaking of crisis comms [because] I was an issue that needed to be accounted for and dealt with. Everyone is scrambling to deal with the Jewish problem [because] the person who had created the program [was Jewish], therefore, was potentially going to put the event at risk. (Stakeholder A15)

For some, the intensity, described as "laser-focused" (Stakeholder A33b), of an anti-Israel discourse within their networks is deeply unsettling, registering as a form of exceptionalism for this particular geopolitical issue. There was notable commentary on the spectrum of how stakeholders understood Zionism, with several Jewish stakeholders observing what they perceived to be deliberate or malicious repurposing of the term within the sector.[9] One stakeholder noted that the term has been "twisted" to equate with negative social conditions, such as colonialism, apartheid and White supremacy (Stakeholder A17). The disputed understandings of the term within the non-Jewish community and personal meanings of Zionism among Australian Jews are summarised by one interviewee: "the definition of Zionist to me [is] believing Israel has a right to exist, but to other people, it means land-grabbing and abusing Palestinians and murdering. That's not what it means to me" (Stakeholder A21). This contrast is further illustrated by another Jewish stakeholder who explained: "I do believe you can be, like, Zionist and pro-Palestinian – you can believe in Palestinian statehood and sovereignty, and also the existence of a Jewish state" (Stakeholder A28). Stakeholders also observed a growing permissibility of vilification and incitement to violence directed at those who identify (or have been identified) as Zionists based on their Jewish identity:

> [After 7 October] certain phrases and language were okay, and then it has become more and more extreme where now people can say: "all Zionists deserve to die." (Stakeholder A15)

It is the reported lack of nuanced understanding (or intentional repurposing, for some) of the term and its meanings for Jewish stakeholders that has surfaced hostile interactions and the normalisation of dehumanising language or incitement to violence in their professional and creative circles. A Jewish creative managing a non-Jewish arts organisation (Stakeholder B10) relayed an experience of networking socially with fellow creatives when one artist spoke about the importance of respecting everybody's humanity, "and then she said: 'except Zionists. I want to kill all Zionists'". While it is broadly acknowledged among research participants that there is an important distinction to be made between antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric, since many Australian Jews identify as Zionist (or have a personal or familial connection to Israel), the impact of such vilification ought to be considered in light of this fact. This is not to marginalise the views of those in the Jewish community who oppose Zionism as a concept (or debate its centrality to Judaism), but to recognise that the normalisation

[9] One research limitation is that stakeholders were asked to define antisemitism but not Zionism. This question would likely have elicited explicit and diverse responses from Cohort A, as inferred from subsequent dialogue with interviewees and workshop attendees.

of dehumanising language creates settings in which many Jewish stakeholders feel unsafe, and social matrices in which antisemitism is more likely to emerge.

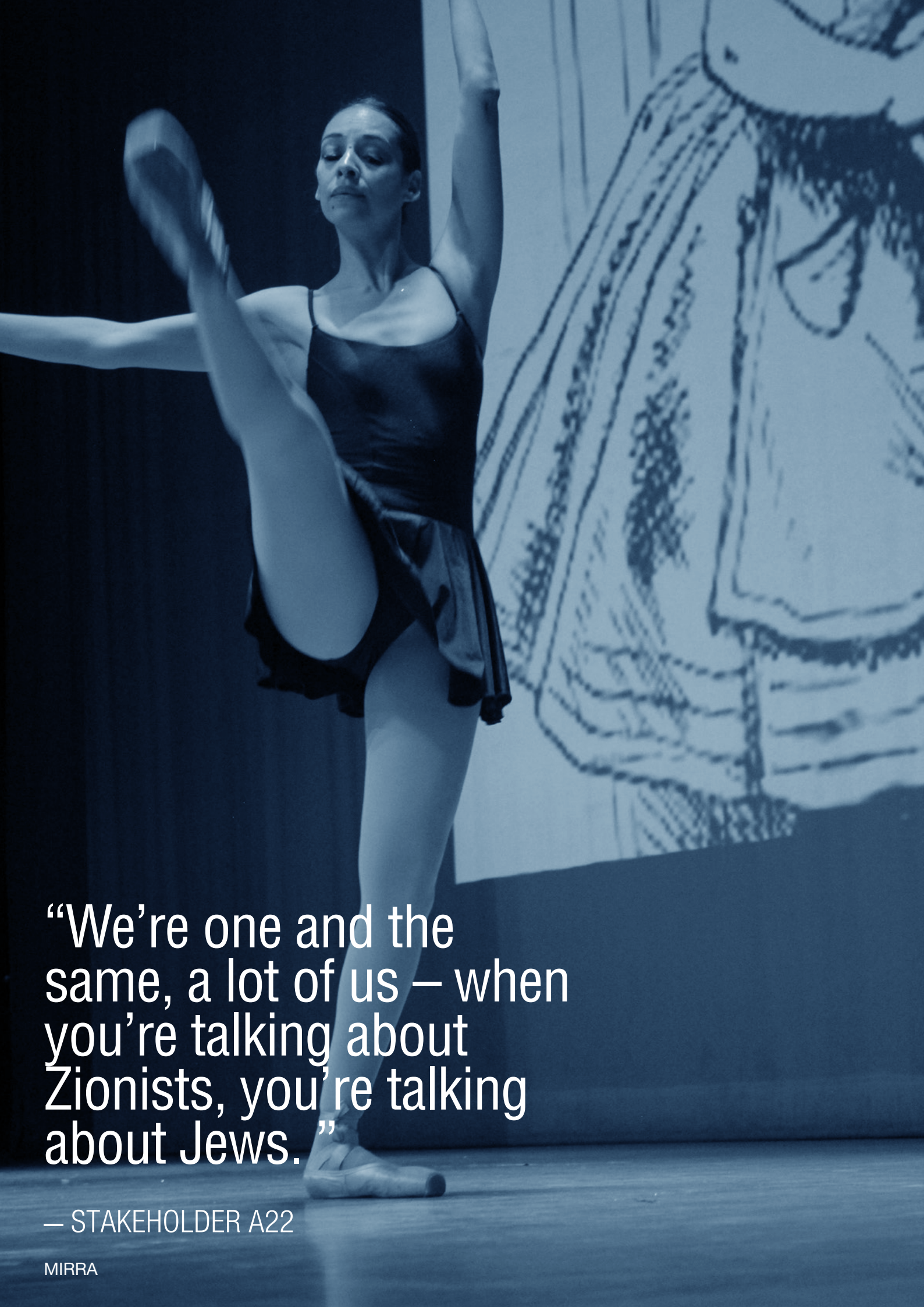
Many stakeholders' experiences point to the growing normalisation of antisemitic tropes embedded in anti-Israel rhetoric. In the words of one stakeholder (A28): "I don't think everyone who's pro-Palestinian is inherently antisemitic or anti-Israel, [but] there is often such a bleeding between them." The following exchange is indicative of this overlap, while capturing the emergence of "a feeling of antisemitism" (Stakeholder A9b) as an affective response triggered by familiar antisemitic tropes that are regularly incorporated into anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian advocacy and discourse:

> Stakeholder A9b: I had an experience where I went into a toilet stall after a rehearsal and there was an anti-Zionist sticker in the bathroom — I don't know who the person was, but it was an image of a stereotypical overweight Chabadnik guy on a blue-and-white background with a big red cross through it.[10]
>
> Stakeholder A9a: I can provide context: there's a very famous video of a guy who stole a person's house [in Palestine]
>
> Stakeholder A9b: This is where it gets complicated — I'm not following all this stuff. I walk in and experience a feeling of antisemitism, because that's all I see…when there's nothing written to provide context and you just see that image on a toilet stall after rehearsal — that's what it feels like.

Loeffler (2020: 40-1) notes that it is not necessarily the content of an anti-Israel, anti-Zionist or pro-Palestinian stance that determines whether it is antisemitic, "but the *context* in which criticism occurs" (emphasis added). For example, while the regular rallies organised by the Free Palestine Coalition outside the State Library of Victoria are not antisemitic — although "disconcerting" (Stakeholder A9) for some Jewish stakeholders, especially when considering that some protestors have engaged in antisemitic rhetoric — the example perhaps becomes more complex when considering the institution's traditional philanthropic support or the subject matter of its exhibitions and programming.

