

FOI

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Attachments: Creative Australia Ministerial Brief - Venice Biennale 2026 Artistic Team.docx; Att 1 - Announcement of Australias artistic team for the Venice Biennale (Draft).docx

s22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> creative.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 31 January 2025 5:37 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> mo.arts.gov.au
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> arts.gov.au; TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> arts.gov.au; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> creative.gov.au; Adrian Collette <adrian.collette@creative.gov.au>
Subject: Creative Australia Ministerial Brief - Venice Biennale 2026 Artistic Team

Dear s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

Please find attached a For Information Brief from Creative Australia to the Minister about the Venice Biennale 2026 Artistic Team.

Appreciate your assistance in providing this Brief to the Minister.

FYI the announcement is scheduled for 2pm Friday 7 Feb 2025 (draft media release attached). OFTA will work with media team on Minister quote if needed.

Any questions please let Nicola or myself know.

Thank you and have a good weekend

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

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We acknowledge the many Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and honour their Elders past and present. We respect their deep enduring connection to their lands, waterways, and surrounding clan groups since time immemorial. We cherish the richness of First Nations Peoples' artistic and cultural expressions



Australian Government

**FOR INFORMATION**

To: The Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for the Arts
From: Adrian Collette, Chief Executive Officer, Creative Australia
Subject: Venice Biennale Artistic Team 2026
Date: Thursday, 30 January 2025

Summary

This brief provides information on the decision for the appointed artistic team for the 2026 Venice Biennale. 2026 will be the 26th edition of Australia's participation at the Venice Biennale which commenced in 1954.

Creative Australia is the commissioner of the Australia Pavilion and the producer of the Australia at the Venice Biennale project, which incorporates the exhibition within the Pavilion, a suite of professional development programs for Australian creative and cultural workers, and a co-investment program that garners support and advocacy for the project.

Khaled Sabsabi has been appointed as the 43rd artist to present in the Australia Pavilion in the category of National Participation. **Michael Dagostino** has been appointed as the curator for the artistic team. Both members of the artistic team are from New South Wales.

As set out in our brief sent on Monday 20 January 2025, Creative Australia will publicly announce the 2026 Venice Biennale Artistic Team on **7 February 2025**. We invite you to include a quote in the media release, a draft of which is attached (**Attachment 1**).

Sensitivities – see point 9.

Background

1. Creative Australia is the commissioner of the Australia Pavilion and the producer of the Australia at the Venice Biennale project, which incorporates the exhibition within the Pavilion, a suite of professional development programs for Australian creative and cultural workers, and a co-investment program that garners support and advocacy for the project.

Assessment Process

2. Stage one expression of interest applications opened on 27 August 2024 and closed on 8 October 2024.
3. Creative Australia convened a panel of five industry advisors. The industry advice panel was carefully appointed from a longlist that was Board approved. 51 eligible applications were submitted to the stage one expression of interest.
4. The industry advisors were Mariko Smith (Yuin and Japanese curator), Elaine Chia (arts professional), Wassan Al-Khudhairi (curator of Hawai'i Triennale), Dunja Rmandić (Director



Australian Government



Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery) and Anthony Gardner (independent curator and academic).

5. An assessment meeting was held on 8 November 2024 to receive the advice of the panel from which **six** shortlisted applicants proceeded to stage two of the assessment process.
6. Stage two applications opened 11 November 2024 and closed 6 December 2024. Industry advisors met with the CEO and Head of Visual Arts at Creative Australia, to provide feedback on stage two submissions.

