Cultural Safety at *ArtsHub*

As journalists and writers, we have the power to shape narratives and perspectives through the stories we tell. It's important to recognise that our words can have different impacts on people from different cultures, backgrounds and experiences.

Cultural safety is about creating an environment where people feel safe and respected at every level. This is not limited to the relationship between colleagues or co-workers, but also editors, writers, interviewees and readers.

This document aims to provide some guidance on establishing an environment for cultural safety and start the conversation around some key considerations when working with our vibrant, diverse communities.

This is a living, working and evolving document. We welcome any feedback to expand our understanding and put into action cultural safety guidelines for our writers, editors and workplaces.

We respectfully acknowledge First Nations people as the traditional owners of the land on which we produce *ArtsHub*. We pay our respects to Elders, both past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded.

Contacts at ArtsHub

If you have any concerns about cultural safety and editorial content, reach out to:

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Summary of cultural safety considerations

Writers have the responsibility to:

- Check what is your motivation for pursuing this story and consider how it will help amplify the voices of the communities involved.
- Consider your own privilege when engaging with an interviewee/community and how you can adjust so that the relationship is more equal.
- Research extensively and consider the multitude of diverse views within each community.
- Recognise that no marginalised group is a monolith and must not be reduced to stereotypes or one point of view.
- Consider the narrative/message you are putting forward and what impact it will have on the community being written about.
- Actively seek permission with interviewees when touching upon sensitive topics and help them prepare by providing context and interview questions in advance.
- Use inclusive language and avoid slang/phrases that may be offensive or discriminatory.
- Always seek permission when engaging with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).
- Consider cases when anonymity may be necessary, and how do you balance that with a story that still speaks truth.
- Think about whether your story needs a trigger warning.

Editors have the responsibility to:
- Provide feedback, fact check and conduct copy edits of a piece of writing. If there are concerns around the content, discuss with the writers before making any changes.

- Understand the power imbalance and also acknowledge their own privileges. The editors will work to reduce the power imbalance and respectfully share power with the writers.
- Not push to change the narrative or main argument and respect the point of view presented by the writer with lived experience.
- Not put the burden of proof on the writers in instances where there is a lack of research and stats available. The editors understand that often marginalised communities do not have extensive research backing their claims/experiences. In such instances, the piece can be presented as an opinion piece.
- Clearly explain the rationale behind changes to a brief or article.
- Be mindful of perpetuating stereotypes and seek to go beyond generic understandings of different identities.
- Improve accessibility from the perspective of plain, inclusive language and using alt-texts for images.
- Ensure the writer is aware and happy with how their article is being presented, including headlines, excerpts, images, and social media copy.
- Create a safe space for writers to discuss sensitive issues and tackle difficult topics with time to gestate their ideas.
- Understand and accommodate different communication preferences, including email, phone call or zoom.
- Acknowledge that other things can come before deadlines. If an individual is unable to meet a deadline it could be due to a whole variety of reasons. Don't assume that it's a character flaw, laziness or uncooperative behaviour and check- in in a respectful manner.

1. Motivations and privileges

As a writer there may be times when you identify a topic that you feel passionate about, but it's important to begin by considering if you are the right person to tell that story. First check, what is your motivation for pursuing this story? How will it help amplify the voices of the communities involved?

When approaching an individual or community for an interview, consider your own position of privilege and try to give as much context for your article as possible. Clearly articulate the angle of the story and who else will be involved. Providing a few preliminary questions in advance can also help your interviewee prepare.

In some cases, the interviewee may ask to review the draft before it goes out for publication. This can offer them peace of mind, especially if they are being asked to address sensitive topics or are putting their own reputation on the line – it's a small industry and we need to be aware of these relationships.

You may offer content for review at your own discretion and on a case-by-case by basis. It may entail sharing the whole or part of an article, or simply individual quotes for approval. The important thing is that you take care to always ensure transparency and that there is clear and respectful communication with the interviewee involved.

It is necessary to research extensively and consider the multitude of diverse views within each community. No marginalised group is a monolith and must not be reduced to stereotypes or one point of view.

Editors also need to be aware of their position of power. At *ArtsHub* we respect and value diverse experiences. The role of the editor is to provide feedback, fact check and conduct copy edits of a piece of writing. If there are concerns around the content, editors should

discuss this with the writer before making any changes to explain their rationale.

