



# Picturing Democracy Exhibition

## Questions on Notice

This document presents a series of questions arising from community concerns regarding the Picturing Democracy exhibition. The questions seek clarification on the exhibition's curatorial framework, governance and oversight arrangements, and alignment with Council values, policies and statements.

### Question 1

The 'Picturing Democracy' Exhibition text asks 'Who and What is not seen?' Does Council consider that the exclusion of minorities from this exhibition is acceptable?

**Council response:**

Council does not support the exclusion of any community.

The exhibition was delivered under an artist led curatorial model, where expectations regarding inclusion were not explicitly defined in the brief. This has highlighted the importance of clearer frameworks to ensure Council's values are consistently reflected in future cultural programming.

### Question 2

Did the Exhibition Commission Brief require multiculturally inclusive content?

**Council response:**

The brief did not include specific requirements relating to multicultural representation.

The exhibition met the artistic and technical requirements of the brief, including responding to the PHOTO 2026 theme and use of the City Collection.

### Question 3

Does Council consider that the Brief requirements were satisfactorily met?

**Council response:**

Yes. The exhibition met the requirements of the brief as written.

Council recognises that future briefs would benefit from clearer guidance regarding inclusion, policy alignment and oversight.



## Question 4

How does the exclusion Jewish, Chinese and Hindu places of worship enhance social inclusion, juxtaposed to the over-representation of other religions?

### **Council response:**

The brief did not require representation of religious places or communities, and the exhibition was not intended as a commentary on religious inclusion.

Council recognises, however, that absence can be experienced as exclusion and that this is an important consideration for future programming frameworks.

## Question 5

With significant Jewish content that is readily accessible from the City Collection - why does it only form 1 out of 106 images in the Picturing Democracy Exhibition?

### **Council response:**

Content selection was at the discretion of the curator, who was not required to represent communities proportionally to Collection holdings.

Council notes that clearer expectations around representation would provide stronger guidance in future projects.

## Question 6

With significant Chinese content that is readily accessible from the City Collection - why are there zero Chinese content images in the Picturing Democracy Exhibition?

### **Council response:**

As with other content areas, selection decisions rested with the curator and were not guided by demographic or representational criteria.

Council recognises that this outcome has generated concern and reinforces the importance of clearer curatorial parameters.

## Question 7

Notwithstanding the avoidance of Chinese and Jewish content in the City Collection, why did the Curator not seek to provide new images reflecting relevant content?

### **Council response:**

The brief permitted, but did not require, the creation of new material.

In response to community feedback, exhibition text has been amended to invite broader community participation through contributions to the gallery webpage and the City Collection.



## Question 8

The Mayors and Councils Dec. 2025 joint declaration: 'Stand in Solidarity Against Antisemitism' notes: '*To our Jewish Community we say: We see you. We stand with you....*' Why has this Exhibition made the Jewish Community invisible and 'unimaginable'?

### **Council response:**

The exhibition brief did not reference Council's declaration *Stand in Solidarity Against Antisemitism*, nor require those commitments to be reflected explicitly.

This has highlighted the need for clearer alignment between Council statements and commissioned cultural activity.

## Question 9

Council's 'Social Cohesion, Diversity and Inclusion' Policy' states: 'A socially cohesive community is one in which people from all backgrounds are welcome, have positive relationships and social connections and feel a strong sense of belonging.' How does this demographically distorted Exhibition reflect council Policy?

### **Council response:**

The exhibition does not breach Council policy.

However, the policy principles were not specifically embedded into the curatorial framework, and alignment was therefore not explicitly assessed during development.

## Question 10

Would Council agree that the exclusion of minorities in this Exhibition constitutes an expression of 'political correctness' that has become so entrenched that it has been entirely overlooked - in ignorance of the Australian Human Rights Commission Campaign: '*There Is Nothing Casual About Racism*'.?

### **Council response:**

There is no evidence that curatorial decisions were driven by political ideology.

The matters raised are more accurately understood as issues of governance, scope definition and process clarity.

## Question 11

Will Council consider whether it may be in breach of the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 9: (1) *It is unlawful for a person to do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.*

### **Council response:**

Council has considered this question and does not believe the exhibition constitutes unlawful discrimination under the Act.

The exhibition did not deny access to services, participation or rights, nor was it developed with discriminatory intent.



## Question 12

Why are whole localities either inadequately represented like Elwood, or entirely absent from the Exhibition, like Ripponlea?

### Council response:

The brief did not require geographic representation across suburbs.

Selection decisions were made based on artistic interpretation rather than location coverage.

## Question 13

Why have major historical campaigns within this municipality been overlooked and ignored?

### Council response:

The brief did not require comprehensive historical coverage.

Council recognises that clearer scope parameters would assist future exhibitions.

## Question 14

Would Council agree that there has been a severe lack of oversight concerning this Exhibition?

### Council response:

Council recognises that oversight mechanisms could have better anticipated community concerns related to representation and inclusion.

## Question 15

What action will Council take to address this severe lack of oversight?

### Council response:

Council has commissioned an independent cultural safety review as part of its existing commitment to inclusion, cultural safety and strengthened cultural governance. The review was commissioned prior to the matters referenced above and has since been completed. It recommends strengthening inclusion frameworks, improving transparency, embedding cultural safety practices, and enhancing oversight and risk management. Council is progressing these recommendations to inform and strengthen future cultural programming.