Recipients and Shortlistee

7. Here is the appointed artistic team for the 2026 Venice Biennale.

State	Recipient
New South Wales New South Wales	Khaled Sabsabi (artist) Michael Dagostino (curator)

8. Here are the artistic teams that were shortlisted for stage two of the assessment.

State	Shortlistee
Victoria New South Wales	Hayley Millar-Baker (artist) Erin Vink (curator)
Northern Territory Queensland Australian Capital Territory	Dhopiya Yunupingu (artist) Tony Albert (curator) Sally Brand (curator)
Victoria Australian Capital Territory	Jenna Lee (artist) Tina Baum (curator)
Victoria New South Wales	Hong An James Nguyen (artist) Anna Davis (curator)
New South Wales United Kingdom	Mel O'Callaghan (artist) Tamsin Hong (curator)

Sensitivities

9. Khaled Sabsabi along with other artists withdrew from the Sydney Festival in 2022 in protest at the festival receiving funding from the Israeli Embassy, 'out of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23/12/2021).



Australian Government



Announcement

10. Creative Australia will announce the 2026 Venice Biennale Artistic Team on **7 February 2025**.

Adrian Collette
Chief Executive Officer
Creative Australia

Attachments

1. Draft announcement of Australia's Artistic Team for the Venice Biennale (Media Release) – with opportunity to add a quote.



Media release

Announcing Australia's artist and curator for the 2026 Venice Biennale

Under embargo until 2PM AEDT, Friday 7 February 2025

Creative Australia announces award-winning multidisciplinary artist Khaled Sabsabi and esteemed curator Michael Dagostino as the artistic team to represent Australia at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

Their collaboration will bring an exhibition to the Australia Pavilion that hopes to build empathy and connection between all people.

For more than 35 years, Sabsabi's artistic process involves working across art mediums, geographical borders and with communities in Australian and international contexts. For Sabsabi, creating and exhibiting art has been a way to bring people together in immersive and engaging experiences. Through his work, Sabsabi explores human collectiveness; and questions identity politics and ideology, inviting audiences to do the same.

Michael Dagostino was the founding director of Parramatta Artists' Studios, later Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre, and currently Director of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney. Dagostino has embedded an intentional artist-driven approach to all of his curatorial and director roles, facilitating access, equity and authorship.

Reflecting on his collaboration with appointed curator Michael Dagostino, Khaled Sabsabi said:

"We acknowledge and recognise First Nations cultural and linguistic diversity that has existed on these lands for thousands of years.

Our collaboration is informed by our common lived experiences and work histories, as migrants and children of migrants. We trust in the culturally diverse voices of Western Sydney and Australia more broadly and the lessons they may offer in negotiations of global futures."

Khaled Sabsabi joins a distinguished group of 42 other Australian artists whose creative contributions have critically engaged with global audiences.

Federal Minister for the Arts, the Hon Tony Burke MP, said:

There were a total of six artistic teams shortlisted in the two stage open call process. Creative Australia wishes to acknowledge the talent of shortlisted teams, their efforts signal to the depth of Australia's artistic capacity:

- Dhopiya Yunupingu (1950 – 2024, artist) with Tony Albert and Sally Brand
- Hayley Millar Baker (artist) with Erin Vink
- James Nguyens (artist) with Anna Davis
- Jenna Mayilema Lee (artist) with Tina Baum
- Mel O'Callaghan (artist) with Tamsin Hong

Media release



Creative Australia continues its role as the commissioner for Australia in the category of National Participation.

Creative Australia CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

“We are proud to support this extraordinary team as they prepare to showcase their vision at one of the most prestigious platforms for contemporary art. Khaled Sabsabi’s work, in collaboration with curator Michael Dagostino, reflects the diversity and plurality of Australia’s rich culture, and will spark meaningful conversations with audiences around the world.”

established Australia Council Board Chair Robert Morgan said:

“Khaled Sabsabi and Michael Dagostino continue a proud tradition of showcasing Australia’s exceptional artistic talent at this important global arts event. This unparalleled opportunity is only possible through the generosity of our philanthropic partners who, for decades, have enabled artists to bring their bold and compelling works to this prestigious platform.”

