



## **ARTISTIC FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW SYMPOSIUM**

### **Call for papers – Human Rights Panel**

We are pleased to announce a call for papers for a Symposium on Artistic Freedom and Human Rights Symposium, organised by Maria O’Sullivan and Megan Beatrice from the Deakin Law School.

#### **Dates and venue**

Friday 24 October 2025, 9.30am to 5.30pm

Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne (in person event)

#### **Symposium Overview and Aims**

The right to freedom of artistic expression is a fundamental aspect of cultural rights which are protected under international human rights law. It includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds ‘in the form of art’, the right ‘to enjoy the arts’ and the creativity of others, as well as obligations from States to ‘respect the freedom indispensable for...creative activity’. But is this right being protected in practice? How do we differentiate the expression of political views through art, and the right of artists to express a political opinion outside of that (eg on social media, at a curtain call etc).

This gathering of artists, human rights scholars and cultural organisations aims to bring together people to discuss significant recent developments in artistic freedom in Australia. These include the challenges facing artists and cultural organisations in navigating freedom of expression, the cancellation of art or exhibitions/events due to the political expression of views by artists, the de-funding/withdrawal of support of festivals or artists and the inclusion (or absence) of marginalised voices at certain prominent events. It also hopes to examine other important areas of artistic freedom, such as the intersections between patriarchy, protest, and art and artists as human rights defenders.

We wish to start a dialogue between artists, human rights lawyers/academics and cultural organisations in order to ensure that the law adequately meets the needs of artists and our cultural life.

The day will be comprised of three key discussions: an artist panel, human rights panel and a cultural organisations panel, followed by a whole-room discussion of the issues and the way forward for artistic freedom in Australia.

This Call for Papers is for the **Human Rights Panel** which is scheduled to occur from 1.30-3pm on Friday 24 October. It will be comprised of 3-4 speakers and presenters will have approximately 15-20 minutes to present, followed by audience Q&A. We are expecting approx 60 participants at the symposium.

The convenors welcome contributions which address any issue relating to the themes of the symposium. We note that topics for discussion on the day will include (but are not limited to):

- Artistic freedom in a settler colony/art and colonialism
- Artists and Activism: Art and the right to protest; Artistic freedom and freedom of expression
- Artists as human rights defenders (artists as exposers of human rights violations)
- The role of cultural institutions (arts bodies, museums etc) in protecting the right to artistic freedom
- Patriarchy, protest, and art.

### **Submission Guidelines**

If you would like to present at the Human Rights Panel at the Symposium, please send the following information to Maria O’Sullivan at [m.osullivan@deakin.edu.au](mailto:m.osullivan@deakin.edu.au) by Friday 12 September 2025.

- a) A title and an abstract of approximately 300 words.
- b) A short biography, name, affiliation and contact detail of author/authors (in case of more authors, please indicate the name of the corresponding author).

This event is free to attend, and you can register at the event link: [Artistic Freedom and Human Rights Symposium Tickets, Fri, Oct 24, 2025 at 9:30 AM | Eventbrite.](#)

We advise that we may be able to provide some funding for inter-state travel to confirmed panellists (airfare and one night’s accommodation). Please indicate if you require that funding when you submit your abstract.

## Written Papers and Planned Publication

There is no requirement to provide a formal written paper to participate as a panellist. However, presenters are very welcome to provide a written paper to the organisers (or disseminate their paper to participants at the symposium) if they wish to receive feedback on their work.

In terms of plans for a publication arising from the symposium, the organisers are currently examining various journals for a Special Issue on the symposium themes. In the first instance, we are encouraging participants to consider submitting their paper to an upcoming thematic issue of the University of New South Wales Law Journal titled 'Privacy, Reputation and Freedom of Expression'. The Call for Submissions, can be found here:

<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/call-for-submissions-to-the-university-of-new-south-wales-law-journal-issue-492>. The submission deadline for that thematic issue is 14 November 2025 and the Issue is set to be published in July 2026.

## Important Dates

- Abstract submission deadline: Friday 12 September 2025
- Notification of acceptance: 19 September 2025
- Conference date: Friday 24 October 2025

## Further information

For further information about the conference, please contact Associate Professor Maria O'Sullivan (Deakin Law School: [m.osullivan@deakin.edu.au](mailto:m.osullivan@deakin.edu.au)).