In late October 2023, a collective of creatives afforded fellowship funding from the philanthropy of the Sidney Myer Fund released a statement online in solidarity with Gaza. A freelance Jewish artist (Stakeholder A2b) commented on this action, noting that this "major art award" (the Sidney Myer scholarship) is awarded by a philanthropic organisation "that was set up by a Jewish family. And suddenly all the Sidney Myer Creative Fellows [are] getting together to write a statement". What can we infer from the fact that the stated commonality among this group — aside from working in the creative and arts sector more broadly — is their affiliation with a collective named after (and shaped by the legacy of) a Jewish patron of Australian arts and culture?

[10] A follower of the Chabad Lubavitch Hasidic movement, an ultra-Orthodox religious (Hasidic) form of Judaism



“We’re one and the same, a lot of us – when you’re talking about Zionists, you’re talking about Jews.”

– STAKEHOLDER A22

CULTURAL ACTIVISM AND CREATIVE-POLITICAL EXPRESSION

As creatives, artists and staff in the cultural sector engage with discourse around Palestine, questions have emerged among stakeholders about whether activism and political expression are an inherent component of artistic expression and practice, or of the sector at large.

> It's a very political industry… and it attracts a lot of people who are very politically engaged… people who are drawn to political activism are also drawn to the arts as a way of practicing their political activism… The industry has absolutely been taken over by political activists, not artists. (Stakeholder A2b)

In an industry where "freedom of expression has always been held at the highest levels" (Stakeholder A17), a notable tension arises around defining the boundaries of an artist's creative freedoms within institutional contexts. While artists often self-identify (or are recognised) as "dissenters [or] political envoys" (Stakeholder A16), institutions carry responsibilities, especially when artists are employees or recipients of government funding.

> We work with a lot of independent artists [who] are very outspoken… they tend to be quite far away from "the establishment". And so we're in a situation where [we are connected to] the main stakeholders (the state government [and] institutions) and we're working with very independent artists. And so we're at the nexus between these two worlds. (Stakeholder A10)

For many stakeholders across both cohorts, the notion of institutional neutrality or apoliticality (an already debunked notion for some) is increasingly being challenged by these dynamics. This includes not only questions around how organisations respond to political and social issues, but also a broader rethinking of whether it is appropriate (or within their remit) for arts organisations to position themselves as spokespersons on matters of current affairs.

> We're not going to be able to solve Middle Eastern politics and, quite frankly, we shouldn't try to because we're a [performing arts] company in Australia… what surprised me was some of the expectations of what some people felt we could or should do, or in fact, were capable of [doing]. (Stakeholder B24)

Many stakeholders in Cohort B, for instance, emphasised the importance of allowing for artistic freedom (inclusive of political commentary or activism) while ensuring organisational responsibility and due diligence when it comes to organising and hosting an events program, cultural production or performance. In an organisational context, balancing the demand for freedom of expression with a duty of care to audiences, staff and board members has become increasingly urgent. Regarding the stage and programming, the key challenge (as outlined by various stakeholders) lies in "giving people spaces to express themselves" (Stakeholder A1b) without enabling harm. One stakeholder noted that harm is not necessarily the issue, but rather that the stage itself, for example, is not the appropriate platform for any political stance:

> But when people go to the [theatre] and the play [has] nothing to do with the Middle East and the actors come out wearing the keffiyehs... I just don't see the reason for that in the arts – it's not what we're about. There will be places where that discourse can occur, but that's not appropriate to hijack something that's got nothing to do with anything political. (Stakeholder A9)

Such comments regarding freedom of expression reflect a broader tension within the sector — not confined to any single geopolitical issue — but rather concerning how to create space for difficult or nuanced conversations while ensuring respectful dialogue that does not veer into "hate speech, intimidation or promotion of [extremist views]" (Stakeholder A17) or antisemitism. A key challenge for the sector has been balancing support for artists, creatives and staff with pro-Palestinian views, while sanctioning anti-Israel discourse that uses dehumanising language, antisemitic tropes or otherwise threatens the safety of audience members. To this point, one stakeholder (a Jewish creative worker in an arts organisation) noted their approach to setting expectations among contracted artists or performers, surfacing another tension that emerged across stakeholder discussions: Where do we draw the line between safety and comfort, and who determines what qualifies as an "unsafe" setting, program or statement?

> Look, if you wish to speak your mind, we understand that art is political and that we absolutely accept that, and people do have the right to state their opinions… but if you create an environment that's unsafe in a way that is really unsafe – it can be uncomfortable, but we won't accept hate speech, any kind of riot, any potential violence and any extreme disrespect to both community groups and individuals. (Stakeholder A10)

Crucially, while arts and cultural organisations at times grapple with defining and regulating the boundaries of artistic freedom, the online space allows for its immediate and unrestricted expression, often exempt from institutional oversight, management or intervention. The online space has become a key site for political mobilisation among creative communities and artist groups. It is where calls to boycott organisations, events and funding bodies perceived to be complicit in the suffering of Palestinians have gained momentum. These unmoderated digital environments are an inescapable part of the contemporary creative landscape for many users. They are often "potent" spaces where people "feel least accountable for how they express themselves" (Stakeholder A1b) that can lead to the "amplification of hatred" (Stakeholder A7a). What becomes increasingly clear through conversations with stakeholders is that the "negative impact of social media cannot be understated, particularly within the arts" (Stakeholder A7a).

The online space — particularly social media — has become the most active arena for artists' activism, including the initiation of boycotts targeting Jewish board members, professionals and funders affiliated with cultural and arts organisations. These efforts often take the form of coordinated social media activity, such as tagging institutions, sharing petitions and amplifying calls for institutional accountability. It is also an unregulated zone for discourse and calls to action, including incitement to harass Jewish individuals identified as "Zionists" or having affiliations with Israel, and one that many arts organisations lack the capacity or

oversight to manage safely or in a timely manner. As a result, these organisations can become overwhelmed by rapidly growing online artist movements that threaten to disrupt their programming, operations or reputational standing. One arts organisation faced "serious boycott potential" from artists protesting its funding from a Jewish philanthropist, noting that "there was a lot of noise becoming louder and louder" on social media, creating a "high risk situation" (Stakeholder A10). In response to these "insidious and underhanded" online attacks, the philanthropist and their team chose to withdraw funding to minimise risk for the arts organisation, which lacked "the resources to withstand" an online attack (Stakeholder A22b). In some instances, the social media activity of Jewish professionals working in arts institutions, such as engaging with posts about Israel-Palestine or challenging perceived misinformation about the conflict, has been cited by other artists as evidence of ethical misconduct and reported to their affiliated institutions or organisations as grounds for investigation, disassociation or boycott.

IMPACT

This section examines the impacts of the sector's engagement with discourse on Israel and Palestine on Jewish creatives, artists and professionals working in the arts who participated in this research. For many Jewish stakeholders (individuals and organisations), the "professional ramifications" (Stakeholder A18) include loss of work, networks, income, revenue and opportunity. Psychological impacts include diminished motivation — "I've found it very difficult to be creative" (Stakeholder W3SN5.7) — to pursue career development pathways (such as applications for jobs and project funding) and increased concerns for safety in engaging with the arts. Various stakeholders referred to the "Zio600" doxxing incident in which the names, professions, locations and contact details of 600 Jewish creatives in a WhatsApp group chat were circulated on social media: "I was doxxed. I was in that group, you know, the 'Jew list' — people love making lists of Jews" (Stakeholder A15).