The 2026 artistic team was selected based on the advice of a panel of independent industry advisors including national and international visual arts experts. Creative Australia thanks the industry advisors who took part in this process, including: Anthony Gardner, Dunja Rmandić, Elaine Chia, Mariko Smith and Wassan Al-Khudhairi.

The 61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia will take place from April – November 2026. In 2026, the main exhibition is being curated by Koyo Kouoh, the executive director and chief curator of Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, South Africa.

More information about Australia at the Venice Biennale is available on our website.

Media contact:

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff
details

Media Manager, Creative Australia

Mobile: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

Email: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details creative.gov.au

More information

About the Artist: Khaled Sabsabi

For more than 35 years, Khaled Sabsabi’s artistic process has involved working across mediums and with communities. He sees art as an effective tool to communicate and converse with people, through a familiar language.

Sabsabi was awarded a Creative Australia (previously Australia Council for the Arts) Community and Cultural Development Fellowship in 2001, Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship 2010, 60th Blake Prize 2011, MCG Basil Sellers fellowship 2014, Fishers Ghost Prize 2014, Western Sydney ARTS NSW Fellowship 2015, Sharjah Art Programme Prize 2016, International Council of Museums’ and Heritage Awards, Video Art Prize 2016, University of NSW Annual Alumni Award ‘Art and Culture’ 2019, Copyright Agency Cultural Fund Visual Arts Fellowship 2020,



Creative Australia 'Annual Visual Arts Award' 2023 and the Mordant Family and Creative Australia American Academy Rome Affiliated Fellowship 2024.

He is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane and has produced more than 65 major mixed media and installation-based works to date, exhibiting in over 90 solo and group art exhibitions in Australia and abroad. Khaled also participated in the 5th Marrakech Biennale, 18th Biennale of Sydney and the 21st Biennale of Sydney, 9th Shanghai Biennale, Sharjah Biennial 11, 1st Yinchuan Biennale, 3rd Kochi Muziris Biennale, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art 2018 and 2024.

About the Curator: Michael Dagostino

Michael Dagostino is the Director of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney. As a new museum, it unites the university's diverse collections into a multidisciplinary institution dedicated to education and community engagement.

As founding director of Parramatta Artists Studios, he established a key platform for emerging artists. In 2011, he became Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre, where he continued an artist-driven program supporting local, national, and international collaborations. Notable projects include *With Secrecy and Despatch* (2016), co-curated with Tess Allas and David Garneau, exploring colonial impacts through the Appin Massacre, and *Another Day in Paradise* (2017), showcasing Myuran Sukumaran's work co-curated by Ben Quilty.

Michael curated Lisa Reihana's *Cinemanía* (2018) and commissioned the Australian First Nations component of her *"In Pursuit of Venus [Infected]"* for the NZ Pavillion at the Venice Biennale. *A Hope and A Promise* (2021), co-curated by Adam Porter and Matt Cox, surveyed Khaled Sabsabi's 30-year practice held at the Art Gallery of NSW and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

Michael has received Imagine Awards and ICOM awards for institutional excellence. His board memberships include Sydney Dance Company, FBi Radio, Accessible Arts, and the Sydney Writers' Festival, alongside advisory roles for the NSW Government. He remains committed to advancing museums' role in fostering access, equity and authorship.

About the Commissioner: Creative Australia

Creative Australia is the Australian Government's principal arts investment and advisory body.

With artists at the heart of what we do, we invest in creative talent and stimulate the market for Australian stories to be told on a national and international scale, sharing our rich culture with the world. We do this because art and creativity define us, recording what we have been and what we might yet become. As a nation, creativity connects us and benefits us all.

We are proud of Creative Australia's 50-year history of investing in First Nations Arts and Culture and supporting First Nations self-determination. Creative Australia will build on that legacy in 2024 when the inaugural First Nations-led Board will be appointed.

Creative Australia is for the artist.

Creative Australia is for us all.