Editors will not push to change the narrative or main argument, and will respect the point of view presented by the writer with lived experience.

In cases where there is a lack of research and statistics, editors should not put the burden of proof on the writers. Often there is no extensive research in marginalised communities to back claims and experiences. In such instances, an article can be presented as an opinion piece.

Finally, as a writer you should not assume what people are trying to say, but always seek clarification if a statement is unclear.

2. Respectful relationships

Being a writer and journalist in the arts is about managing different relationships as much as it is about the writing. It's a small sector where professional and personal lives are often intertwined.

Learning how to manage different relationships respectfully can help reduce a lot of stress and pressure, especially when a topic may cause upset.

If you are giving a negative review or expressing criticism, aim the arguments at the particular show/performance rather than making a personal attack. Back up the critique with clear arguments and remember that a piece of writing can be critical without being cruel.

Equally, writers should be treated with respect – it's important to know when a comment crosses the line between professional pushback and personal attack. If necessary, escalate the matter to your editor. Sometimes introducing a third party is effective at diffusing conflict.

Feedback and criticism may be inevitable but we can find ways to manage it with a strategic editorial and social media approach.

Finding a community of supportive peers is important. If you haven't already, consider joining networks such as the [Diversity in Australia Media Facebook Page](#), [FNPOC in Publishing Network](#) and [the MEAA](#).

Additional resources:
- [Why 'bad' reviews are equally valuable and how to do them well](#)

3. Mindfulness around stereotypes

When working with interviewees and communities, actively work against perpetuating easy, flat-lined stereotypes. Seek to gain a deeper understanding of lived experiences rather than relying on textbook knowledge. Consider the multitude of diverse views within each community, and how intersecting identities bring in layers of complexity and marginalisation.

Remember that stereotypes exist not only in our phrases and words, but also images. For example, do not use an image of a wheelchair user to 'represent' the disability community.

4. Inclusive language

Use inclusive language and avoid slang/phrases that may be offensive or discriminatory. This can be in reference to race or ethnicity, disability status, sexual or gender identity, religion, socioeconomic level or any other characteristic.

It's important, however, to respect individual preferences over what is considered 'right' or 'correct'. For example, some people in the disability communities are happy using 'crip' (slang for cripple) to identify themselves, and it's a phrase in the process of being reclaimed by disabled people. Similarly, 'Aspie' (slang for Asperger's Syndrome) is medically outdated, but is still used by some.

Other considerations around inclusive language include, but are not limited to:

- Asking whether an individual prefers 'person-first' or 'identity-first' language; for example, a person with a disability or a disabled person.
- Asking and respecting an individual's name and pronouns.

- Asking how a First Nations person identifies; this may include language groups, clans, Traditional Country and/or regional identity.
- Asking how people identify with their culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- Avoiding making assumptions or generalisations based on age.

5. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

First Nations communities have the right to self-determination, that is, the right to enforce their own engagement and cultural protocols. An important aspect of self-determination is the right to own, control and manage Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).

Writers will come across both tangible (objects, artwork, physical items) and intangible (knowledge, stories) forms of First Nations cultural heritage. It is important to always actively seek permission to engage, ask and write about content in relation to ICIP, and keep in mind that First Nations communities/individuals have the right to withdraw consent at any point. Respect that some topics may be sacred, private or mob business.

6. Accessibility

The aim of building accessible digital content is so that a person with physical or cognitive impairments can have the same access to content as others in the community. Plain and inclusive language is the first step towards accessible content.

Other considerations include adding alt-text to images that convey information or meaning, and capitalising the first letter of each word if you're using any hashtags.

Alt-texts should aim to be descriptive but concise (in comparison to image descriptions), and provide a general sense of what the image is about.

7. Anonymous sources and pseudonyms

In some cases, an interviewee may wish to remain anonymous. This is often done to avoid being identified in their workplaces or risks to reputation. Writers will need to find the balance between using an anonymous source and a rigorous, truth-based story.

If an interviewee wishes to be anonymous or use a pseudonym, be aware of other information that may become easy identifiers. It's always safer to check the content of the story with the interviewee before it gets published.