Regardless of whether these safety concerns are realised, they are "undermining our ability to fully engage in our profession" (Stakeholder A1a). Some also reported a noticeable impact on their physical and mental health, for example, stress, weight-loss and the "return of anxiety and panic attacks" (Stakeholder W1SN4.1). Overall, the root causes of such impacts, described by one stakeholder (A25) as "pernicious", are difficult to state definitively or quantify for several stated reasons:

> It's very hard in the arts to specifically say they didn't get that job because they were Jewish. (Stakeholder A22c)

> [Was] the reason people were [not] coming to [the Jewish event] because of a cultural boycott of Jewish culture? [Or] did we do a good enough job at marketing? (Stakeholder A6a)

> I've creatively been pretty stunted, but it's been impossible to know if that's because of antisemitism or just how depressing the whole situation is with the war. (Stakeholder 39a).

Three core narratives related to impact emerged from our research, highlighting key themes that shape the experiences of Jewish stakeholders in the arts and cultural sector: (1) cultural boycotts of Jewish creatives and professionals (and their work), and the circulation of antisemitic tropes related to Jewish funding of the arts; (2) growing concerns around cultural safety, often manifesting in the dismissal of concerns about platforming or programming anti-Israel perspectives, or hostile interpersonal interactions with colleagues and industry peers, or in withdrawal and exclusion; and (3) feelings of cultural homelessness among Jewish participants within professional and creative spaces (arts venues, workplaces and networks) across the sector.

We can also note that antisemitic discourses operating at higher levels (such as those targeting Jewish philanthropic institutions) have a trickle-down effect on independent Jewish artists and creatives. These narratives about philanthropy not only shape how individuals in the broader cultural sector perceive and engage with Jewish artists (e.g., discrimination, exclusion, antisemitic comments), but also influence how these artists navigate their professional and creative spaces, often with increased anxiety or self-censorship stemming from a hostile or unsettling environment (or expectation of).

CULTURAL BOYCOTTS

The funding, programming and governance decisions of certain arts organisations have come under increased scrutiny as some creative workers and artists protest what they perceive as the sector's complicity in Palestinian suffering and the silencing of Palestinian voices or their advocates within the creative arts community. At times, this has resulted in the threat or enactment of a boycott of Jewish philanthropists, board members and artistic producers/creative programmers. For example, an independent Jewish creative working in the performing arts sector faced online rumours accusing them of trying to cancel a pro-Palestinian event: "a ridiculous, absurd accusation because how am I going to do it?" (Stakeholder A15). In response to the rumours, the organisation they were working with initiated an internal investigation involving "months of auditing" their emails and social media, with no regard for their mental wellbeing or other personal ramifications.

Key incidents involved an artist-led online boycott on social media aimed at pressuring organisations to remove Jewish board members identified as "Zionist" or having pro-Israel sentiments over concerns about their influence on programming decisions or, in some cases, simply on the board. In one instance, a board member of an arts organisation became the target of an online harassment campaign after being publicly identified as a Zionist by artists on social media. The individual received hostile direct messages and saw multiple posts tagging the organisation and accusing them of supporting Zionism through having this individual on the board: "There were a couple of comments from other artists I knew saying: 'How dare you have a Zionist on the board?'" (Stakeholder A3b). Despite the public targeting, there was initially no outreach from the organisation's leadership — "there was no empathy" (Stakeholder A3b) — until an urgent board meeting was called days later, which appeared more focused on protecting the organisation's reputation with artists than addressing the board member's concerns:

> [I was] trying to explain to them what I'd gone through, what antisemitism was, [but] the message was: You are affecting our reputation with artists. Artists are allowed to say whatever they want. You have a responsibility to this organisation as a board member to support them.

Feeling unsupported, the board member resigned. The resignation of board members has raised concerns among Jewish creatives about the wider implications for Jewish representation in the arts sector: "If there's no Jewish representation on the board, there's going to be even less Jewish representation in programming" (Stakeholder A18) and "I'm worried we haven't got a seat at the table" (Stakeholder A4b). Such concerns echo broader anxieties articulated by Jewish stakeholders across the arts and cultural ecosystem.

In a similar scenario, a Jewish board member engaged with artists' political posts on social media, which were later forwarded to the arts organisation as a complaint. As one example, an artist demanded to know "why would they have someone like me (a Zionist) on their board" (Stakeholder A23). The board member was also called into an emergency meeting and reprimanded for unacceptable conduct by the marketing department; however, they did not resign their position as they felt supported at board-level because their concerns were not dismissed: "I've got a perspective of someone who's directly impacted and I felt that that's been listened to – I'm not saying it's always been understood" (Stakeholder A23).

Some Jewish creatives and artists whose work or productions were programmed prior to 7 October 2023 faced institutional decisions to either cancel their work entirely or significantly scale back its marketing: "there was no press coverage" (Stakeholder A11a), "there were no

posters outside" (Stakeholder A9) and "they didn't even send one mail-out to say that my show existed" (Stakeholder A25). These actions were experienced as a form of erasure of their creative labour and presence, or as evidence of their host organisation's limited understanding of the cultural specificity and diversity within the Australian Jewish community. For example, one stakeholder, referring to a Jewish-themed exhibition, observed that institutional hesitancy around its public promotion stemmed from concerns about security and public relations, driven by fears that elements of the work could be misinterpreted as "Zionist objects" (Stakeholder A11a).

One Jewish creative described facing institutional pushback from a partnering arts organisation, where staff expressed concern that hosting a planned production centred on Jewish themes unrelated to contemporary politics could be perceived as endorsing the actions of Israel. Upon hearing about a potential staff boycott at the organisation, the Jewish creative team took a proactive approach: "We want[ed] to come in and meet with all the staff who are feeling uncomfortable, field their questions and see if we can get everybody back on the same page" (Stakeholder A2b). During the process of community-led cultural consultation, the staff asked for an explanation of the difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism: "[this is] someone in the cultural sector (we're talking about a literate community) – do I need to say anything more?" (Stakeholder A2a). This incident raises several discussion points: gaps in knowledge regarding the diversity of Jewish experience within the creative sector, the role of community consultation in educating about Jewish experience, and the cultural burden and emotional labour placed on Jewish creatives who must navigate hostile environments in the absence of adequate institutional frameworks for staff training on cultural awareness of minority groups. As one stakeholder noted: "Why is the onus on me to try and solve this for you?" (Stakeholder A2b).

ANTISEMITIC NARRATIVES TARGETING JEWISH PHILANTHROPY IN THE ARTS

Having explored cultural boycotts and the navigation of threats targeting Jewish artists, their creative work and their presence on boards for arts organisations, it is notable that some institutions have also faced boycott threats from artists and employees — "worried about being in receipt of funding from a Jewish funder" (Stakeholder A22b) — who have used social media platforms to demand accountability. Antisemitic discourses surrounding "wealthy Jewish families contributing 'Zionist blood money' to progressive [arts] spaces" (Stakeholder A17) were circulated across creative circles online. These narratives surrounding philanthropic giving from Jewish funders are informed by recycled antisemitic tropes about the wielding of wealth and "undue influence" (Stakeholder A22c) to control artistic programming:

> People are suddenly seeing all these Jewish philanthropists not as philanthropists who are benevolent. They're seeing them as Zionist propaganda controllers. And so, suddenly, the reason that they're giving them money is not because they care about the arts or they care about culture. It's because they have an agenda that they need to manage and control. (Stakeholder A2b)

> I was the point of contact for all the major donors, all the grants, the corporate partners [in my organisation] at a time where [staff] were talking about "not taking blood money from Zionists". I feel really conflicted about the way that people are talking about really important philanthropic organisations who have been instrumental in holding up institutions like this. (Stakeholder A14)

These antisemitic narratives about "the nefarious, underhanded, secret tentacles of Jewish power" (Stakeholder A2b) are not reserved for those operating at a philanthropic level, but manifest in the everyday interactions of artists and creatives in the context of their professional roles or when navigating potential career opportunities. One Jewish stakeholder outlined the interview process for a development role at an arts organisation where the interviewer posed a series of questions around the ethics of funding:

> So this person came back to me [and said:] "but would you agree that there may be organisations that we would not be wanting to accept money from?" … they came back to me again with: "But surely you would agree that there could be [philanthropic] organisations that would not agree with [our] mission and we would not want to accept money from these organisations?" (Stakeholder A3a)

The accounts from a range of Jewish stakeholders reveal the emotional impact and harm caused by antisemitic narratives that circulate freely within their creative and professional circles. For one Jewish philanthropist, the only viable response to online attacks and protests from creative workers and artists (compounded by a lack of support from leadership) was to withdraw financial support from a partner organisation, despite a long-standing relationship.