Australia's participation at the Venice Biennale

Established in 1895, La Biennale di Venezia holds a reputation as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world and attracts over 500,000 visitors to its biennial Art exhibition. The history of the La Biennale di Venezia dates back from 1895, when the first Art exhibition was hosted. In the 1930s new festivals were born, including Music, Cinema, and Theatre (the Venice Film Festival in 1932 was the first film festival in history). In 1980 the first Architecture exhibition took place, and in 1999 Dance made its debut at La Biennale.

Australia has participated in the Venice Biennale since 1954 playing a crucial role in presenting Australian talent and ideas to the world. It is one of only 29 countries with a permanent national pavilion in the Giardini (Biennale gardens) and provides an elegant home to showcase the best of Australian art and architecture.

Creative Australia serves as the commissioner and producer of the Australia Pavilion, overseeing its ownership, management and the delivery of its Art exhibitions. It also presents associated activities that currently include sector development programs that provide invaluable international opportunities for visual arts professionals from across the continent.

From 2025, Creative Australia will deliver the production of the Architecture exhibitions to expand its advocacy and development role in supporting Australian creativity.

FOI

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 3 February 2025 12:38 PM
To: Media
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; Arts - DLO Burke; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: RE: potential ministerial quote - CA Venice Biennale artistic team MR [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hey s22(1)(a)(ii) -

We're happy to leave this one to Creative Aus!

Thanks ☺

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
 Media Adviser | s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
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[homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@homeaffairs.gov.au)

Office of Tony Burke MP

Member for Watson | Minister for Home Affairs | Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
 Minister for Cyber Security | Minister for the Arts | Leader of the House of Representatives

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where I live and work.

I pay my respects to their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Media
Sent: Monday, 3 February 2025 12:28 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: Media; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; Arts DLO Burke (Arts); s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: potential ministerial quote - CA Venice Biennale artistic team MR [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hey s22(1)(a)(ii) -

CA team have sent through a draft MR for the announcement of their artistic team for next year's biennale.

They're hoping to send out this Friday.

Would you like to include a quote from the Minister?

Cheers,
 s22(1)(a)(ii) -

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

details

Senior Media Officer (Communications and Arts) • **Communication and Change Branch**

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• M +61

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(ii) - staff details
GPO Box 994 Canberra, ACT 2601**Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts****CONNECTING AUSTRALIANS • ENRICHING COMMUNITIES • EMPOWERING REGIONS**arts.gov.au*I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.**I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.**I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.**I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.**I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.**I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people***OFFICIAL**

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FOI

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 5:17 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: Media Release - 2026 Venice Biennale artistic team
Attachments: Media Release - AusAtVenice - Artistic team announcement for VB2026.docx

Good afternoon s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

Attaching for your awareness the final media release announcing the 2026 Venice Biennale artistic team.

Please note this is under embargo until 2PM AEDT, Friday 7 February 2025.

Best wishes,

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

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Media release

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Creative Australia announces award-winning multidisciplinary artist Khaled Sabsabi and esteemed curator Michael Dagostino as the artistic team to represent Australia at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

Their collaboration will bring an exhibition to the Australia Pavilion that hopes to build empathy and connection between all people.

For more than 35 years, Sabsabi's artistic process has involved working across art mediums, geographical borders and with communities in Australian and international contexts. For Sabsabi, creating and exhibiting art has been a way to bring people together in immersive and engaging experiences. Through his work, Sabsabi explores human collectiveness; and questions identity politics and ideology, inviting audiences to do the same.

Michael Dagostino was the founding director of Parramatta Artists' Studios, later Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre, and currently Director of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney. Dagostino has embedded an intentional artist-driven approach to all of his curatorial and director roles, facilitating access, equity and authorship.

Reflecting on his collaboration with appointed curator Michael Dagostino, Khaled Sabsabi said: "We acknowledge and recognise First Nations cultural and linguistic diversity that has existed on these lands for thousands of years.