Examples where anonymous interviewees and pseudonyms are necessary:

- [Internships: valuable work experience or glorified volunteering?](#) (Pseudonyms used)
- [Redevelopment plans put Meat Market in a tight squeeze](#) (Anonymous source)

8. Defamation

Defamation is a serious legal matter. When reviewing the draft, editors will evaluate any risk of defamation, but if the article has been published when an issue is raised, it needs to be escalated to *ArtsHub*'s Managing Editor, Madeleine Swain, pronto.

Arts Law Centre provides [a comprehensive information sheet on defamation](#). What writers need to keep in mind is the test of whether a communication is defamatory:

- Does the communication lower/harm the plaintiff's reputation?
- Does the communication hold the plaintiff up to ridicule?
- Does the communication lead others to shun and avoid the plaintiff?

It should also be noted that it is not necessary to name an individual to defame them. If a person can be identified from other supporting information, such as place of work, position, physical characteristics etc, a claim of defamation is possible.

This is judged from the viewpoint of 'ordinary reasonable people in the community in general'.

Defamation will be explained in more detail through an online workshop + Q&A (Date and time to be confirmed).

9. Content warnings

Content warnings, where appropriate, should be included at the beginning of an article in italics. This includes subject matter around mental health, suicide, substance abuse, sexual harassment or assault, trauma, and the mention and/or depiction of First Nations people who are deceased.

Standard content warnings:
- *Content warning: this story contains discussions and references around (insert trigger topic).*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this article contains names and/or images of deceased people. (Include permission if applicable.)*

If the topics mentioned may cause distress, consider including these contacts at the end of your article:
- Lifeline's 24-hour telephone support line: 13 11 14

- [Beyond Blue](#) counselling service: 1300 224 636
- [Support Act Wellbeing Helpline](#) for anyone who works in the arts: 1800 959 500
- [National domestic family and sexual violence counselling service](#): 1800 737 732

10. Editorial process

Step 1. Writers will be provided with an article pitch template for feature articles and opinion pieces. Pitches should be sent via email to Project Manager and Editor Celina Lei, and copy Managing Editor Madeleine Swain.

Writers can pitch performances/exhibitions/books that they wish to review. *ArtsHub* will assist with arranging tickets to shows and advance copies of books where needed. Please let the editors know if you're open to being allocated content for review (writers retain right of refusal).

Step 2. All first drafts will be reviewed by Diversity and Inclusion Editor Celina Lei from a content editor's perspective. When required, Program Adviser Ana Tiwary will provide additional feedback and help writers work on their article angle.

Writers will be provided with any feedback and/or edits to be reviewed where required. Please let the editor know your preferred mode of communication for feedback, this can be via email, a phone call or Zoom.

Step 3. Once writers and editors are happy with the draft, all articles will be sub-edited by Managing Editor Madeleine Swain for final fact check before going live on *ArtsHub*.

11. A note on deadlines

Deadlines will be established when articles are pitched, but can be flexible to take into consideration the time needed for culturally sensitive topics, mental health, mob business and other unforeseen circumstances. Please notify Celina of any changes regarding article deadlines as soon as possible.

Deadlines are important, but if an individual is unable to meet them, it can be due to a whole variety of reasons. Editors should try to check in with writers in a respectful manner and not assume that an inability to meet a deadline is a character flaw or suggestive of uncooperative behaviour.

12. Social media

ArtsHub's main social media channels include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn with more than 200,000 followings combined. This means that our content will be presented to people from a range of different backgrounds.

*ArtsHub'*s social media and marketing team regularly moderates comments and interactions on our social media sites. Trolls, spammers and inappropriate commenters (including but not limited to explicit language, sexual content, or racist, homophobic, sexist and ableist comments) will not be tolerated.

Our social media coordinator will hide/delete comments or ban users on a case-by-case basis. Many social media platforms also allow moderators to turn off the comments section, and this can be a joint decision between the writer, editor and social media coordinator.

If writers have any concerns regarding their content being posted or interacted with on social media, reach out to *ArtsHub*'s social media team and copy Celina in the email.

ArtsHub's social media contact is:

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Social Media Coordinator (Monday-Friday)
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Instagram: [@_artshub](#)
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