> We just can't afford to [fund the arts] because of the hateful social media that [the funded organisation] gets from some artists. We could foresee having problems and we didn't want that for the organisation or for us. (Stakeholder A22a)

This risk management strategy was welcomed by the partner, a performing arts organisation, which sought to minimise operational disruption. The organisation had come under pressure when it was revealed via informal channels that several programmed artists were being urged to boycott the event due to perceptions that it was "being led by or supported by or funded by Zionist organisations" (Stakeholder A10). While the philanthropic organisation maintained an "arms-length" approach to funding, with no influence over programming or operations (Stakeholder A22a), the festival team had assumed this was understood by their community:

> [We just assumed people knew that funding] does not give any of those people influence on how the organisation operates (who was booked, what staff could or couldn't speak about, or what they could wear). It's all completely false and wrong. They have no influence whatsoever. (Stakeholder A10)

As online backlash intensified, the philanthropic organisation met with the arts organisation team to assess whether they could manage the

mounting “aggression forming on social media” (Stakeholder A22b). Although reassured the situation was under control, the festival later asked the Jewish funding organisation to issue a public statement denying the accusations “which the festival organisers knew had no merit, and yet they still, in order to prevent a boycott or financial sanction by artists and audiences, were willing to effectively throw the funder under the bus so they could come out unscathed or less damaged” (Stakeholder A22b). When the funder declined, the organisation instead published a disclaimer on its website distancing itself from the funder, which was perceived as a public disavowal with subtle antisemitic undertones:

> You’re putting us out there as these Jews. “This is the Jews who are doing this…we’re not getting funding from the Jews.” Do you understand how it feels [when] I’m seeing “we’re not funded by the Jews anymore”? (Stakeholder A22a)

While some Jewish philanthropists remain open to the possibility of returning to support arts organisations that have recently lost their backing — “[your organisation] isn’t ‘no’ forever, but it’s ‘no’ for now” (Stakeholder A14) — others have started redirecting their support towards explicitly Jewish cultural initiatives and artistic endeavours.

Some stakeholders noted their concern that the withdrawal of support from Jewish philanthropists might fuel resentment in a sector that is already navigating resourcing challenges, while bolstering antisemitism tropes that “we’re the ones who hold the purse strings” (Stakeholder A14). This is what one stakeholder has termed: “the weaponisation of generosity” (Stakeholder A35). Similarly, there is a sense of concern among several stakeholders that using one’s influence (e.g., as a Jewish board member or philanthropist) to signal disagreement with what they perceive to be antisemitism within the context of their affiliated organisation may reinforce antisemitic discourses across the sector.

> We need to find another way… no one should write any letters. No one should make any phone calls to anybody… because all that does is feed into the *toxic narrative.*
> (Stakeholder A2a, emphasis added)

When Jewish stakeholders identify or challenge antisemitism using their available resources or channels, they risk reinforcing harmful antisemitic tropes about disproportionate power or influence. However, some feel that remaining silent (or in the case of board members or funders, choosing not to withdraw from certain organisations despite their concerns) might be “characterised as acquiescence” (Stakeholder A35). This paradox places many Jewish stakeholders in an impossible position and highlights how antisemitism within the creative arts and cultural sector operates in a self-reinforcing cycle.

CULTURAL SAFETY

The impact of 7 October on Jewish staff working in arts and cultural organisations was profound, particularly in workplaces where their emotional responses were neither acknowledged nor understood by non-Jewish colleagues. For some, returning to work the following day was an emotionally fraught and challenging experience:

> On October 8th [2023], walking into work that morning would have been the hardest thing that you could do…you had to walk in [while in] a state of grief and face questions: "Hey, how was your weekend?" (Stakeholder A6a)

In the weeks and months that followed, and as the violence between Israel and Palestine escalated, many Jewish staff described feeling increasingly isolated or vulnerable. Often these feelings of exposure were heightened by the fact that they were the only Jewish person in their organisation, whether on the board or in the office.

> People [were] walking around in my small office with "Free Palestine" [on their shirts] all the time. So it was very, very confusing and lonely. But on top of it all, I was terrified I was going to lose my job. (Stakeholder A14)

There are also several reports from interviewees and workshop attendees of microaggressions and instances of direct hostility in the context of interactions with industry peers and colleagues. Outlining a meeting with external contractors regarding the delivery of an education program at their cultural institution, one stakeholder (A24) noted:

> They didn't want to mention Israel. They didn't want to mention contemporary antisemitism, because they kept on saying: "it's anachronistic". And so you start questioning yourself.

The invalidation of Jewish experiences of antisemitism — "telling us we're overreacting" (Stakeholder W3SN3.7) — registers as its own form of harm while also leading to feelings of self-doubt as to whether certain actions or words are antisemitic or simply coincidental. One freelance Jewish creative (Stakeholder A28) recounted an interaction with a creative collaborator who "one time said to me: 'it's very convenient for Jewish people [to have] a shape-shifting identity that we invoke for whichever setting most serves us.' I don't feel safe working on my next [project] with them." Other reported hostile interpersonal interactions, whether online or in-person, including conversations or confrontations with colleagues and industry peers in which Jewish stakeholders are expected to explain or qualify their identity and positionality, or account for the actions of the State of Israel. For example, one stakeholder recalled "being questioned about Israeli military policy for two hours" (Stakeholder W1SN5.5); another noted that "when people find out that I'm Jewish they tell me their thoughts on the State of Israel — always negative" (Stakeholder W1SN5.8), as though simply being Jewish makes them responsible for the actions of a nation-state.

Others pointed to a broader organisational culture that mishandled their emotional wellbeing, prioritising the comfort of non-Jewish staff over the needs of Jewish colleagues. One Stakeholder (A12b) recalled being told that Jewish staff couldn't speak about 7 October "in the staff room or anywhere in the building because it might upset the non-Jewish staff." One stakeholder described how their concerns were trivialised and dismissed during a board meeting, where they were teased for being "a bit mean" to someone who had expressed antisemitic views: "And this is my problem with the arts — they wouldn't tolerate any other form of racism except against the Jews" (Stakeholder B30).

“And this is my problem with the arts – they wouldn’t tolerate any other form of racism except against the Jews”

– STAKEHOLDER B30

Several Jewish stakeholders' experiences pointed to inconsistencies in how political discourse or identity-based expression around Israel and Palestine is handled within the context of their institutions. For example, while artists may freely express political views, Jewish board members and professionals often face restrictions, based on the perception that they represent the institution and are, therefore, held to different behavioural standards (whether explicit or implied). A Jewish creative working in an arts organisation (Stakeholder A15) recalls that they were asked by their employer "not to share anything political on my [personal] social media accounts. [I'm] silenced. But one of my colleagues was wearing her keffiyeh to work, and] in the background of her screen during Zoom meetings were 'Free Palestine' posters. I know you can't prevent people from expressing themselves, but I feel like there could be a standard of safe practice." This insight reflects the practical realities of the responsibility of leadership in drawing the lines between creative self-expression and the creation of inclusive, safe spaces for diverse stakeholders.