Our collaboration is informed by our common lived experiences and work histories, as migrants and children of migrants. We trust in the culturally diverse voices of Western Sydney and Australia more broadly and the lessons they may offer in negotiations of global futures."

Khaled Sabsabi joins a distinguished group of 42 other Australian artists whose creative contributions have critically engaged with global audiences.

A total of six artistic teams were shortlisted in the two-stage open call process. Creative Australia wishes to acknowledge the talent of shortlisted teams, their efforts signal to the depth of Australia's artistic capacity:

- Dhopiya Yunupingu (1950 – 2024, artist) with Tony Albert and Sally Brand
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- Mel O'Callaghan (artist) with Tamsin Hong

Creative Australia continues its role as the commissioner for Australia in the category of National Participation.

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Media release



Creative Australia CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

“We are proud to support this extraordinary team as they prepare to showcase their vision at one of the most prestigious platforms for contemporary art. Khaled Sabsabi’s work, in collaboration with curator Michael Dagostino, reflects the diversity and plurality of Australia’s rich culture, and will spark meaningful conversations with audiences around the world.”

Creative Australia Chair Robert Morgan said:

“Khaled Sabsabi and Michael Dagostino continue a proud tradition of showcasing Australia’s exceptional artistic talent at this important global arts event. This unparalleled opportunity is only possible through the generosity of our philanthropic partners who, for decades, have enabled artists to bring their bold and compelling works to this prestigious platform.”

In 2026, co-investment for Australia’s participation at the Venice Biennale is led by Alexandra Dimos, Chair of the Venice Biennale Ambassadors.

Dimos (SA) is joined and supported by national and international Ambassadors Clare Deloughery (NSW), Nicole Redden (QLD), Samantha Cross and Theresia Spencer (VIC), Paul Chamberlain (WA), Eleanor Hartmann (Hong Kong) and Simon Mordant (International). We thank the Ambassadors for their brilliant sharing of knowledge and generous support of the 2026 exhibition.

The 2026 artistic team was selected based on the advice of a panel of independent industry advisors including national and international visual arts experts. Creative Australia thanks the industry advisors who took part in this process: Anthony Gardner, Dunja Rmandić, Elaine Chia, Mariko Smith and Wassan Al-Khudhairi.

The 61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia will take place from April – November 2026. In 2026, the main exhibition is being curated by Koyo Kouoh, the executive director and chief curator of Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, South Africa.

More information about Australia at the Venice Biennale is available on our [website](#).

Media contacts:

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details

Media Manager, Creative Australia

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More information

About the artist: Khaled Sabsabi

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About the curator: Michael Dagostino

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As founding director of Parramatta Artists Studios, he established a key platform for emerging artists. In 2011, he became Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre, where he continued an artist-driven program supporting local, national, and international collaborations. Notable projects include *With Secrecy and Despatch* (2016), co-curated with Tess Allas and David Garneau, exploring colonial impacts through the Appin Massacre, and *Another Day in Paradise* (2017), showcasing Myuran Sukumaran's work co-curated by Ben Quilty.

Michael curated Lisa Reihana's *Cinemanía* (2018) and commissioned the Australian First Nations component of her *"In Pursuit of Venus [Infected]"* for the NZ Pavillion at the Venice Biennale. *A Hope and A Promise* (2021), co-curated by Adam Porter and Matt Cox, surveyed Khaled Sabsabi's 30-year practice held at the Art Gallery of NSW and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

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About the commissioner: Creative Australia

Creative Australia is the Australian Government's principal arts investment and advisory body. With artists at the heart of what we do, we invest in creative talent and stimulate the market for Australian stories to be told on a national and international scale, sharing our rich culture with

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Media release



the world. We do this because art and creativity define us, recording what we have been and what we might yet become. As a nation, creativity connects us and benefits us all.

We are proud of Creative Australia's 50-year history of investing in First Nations Arts and Culture and supporting First Nations self-determination. Creative Australia will build on that legacy in 2024 when the inaugural First Nations-led Board will be appointed.