As incidents unfold within arts organisations and debates dominate at organisational and sector levels, many in the Australian Jewish creative community feel they have become "collateral damage" (Stakeholder A22b) due to their Jewish identity. Many stakeholders are actively negotiating what it means to occupy the role of artist, creative or cultural professional in relation to that identity and how it is perceived by others. While some feel protected since they can disentangle their Jewish identity from their professional praxis, many others have felt the need to minimise it in their artistic praxis:

> I've been very careful not to include Jewish themes or have Judaism be a part of my artistic work in any way, which doesn't feel right because my creative work is so much an expression of who I am, my lived experiences and my connection to culture. (Stakeholder A1b)

Others omit or downplay their Jewish-related work or education in their applications for jobs or conversations with industry peers because "at the moment, the 'Jewish' label [is] a very, very negative brush to be tarred with" (Stakeholder A2b). Such attempts to censor themselves — for example, "I shrunk myself" (Stakeholder W3SN5.2) — can lead to feelings of guilt and shame.

Underpinning their interactions with non-Jewish industry peers is a growing sentiment among Jewish artists, creatives and professionals in the arts and cultural sector that they are now navigating "enemy territory" (Stakeholder A2b). As a result, many Jewish stakeholders have felt compelled to retreat from spaces and communities that "once felt like home" (Stakeholder W1SN5.5). Such feelings speak to the fact that many Jewish practitioners and supporters saw themselves as integral to the creation of a vibrant, multicultural arts landscape in Australia — "look at the contribution we've made across all of the arts" (Stakeholder A9):

> In this country, the Jews have played a really big role in creating the arts... I mean, I was raised by a single mother. We didn't really have much money at all, but she always found a way to [take us] to the theatre. I think [that's why] there's quite a lot of pain because it's part of the social fabric of who we are. (Stakeholder B30)

Several stakeholders described a reluctance to attend performances, exhibitions or arts venues, expressing that cultural spaces no longer feel safe. Many Jewish stakeholders are pre-emptive in their identification of antisemitism, managing their psychological safety and mental wellbeing by withdrawing from their creative praxis, networks and spaces. Some report conducting personal risk assessments before attending events or venues: “Who’s going? Who do I need to be aware of? Who’s producing it. I want to do my research” (Stakeholder A18) or pre-emptively planning their response to unexpected or unsafe interactions: “If someone said something that was distressing or upsetting, I would just walk out” (Stakeholder A22a). In articulating their self-protective measures — from withdrawal to self-censorship — some Jewish stakeholders invoke terms that draw parallels between personal and historical Jewish experiences, using analogies that speak to an “intergenerational trauma or fear of persecution” (Stakeholder A14), the cyclical nature of antisemitism and patterns of survival that are deeply informed by collective memory and intergenerational trauma:

> I’m not waiting for the flag to turn red – as soon as it goes a little bit pink in the wash, I’m gonna do [take action] because my grandfather’s family escaped before things got worse in Poland. (Stakeholder A38c)

> I find myself pretending that I’m not Jewish, but I feel a lot of guilt about hiding… it takes me back to my grandparents and a historical pattern of Jews having to hide who they are for [their] safety. (Stakeholder A1b)

> I’m terrified of going [to theatre shows]. I don’t even know how to navigate that in a safe way, so I just haven’t gone – my grandfather hid during the Holocaust and there’s definitely that trauma of [having to] hide. (Stakeholder A1a)

The presence of the Holocaust “looms large” in contemporary Australian Jewish identity and rhetoric (Creese 2023: 105) and is deeply entwined with intergenerational trauma. This explains why many Jewish stakeholders reach for certain analogies when outlining their responses to perceived threats to their safety. However, one Jewish stakeholder was keen to offer perspective: ”today’s antisemitism bears little resemblance to the antisemitism of 1930s [Europe]. Even though people want to draw an analogy, I still maintain that the world is the best it’s ever been for Jewish people right now” (Stakeholder A17). While this research aims to provide a measured assessment of antisemitism in Australia’s creative and cultural sector, it is worth noting that such improvised safety measures (and the language used to explain them) often serve as substitutes for the organisational reassurances and frameworks that would genuinely create feelings of safety among Jewish stakeholders. To minimise or dismiss these responses risks being perceived as victim blaming, rather than critiquing how individuals describe their strategies for dealing with marginalisation. Our focus should be on addressing those who perpetrate or refuse to acknowledge the discrimination.

CULTURAL HOMELESSNESS AND ENCLAVES

For many Jewish stakeholders interviewed for this research, their "artistic profession has been turned upside down because of the difficulties they've had with maintaining their art practice without the support of colleagues or galleries" (Stakeholder A7a). As a consequence, some Jewish professionals expressed a sense of professional homelessness in terms of creative opportunities, funding channels and career progression, speaking to a general feeling of exile from former networks and space:

> I want to apply for [the role], but I am 100% [saying to myself]: "they're not going to hire me". How can they hire a Jewish person after everything that's gone down [at that organisation]? I feel like I don't know how to move forward. Where do I go now? (Stakeholder A2b)

The impact of antisemitism has heightened many Jewish creatives' sense of difference, leading some to create and find refuge in their own communities of care. Others feel compelled to orient themselves in this way following their exclusion, or sense of exclusion, from the sector at large. This is not necessarily framed as a negative consequence of the challenges stakeholders have faced in the sector, with some noting positively that they are "becoming more and more Jewish" (Stakeholder A9) or "living a truer existence" (Stakeholder A15) as a result of being more actively involved or feeling more connected to the Jewish community. Indeed, many have pivoted to Jewish cultural and arts initiatives, community spaces and organisations.

However, the language used in conversations with stakeholders often tells of an anxiety related to the creation of insular creative spaces, particularly through language that evokes a historical Jewish experience; for example, "back to the ghetto" (Stakeholder A5b) and "we are a shtetl" (Stakeholder A25).[11] There is a tension between the desire for cultural safety and the necessity for building inter-community bridges so as to "normalise perceptions of the Jewish experience" (Stakeholder A18) in the wider community, often framed as an educative and proactive means to challenge antisemitism:

> One of the things the Jewish community has been complaining [about is:]… "You're not understanding the complexities [of] Israel. You don't understand the differences and the diversity in the Jewish community"... But then what do we do? We don't let you in. (Stakeholder A3a)

The tension here is the expressed need to retreat to cultural, arts and professional spaces where one feels safe, supported and understood, while recognising the need to remain an integrated community and not to "become more insular" (Stakeholder A9) as a result of antisemitism.

Although this research has primarily focused on individual stakeholders, whether as independent creatives or artists, representatives of or individuals working within arts organisations, it has also examined the broader organisational challenges faced by arts and cultural institutions that are explicitly Jewish cultural (heritage) spaces. These organisations

[11] Shtetl refers to a small town or village in Eastern Europe with a high proportion of Jewish residents. See: Shandler (2014).

may be defined as such by their name, their institutional history or the subject matter they engage with (for example, the Holocaust). For these Jewish cultural organisations, the impacts of recent challenges and shifts in the sector are mixed.

Some face internal pressure from within the Jewish community regarding programming choices, while others grapple with concerns about institutional identity and long-term viability as they shift from cultural programming to welfare provision. They are also increasingly called upon as community resources, tasked with leading urgent anti-antisemitism education efforts or advocating for cultural safety and inclusion. Some faced fundraising challenges as community and donor attention shifted to supporting Israel-related causes, while struggling to secure external support due to stereotypes that Jewish organisations are inherently well-funded.

Security has become a heightened concern for many Jewish organisations, particularly those worried their venues will become "places of protest" (Stakeholder A5a). This has prompted "serious conversations around lockdown and evacuation procedures" (Stakeholder A6a) and increased security presence that drains already limited budgets while serving as a "constant reminder [of] the situation you're living in" (Stakeholder A7a), impacting staff psychological wellbeing. This security is viewed as both a necessary precaution and an established norm — "as Jews, you always have to have security at every event" (Stakeholder A9) — rooted in long-standing antisemitic threats. For one cultural organisation that previously maintained an "open door policy" for intercultural dialogue, increased vigilance and security measures like "ticking off names" have replaced accessibility and opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue (Stakeholder A3a).