Creative Australia is for the artist.

Creative Australia is for us all.

Australia's participation at the Venice Biennale

Established in 1895, La Biennale di Venezia holds a reputation as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world and attracts over 500,000 visitors to its biennial Art exhibition. The history of the La Biennale di Venezia dates back from 1895, when the first Art exhibition was hosted. In the 1930s new festivals were born, including Music, Cinema, and Theatre (the Venice Film Festival in 1932 was the first film festival in history). In 1980 the first Architecture exhibition took place, and in 1999 Dance made its debut at La Biennale.

Australia has participated in the Venice Biennale since 1954 playing a crucial role in presenting Australian talent and ideas to the world. It is one of only 29 countries with a permanent national pavilion in the Giardini (Biennale gardens) and provides an elegant home to showcase the best of Australian art and architecture.

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From 2025, Creative Australia will deliver the production of the Architecture exhibitions to expand its advocacy and development role in supporting Australian creativity.

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FOI

s22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> creative.gov.au

Sent: Tuesday, 11 February 2025 4:53 PM

To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> homeaffairs.gov.au; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> mo.arts.gov.au

Cc: TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> arts.gov.au; Adrian Collette <adrian.collette@creative.gov.au>

Subject: Media inquiry received re the appointment of the Venice Biennale Team - The Australian

Importance: High

Official: Sensitive

Dear s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

Sharing for your information that we have received an enquiry from a journalist at Margin Call, published daily in The Australian in relation to the selection of the Venice Biennale team for 2026. The enquiry is:

- Questions were asked for CEO Adrian Collette at a recent estimates hearing in relation to social media posts made by Ms Maskinyar, which Mr Collette said he would investigate further.
- Can you advise if any determination has been made in relation to Ms Maskinyar's social media posts?

Our response is below:

On background:

We ask that you do not name the staff member involved, who does not have a decision-making role in the selection of the artistic team for Venice Biennale.

Response:

In response to your query regarding the staff member:

- After consideration, Creative Australia determined there was no breach of the code of conduct.

Additionally, regarding the selection of artistic team:

- The artistic team has been selected as part of a rigorous two-stage assessment process, based on the advice of a panel of independent industry advisors including national and international visual arts experts.
- The artistic team was selected based on the concept, credentials, and experience to exhibit in the Australia Pavilion for the Venice Biennale 2026 as well as the creative ambition and viability of their project proposal.

Kind regards,

s22(1)(a)
(ii) - staff

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff
details

Head of Public Affairs
Office of the CEO

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FOI

s22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details creative.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 13 February 2025 11:12 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details mo.arts.gov.au>
Cc: TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details arts.gov.au>
Subject: Radio coverage

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

Also sharing coverage on 2SM radio this morning ([click here](#) to listen).

Best,

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s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

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Office of the CEO

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Attachments: Sky News - The Bolt Report - 12022025.pdf

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details creative.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 13 February 2025 10:31 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details mo.arts.gov.au>
Cc: TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details arts.gov.au>
Subject: Media coverage

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

Sharing for your awareness coverage on Sky News (Bolt Report) yesterday evening.

The story has also been shared by the [Australian Jewish Association on Facebook](#), which is attracting some further online commentary.

Best,
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Television Transcript

PREPARED: THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2025

TITLE: ANDREW BOLT INTERVIEW WITH ROWAN DEAN.

Summary: Andrew Bolt interview with Rowan Dean discussing the Lebanese Muslim artist Khaled Sabsabi being sent to Venice Biennale to represent Australia.

Channel: Sky News Regional Australia

Program: The Bolt Report

Date Broadcast: 12 February 2025

Date Broadcast: 7:41 PM - 7:44 PM

TRANSCRIPTION

ANDREW BOLT: I want to show you something that is, to me, just so amazing. I mean, says so much. We heard - I really played some of Albanese's - Anthony Albanese's response today, really flat, like he didn't have his heart in it. I think one of the problems here, Rowan, is as you've pointed out many times, the government comes into this with dirty hands, right? The way it's played flag footsies with the Muslim community, backstabbed the Jews for votes. But now this example today, - what timing? The Australian's Yoshi [sic] Bashan reports: Arts Minister Tony Burke, who, as you know, has got a seat with one of the biggest Muslim minorities out of any electorate, I think it's got about more than 30 per cent, is sending to the Venice Biennale, one of the world's top arts festival, this Lebanese Muslim artist, Khaled Sabsabi, supposedly to represent Australia, a man whose artwork includes at least two studies, homages really to the late leader of Hezbollah. Listen, here is an Islamic terrorist group. Now, the Museum of Contemporary Art actually described this particular work as one with the "beams of light shine from his eyes and mouth, suggestive of a divine illumination". Rowan, this artist is now off to Venice on our dime, thanks to Tony Burke. This is sick.

ROWAN DEAN: It is absolutely sick. And it shows that the rot that I was talking about is within our institutions as well. And I think the next ten years we're going to see, hopefully in Australia, what is taking place in America right now, which is we have to see - Donald Trump is dismantling these institutions that have had the kind of long March through them, that have all turned Marxist, all turned woke, all turned very hardcore left wing. They use our money, Andrew. That is what is sick. If people want to hold these beliefs or do whatever or paint paintings of whatever terrorists they feel like, good on them, but not on my money, not with my taxes. I want my taxes to go to people, to help people. I do not want to be paying for people to swan around Venice in gondolas, fantasising about Islamic terrorists on my money. Forget it. Donald Trump has said, and Elon Musk has backed up, that they might even be able to balance the US budget simply on the misuse of money that they are uncovering throughout all these organisations. So, let's start. Let's get Peter Dutton and Jacinta Price to start looking at the

museums, the universities, where the arts grants - where is our money going? Who's it going to? And let's put a stop to it.

ANDREW BOLT: Well, again, you know, this really lovely trust in the Liberals. Let us see Jacinta Price's different kettle of fish. Peter Dutton might be too. But Rowan, we've got to hold them to the mark because Liberals in the past have not been-

END

FOI

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 s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
 s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

Attachments: Sky News - The Bolt Report - 12022025.pdf

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Sent: Thursday, 13 February 2025 11:12 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: TODD, Alison ; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: Radio coverage

Hi s22(1)

Also sharing coverage on 2SM radio this morning ([click here](#) to listen).

Best,
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Well, can I just tell you something about Tony Burke? I'm glad you mentioned Tony Burke, Craig. Tony Burke obviously can't read the room .

 Disclaimer

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Attachments: Khaled Sabsabi_ Creative Australia drops artist as Venice Biennale entrant.pdf

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [creative.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au)
Sent: Friday, 14 February 2025 10:25 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [mo.arts.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@mo.arts.gov.au); s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@homeaffairs.gov.au)
Cc: TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [arts.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@arts.gov.au); Adrian Collette <adrian.collette@creative.gov.au>
Subject: Statement to media by Khaled Sabsabi

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

Sharing with you for information a statement that the artist has made to the SMH.

Best,
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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au>
Sent: Sunday, 16 February 2025 11:38 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: TODD, Alison; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: Media request from Australian Financial Review

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

For your information, we have received the request below from the AFR, we have declined the request.

- *Would it be possible to speak with Adrian Collette today? We'd like to give Creative Australia an opportunity to respond to the resignations of the past couple of days.*

You have likely picked up, but sharing the ABC article from this morning [here](#).

Best,
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s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au>
Sent: Sunday, 16 February 2025 6:11 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: TODD, Alison; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: Anticipated media update

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

Further update today:

- AFR followed up to say they may not run a story today but will be back in touch if they do further coverage.
- We received a request for Adrian to do an interview with Sarah Ferguson for ABC 7.30 report tomorrow (Monday) to explain the decision process. We have declined. They informed us that they have reached out to the artist.