For professionals working in Holocaust memory and cultural heritage organisations, this resurgence of antisemitism since 7 October has prompted critical reflection and re-evaluation. Some are reconsidering what effective antisemitism education should look like, exploring new approaches to meet present urgency; for example, how to apply expertise in historical antisemitism to the "contemporary antisemitism space" (Stakeholder A7a). These are complex questions (not limited to conversations within Jewish organisations) around the apparent "failure" of relying on historical examples of antisemitism (namely, the Holocaust) when, as one stakeholder argues, "the current context is what we need to focus on" (Stakeholder A17). Highlighting an existential crisis — and the need for reflection and evaluation — for Holocaust educators, one stakeholder remarked: "We [have] to ask hard questions: Why hasn't it worked? Where have we gone wrong?" (Stakeholder A24).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this report frame antisemitism as a systemic issue within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), supported by the lived experiences of Jewish creatives, artists and cultural professionals. Through stakeholders' lived, professional and affective experiences, we gained insights into the impacts and underlying conditions they navigate within the sector.

Many stakeholders attributed their experiences to "unconscious" antisemitism: a term used by Mattsson, Andersson Malmros and Sager (2024: 3) to describe a lack of "pre-understanding" that certain views about Jews are offensive, meaning that "almost anyone can perpetuate structures through various expressions without fully understanding their origins or consequences." One stakeholder argues that antisemitism's presence in the arts can be deduced from broader industry patterns, from cultural institution governance to social media responses following 7 October, noting: "I think you can draw conclusions [that] maybe these prejudices are so deeply ingrained that they're *not even conscious*" (Stakeholder A18, emphasis added).

The reported dismissal of these issues (or perceived inaction in addressing them) reflects what some stakeholders describe as "innate" (Stakeholder A23) or "inbuilt" antisemitism (Stakeholder A9) within the sector. Importantly, acknowledging unconscious antisemitism in the CCIs does not preclude the possibility of "conscious hostile motive" (Waxman, Schraub and Hosein 2022: 1805); rather, this framework allows us to focus predominantly on the impacts experienced by Jewish stakeholders as a launchpad for developing recommendations for how the CCIs can address harm:

> If someone is offended and hurt and upset and feels that [something] has happened to them, then that has happened to them – it's about impact, not intent.. the very idea of being called antisemitic is so offensive to so many people [that] their own perception of what they consider to be antisemitic or not overrides any impact that it might have on [Jewish] individuals. (Stakeholder B24)

Listening to reports of harm or impact does not necessarily constitute an admission of antisemitism, particularly given that this form of discrimination often operates covertly within the CCIs and relies on contested definitions that make identification complex. However, dismissing or refusing to engage with Jewish stakeholders' experiences of harm, especially when such dismissal is based on the assumption that Jewish people are not well-equipped to recognise antisemitism affecting their own communities, itself constitutes a structural form of discrimination. This pattern of exclusion from discourse about their own experiences represents evidence of institutional antisemitism within the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW AN INDUSTRY MOVES FORWARD

The following recommendations for how the creative and cultural industries can move forward are informed by explicit suggestions from stakeholders (Cohort A), existing institutional practices and frameworks (Cohort B) and inferences drawn from both cohorts' experiences in the sector. These recommendations can be categorised as long-term cultural shifts through sector-wide and institutional policy review, as well as short-term practical solutions that address immediate cultural safety concerns. However, consistent application of any recommendations — whether developing sector-wide cultural safety protocols or facilitating educational forums and resources — requires clear direction and principled leadership at the governmental level. As one stakeholder noted: "You can put all these frameworks and processes in place, but unless you've got a leader [who is] brave enough to do it, I just don't think it happens" (Stakeholder B30).[12]

There is notable disappointment among stakeholders across both cohorts that "during a time of real crisis and devastation" (Stakeholder A1a), the creative industries and arts sector "has been anything but the glue that holds us together" (Stakeholder B33a). Many stakeholders expressed disillusionment with top-level leadership, highlighting the need to restore sector-wide trust through supportive interventions and effective frameworks. One stakeholder expressed frustration with the government's lack of support for cultural institutions, noting they have received "very little leadership, direction, [or] information. We're very much on our own in that regard" (Stakeholder A10). In response to this gap, they convened an informal conversation with "leaders and institutions" in their local networks: "We emailed and messaged our colleagues and said: 'Do you want to come together for an evening after work and discuss these situations? Because there's probably a lot of information [but] we had been working in isolation'" (Stakeholder A10). Such grassroots efforts, collaborative forums and cross-sector debriefs, might be adapted at a sector-wide level to address key challenges and encourage sharing of expertise and effective practices.[13]

Despite recent challenges, there exists a resounding sentiment that the creative community is best-equipped to facilitate nuanced, constructive conversations that promote empathy and understanding across difference:

> The creative community [should] come together — Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and non-Jews from all walks of life — to touch the hearts and minds of people. That's what the arts should be doing. This is our core purpose. (Stakeholder A2a)[14]

[12] See: Recommendation 1.1.3 in Executive Summary
[13] See: Recommendation 1.2.2 in Executive Summary
[14] See: Recommendation 1.2.1 in Executive Summary

EDUCATION

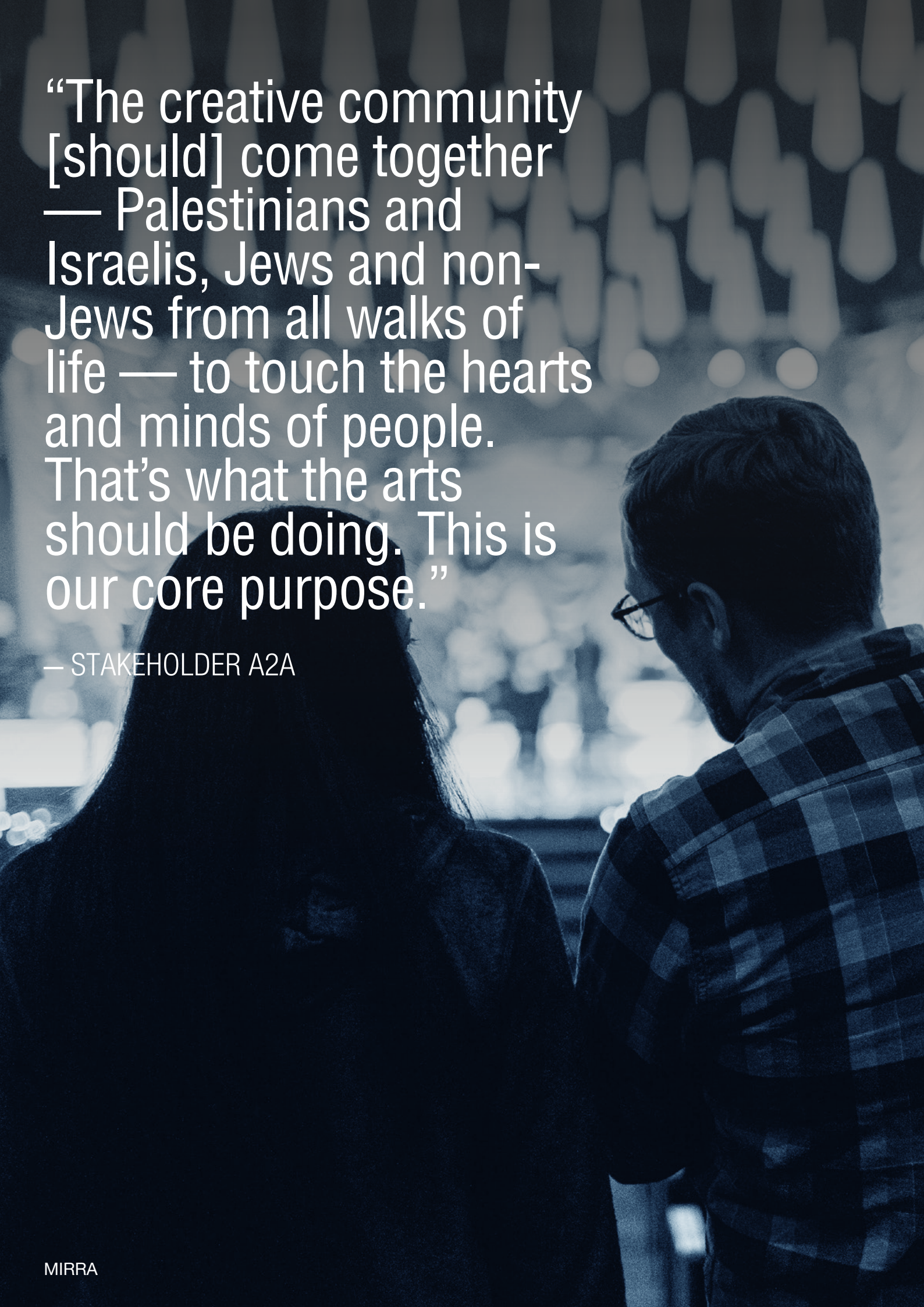
Conversations with stakeholders highlight the need for educational resources, such as community consultation through educational workshops or seminars, to increase knowledge of the Jewish experience. Some stakeholders called for "a general orientation on Judaism and Jewishness for non-Jewish creatives/artists" (W3A3.4). An educational framework is needed that captures the cultural specificities of this minority group, including lived experiences and impacts of antisemitism, as well as cultural awareness of contemporary and diverse Jewish identities and connections to Israel.[15]