Best,
s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Sent: Sunday, 16 February 2025 11:38 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details (Arts); s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: Alison Todd (Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au); s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Subject: Media request from Australian Financial Review

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

For your information, we have received the request below from the AFR, we have declined the request.

- *Would it be possible to speak with Adrian Collette today? We'd like to give Creative Australia an opportunity to respond to the resignations of the past couple of days.*

You have likely picked up, but sharing the ABC article from this morning [here](#).

Best,
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s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 17 February 2025 10:44 AM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details
Cc: TODD, Alison; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details; Adrian Collette
Subject: Update re 730 report and additional media enquiries

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

More activity this morning for your information:

ABC 730:

- Producer Marina Freri has reached out with additional questions:
 - Did the Federal Arts Minister Tony Burke speak with any members of Creative Australia prior to the crisis meeting on Thursday?
 - Did the Federal Arts Minister express an opinion on Khaled Sabsabi's work?
 - Had Creative Australia viewed some of the old artworks by Khaled Sabsabi prior to his appointment as Venice Biennale representative?
- On background we are providing the following:
 - Creative Australia is in regular contact with the Office for the Arts and senior stakeholders. We do not comment on specific conversations.
 - Please refer to the Minister's comments as provided publicly.
 - This is the kind of question that we expect will be considered as part of the independent review.
- We will also provide a statement back prior to their 4pm deadline:

As an allocator of taxpayer resources to support Australia's creative and artistic ambitions the Board of Creative Australia has an obligation to ensure its work and decisions are consistent with its statutory obligations as well as its social licence to represent all Australians.

Creative Australia recognises and acknowledges the process of determining the artist to represent Australia at the 2026 Venice Biennale has created deep disappointment in Australia's artistic and cultural community.

Creative Australia is an advocate for artistic freedom and is not an interpreter of artistic expression however these fundamental principles must always be considered with Creative Australia's wider obligation to all Australians.

The Board has resolved to commission an immediate, independent, external review of the 2026 Venice artistic selection process to recommend any changes considered necessary.

Ten News:

- Narelda Jacobs requesting confirmation on the review. We have provided the same short response we gave to ABC Radio National this morning. Coverage expected in the lunchtime news from 1pm. They are including comments from the Greens but are not planning to attend our offices for filming.

The Guardian:

- Nour Hayder and Kelly Burke, also have asked for interview and they have been provided with the response given to ABC Radio National this morning.

Best,
 s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff
details

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s22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [creative.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@creative.gov.au)
 Sent: Monday, 17 February 2025 5:08 PM
 To: s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [mo.arts.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@mo.arts.gov.au); s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@homeaffairs.gov.au)
 Cc: TODD, Alison <Alison.TODD@arts.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff <s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details> [arts.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff details@arts.gov.au); Adrian Collette <adrian.collette@creative.gov.au>
 Subject: Media inquiries - The Saturday Paper, The Age

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff and s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

For your awareness, we've received further media interest this afternoon.

- The Saturday Paper – Karen Barlow has requested an interview, which we've declined.
- The SMH/The Age – Kerrie O'Brien has sent the questions below. Coverage expected this evening/tomorrow. We have let her know contracts are a confidential matter between Creative Australia and contractors and we would not comment on specific conversations.

Media enquiry – SMH/The Age – Kerrie O'Brien

Was there a taxpayer cost for his cancelled contract, and if so, what was it worth?

What has been paid thus far?

Who did Tony Burke speak to at Creative Australia?

What was said in that conversation?

Who will appear as Australia's representative at Venice this year instead of Sabsabi?

When will that decision be made public?

Given the outcry against this decision, will you reconsider it?

Best,
 s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff

s22(1)(a)(ii) - staff
details

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