Since stakeholders identified a specific form of antisemitism within the creative and cultural sector, educational efforts must address the particular sources and subtle expressions that emerge in progressive arts spaces, such as critiques of colonialism and power grounded in social justice movements, and how historical antisemitic tropes find their way into these narratives.[16] Within this scope, education should address the diversity of views on Zionism and Israel within the Australian Jewish community, highlighting that there is no single Jewish perspective on these matters.[17] This approach addresses concerns outlined by stakeholders working in Holocaust cultural heritage and memory, namely that education efforts to challenge antisemitism are thwarted by a historical lens that does not encompass contemporary manifestations of anti-Jewish discrimination and hatred. Given the strong connection between academia and the arts (as noted by several research participants) recommendations for addressing antisemitism in the CCIs highlight the need for educational workshops tailored to the specific needs of arts and cultural departments.[18] While some universities already offer such campus-based interventions in the form of workshops more broadly, there is an opportunity to build on these by developing department-specific content (e.g., for Arts faculties), ensuring the material is contextually relevant and responsive to the unique dynamics of the sector.

There is an urgent need to develop proactive, practical strategies grounded in trauma-informed, empathy-led approaches focused on understanding what constitutes harmful behaviour, particularly for those who have "grown up in communities that are terrified of antisemitism" (Stakeholder 39a) and who may carry the weight of intergenerational trauma.[19] A constructive question for cultural leaders and organisations committed to safety, inclusivity and respect across differences is: How should I respond when a Jewish audience member, staff or board member shares that they have experienced trauma or harm and need support? To this end, illustrative examples demonstrating the impact of recent incidents in the sector may be more effective than definitions that emphasise intention (see: Waxman, Schraub and Hosein 2022).[20] One stakeholder working at a Jewish organisation outlined their existing educational outreach initiatives with members of the mainstream creative community:

> As part of the workshop we talk about the Jewish community in Australia, [including] the epigenetic transmission of trauma… once

[15] See: Recommendation 2.1.3 and 2.2.1 in Executive Summary
[16] See: Recommendation 2.1.4 and 2.2.2 in Executive Summary
[17] See: Recommendation 4.2.1 in Executive Summary
[18] See: Recommendation 2.1.5 in Executive Summary
[19] See: Recommendation 2.1.2 and 3.2.1 in Executive Summary
[20] See: Recommendation 1.1.2, 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.2.3 in Executive Summary



“The creative community [should] come together — Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and non-Jews from all walks of life — to touch the hearts and minds of people. That’s what the arts should be doing. This is our core purpose.”

— STAKEHOLDER A2A

> they understand that the community [is] dealing with second- and third-generation people who have been affected by their parents' and grandparents' experiences of trauma, then they can understand why the community responds in a certain way. So, for example, one of the incidents with a theatre group and the community got really upset about it. "Why has the reaction been so extreme?" [However], when they understand where the community comes from, then they suddenly understand the response of the community. (Stakeholder A7b)

Emerging from the workshops, manifestos for cultural safety and inclusion centre on the need for a more compassionate and supportive environment for individuals, particularly within the context of ongoing conflict and political tensions surrounding Israel. One manifesto outlined: "We will listen and be guided by those with lived experience" (W3A3.2). Efforts to create spaces for people to "share the impact of their experiences" (Stakeholder B24) speak to existing cultural safety frameworks in the sector that encourage "listening to community voices, and following processes of communication and consultation" (Safer Spaces at the National Association for the Visual Arts [NAVA]). Crafted on such a principle, antisemitism awareness training might borrow from existing educational sessions produced and delivered by other minority groups.[21] One stakeholder (B24) reflected on a "fantastic" workshop delivered by a First Nations individual who trained their staff on "how to shut up and listen, not react, not engage – to be able to sit in stories with people, and hear people's stories and hear them."

SOCIAL MEDIA

There is a need for long-term cultural shifts in how organisations approach social media. This includes developing policies that promote thoughtful engagement, supported by training and education that emphasise the importance of pausing between stimulus and response in online interactions.[22] There is also a need to create a database of resources where Jewish creatives and artists can seek support and guidance independently, including on navigating social and online networks and their professional workplaces.[23] One stakeholder manages an informal online support group for "Jewish [creatives] who have experienced first-hand antisemitism [and are] unsure how to deal with it" (Stakeholder 39a) to help people craft responses or individual strategies for navigating online spaces. One Jewish organisation has created cultural safety guidelines for Jewish professionals working in non-Jewish cultural spaces. This is an example of existing work created by communities best-equipped to recognise antisemitism that can be used to create protocols for organisations "unsure about best practices [on] how to look after Jewish employees" (Stakeholder A15). Community consultation ensures that trusted Jewish voices (namely, representatives of Jewish organisations) are central to developing solutions that reflect the community's lived experiences and address challenges within the sector.[24]

[21] See: Recommendation 2.3.3 in Executive Summary
[22] See: Recommendation 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 in Executive Summary
[23] See: Recommendation 2.3.1 in Executive Summary
[24] See: Recommendation 2.3.2 and 4.1.1 in Executive Summary

The creation of these resources may complement existing initiatives such as the Creative Equity Toolkit, which is a digital platform launched by Diversity Arts Australia that provides practical tools to help cultural leaders, creative workers and independent artists advance diversity and inclusion in the sector.[25] Another relevant initiative is Creative Workplaces, which plans to launch an information service designed to support individuals who have experienced discrimination in their arts-based and creative workplaces.[26]

In highlighting the need for educative initiatives, it is fair to recognise that Jewish organisations and individuals are trusted to handle antisemitism education in a "sensitive and deeply understood way because of the skills we have – there is a capability and excellence to be able to [do] what we do in the antisemitism space" (Stakeholder A7a). However, it is essential not to place the burden solely on Jewish creatives and professionals. Many already experience what Van Milders (2022: 182) describes as "uncompensated and unrecognised" emotional labour, often shouldering a disproportionate cultural load in order to "just keep going" (Stakeholder A3a) amid personal and professional challenges. This includes navigating both real and perceived expectations to act as spokespeople on antisemitism, frequently at the expense of their artistic practice or career ambitions. As one stakeholder reflected: "Now I'm only making work about antisemitism, you know. And why should I?" (Stakeholder A25). Expecting Jewish stakeholders to bear this responsibility alone only reinforces existing cultural and structural inequities.[27]

LEADERSHIP

There is a pressing need for cultural industry leaders at the state and national levels to meaningfully engage with antisemitism and the discourses that have emerged and been amplified since 7 October 2023. A reasonable starting point is acknowledging the impacts and harm experienced by many Jewish creatives, artists and cultural professionals in the sector.[28] While highlighting negative experiences, many Jewish stakeholders also recalled exceptional moments of empathy from colleagues, demonstrating the powerful effect of recognition and acknowledgement.

> I was really nervous. No one had said anything [until] my teacher goes: "You see what's happening in Israel – it's crazy. Is your family okay? [...] Are you doing okay?" And I'm so grateful. That was maybe a week or so after October 7 happened. (Stakeholder A32)

> And so she knew I was Jewish, and she's Muslim, and we connected one day on the stairwell. I was like: "How are you going?" And she was like: "I'm alright. How are you?" So we had a moment. (Stakeholder A14)

> The [only Indigenous] person on our board has reached out to me the most [and] said to me: "Are you okay? Do you need some support?" I think [they get] it the most out of anyone. (Stakeholder A23)

[25] There is also a database of resources titled 'How to be anti-racist in the arts' by Diversity Arts Australia.
[26] See: Recommendation 2.3.3 in Executive Summary
[27] See: Recommendation 4.1.2 in Executive Summary
[28] See: Recommendation 1.1.1 in Executive Summary

At an institutional level, responses can vary significantly even within the same organisation. One stakeholder (B30) noted their organisation "did a very good job" when senior management took Jewish patrons' reports of harm seriously, calling them individually. However, attending a meeting between the artistic team and one of the affected patrons, this stakeholder noticed internal misalignment: while one team member "had the capacity to say: 'I'm sorry for the hurt and pain and I'm really sorry'", another did not acknowledge or "take responsibility for the pain and hurt" caused (Stakeholder B30). While robust frameworks can help create safe workplace infrastructures, effective implementation requires principled leadership to ensure consistent organisational approaches.[29]

The same stakeholder described a positive institutional response that demonstrated such leadership through nuanced decision-making. When facing a decision about language in publicity materials for an arts program, a cultural leader made an informed choice about distinguishing between antisemitism and pro-Palestinian discourse:

> [It was] decided to remove the paragraph [which included the statement] "Free Palestine". And my chair said: "I think that's antisemitic, because the Free Palestine movement that he belongs to calls for the annihilation of Israel, so we're not going to include it". (Stakeholder B30)

This informed decision addressed potential safety concerns without cancelling the artwork or program itself, illustrating how principled leadership relies on educational frameworks that can identify and navigate nuances, and then create frameworks to ensure consistent organisational approaches that maintain both safety and artistic integrity.[30]

FRAMEWORKS

The findings of this report speak to a need for a coordinated, sector-wide initiative that supports institutions and their leaders to outline the responsibilities and remits for its various stakeholders at every level of a cultural organisation, from staff members to contracted agencies and artists, in the commitment to create and uphold safe and respectful workplaces in the arts.[31] There is also an urgent need to address the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping institutional responses and informing the personal and professional emotional life-worlds of creatives, artists and professionals working in the sector.[32]

As part of this research, we aimed to use stakeholder experiences across both Cohorts A and B to conceptualise how existing cultural safety frameworks might be adapted for broad application across the sector's workplaces, networks and spaces. We suggest that sector-wide training and support for implementing cultural safety frameworks should centre on emotional safety, thereby capturing feelings of discomfort and unease that both inform and are informed by affective or ambient antisemitism.[33] This approach aligns with existing rhetorical

[29] See: Recommendation 3.1.3 in Executive Summary
[30] See: Recommendation 3.2.2 and 4.2.2 in Executive Summary
[31] See: Recommendation 3.1.1 in Executive Summary
[32] See: Recommendation 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 in Executive Summary
[33] See: Recommendation 3.2.1 in Executive Summary

strategies for adhering to good practice in cultural safety. The National Association for the Visual Arts (n.d.) identifies cultural safety as essential to creating creative workplaces and settings that "recognise and respect the cultural identities of people, and creates places that [are] socially, *emotionally* and physically safe for people to be who they are" (emphasis added).

If arts and cultural spaces, including their administrative spheres. are expected to remain free from political discourse and identity-based expression for workplace safety, then this principle must be applied consistently. Conversely, if policies or frameworks encourage political self-expression, they must be fairly and consistently implemented in practice, with safeguards to prevent hate speech, intimidation or unsafe expressions of views.[34] In which case, such safeguards ought to be agreed on in advance and communicated effectively across all levels of an organisation.

Whether online or on stage, many of these recent incidents have prompted reflection not only on the creative remits of artists but of the working relationship (and respective remits) of creative teams, operational staff, board and funders.[35] At times, the creative separation between boards and artistic teams is upheld as a necessary condition for the functioning of arts or cultural organisations: "the separation of the board from artistic direction is always seen to be sacrosanct [like] the separation of church and state" (Stakeholder B26). Paradoxically, however, it is often this very distance between governance and operations — "I sit on the governance structure; I'm not down in the weeds" (Stakeholder B10) — that has contributed to some of the issues now manifesting across the sector. One stakeholder describes an intra-institutional conflict that arose not from a simple lack of communication, but from an organisational culture in which minimal communication or interference between staff and governance was considered appropriate:

> I think that the schism last year revealed [that] there hadn't been a lot of communication between the staff and the board about programming – it was kept quite arm's length, which is entirely appropriate from a creative perspective in my opinion. But the board didn't even know what was in the program really, in detail, or what the copy of the program would be. And then when challenges would arise, the first protocol was not to inform the board, but that would then mean that by the time [it had] escalated… the board feels out of the loop and that can be really damaging. (Stakeholder B27)

Some stakeholders feel that the term "cultural safety" is loaded or has been "weaponised" (Stakeholder B27) to police the boundaries of political dissent or opposition, and verges on censorship. Indeed, maintaining safe spaces requires consensus on definitions and parameters, including agreement on where the lines lie between antisemitism and anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian statements.[36] However, since these definitions are highly contested, clear remits are also needed to determine who is responsible for overseeing their application in practice. Despite such definitional challenges, there is already work being done to introduce or revise frameworks, procedures and

[34] See: Recommendation 3.2.2 in Executive Summary
[35] See: Recommendation 3.1.1 in Executive Summary
[36] See: Recommendation 4.2.3 in Executive Summary

contingencies to address this particular issue, including artists' code of conduct, ethical frameworks and staff guidelines, at some of the organisations discussed in stakeholder interviews. Adaptable templates that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual institutions should be developed to promote a consistent sector-wide approach and reduce the burden on organisations of creating policies or frameworks from scratch.[37]

[37] See: Recommendation 3.1.3 in Executive Summary

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to increase awareness and understanding of antisemitism in the CCIs by bringing attention to the specific ways in which antisemitism manifests in these spaces, and raising awareness about the challenges faced by Jewish professionals. Antisemitism has historically and continually reshaped what it means to be Jewish. In the context of Australia's CCIs, many Jewish stakeholders have been "relentlessly thinking about this: What is my identity in an arts organisation?" (Stakeholder A21). Meanwhile, cultural and arts organisations faced "a series of more complicated layers on top of just delivering [an event or program], which were very difficult to navigate and stressful" (Stakeholder A10), as the sector appeared ill-prepared (and the individuals with them often felt unsupported) to respond to the complex and highly charged discourses that emerged following the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Palestine in October 2023.

This research identified patterns such as reactive responses — what one stakeholder described as "a knee-jerk reaction" (Stakeholder B24) — as well as a "vacuum formed by not responding" in a timely or thoughtful manner (Stakeholder A10). These responses often pointed to a lack of preparedness at the governance level and the absence of a principled, strategic approach to crisis leadership. Despite these challenges, the research also revealed a great deal of goodwill. Leaders, representatives and staff from various organisations (Cohort B) willingly participated in interviews for this project on antisemitism in the CCIs, demonstrating a shared commitment to engage with these complex issues.

The research also proposed actionable solutions for fostering more inclusive, equitable and culturally responsive environments across the sector. These included training programs, toolkits and best practice — or, as one stakeholder (B22) notes: "better practice, because there's actually no such thing as best practice" — guidelines designed to better support Jewish creatives and organisations in addressing antisemitism. It is hoped that the findings will inform policy, strategy development and broader strategic initiatives within creative and cultural organisations, helping to more effectively embed antisemitism awareness into their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

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