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Briggs, Dan Sultan & More Indigenous Artists Pen Open Letter Against Proposed Copyright Changes

FEBRUARY 15, 2017 BY **SAM MURPHY**

A host of leading Indigenous artists including [Briggs](#), [Dan Sultan](#) and [Jessica Mauboy](#), have signed an open letter rejecting proposed changes to Australia's

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copyright laws.

In late 2016, the Productivity Commission [proposed significant changes](#) to Intellectual Property laws, including a significant reduction in the time copyright applies to creative work (which currently lasts for 75 years after the author dies), as well as the introduction of a 'fair use' exception for copyright infringement.

"Australia's copyright arrangements are skewed too far in favour of copyright owners to the detriment of consumers and intermediate users," the report found, however, Indigenous creatives are arguing that these changes will be harmful to their community.

Their open letter reads, "The recommendations to change copyright protections will harm the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander film and television makers, writers, artists, musicians and journalists to tell Indigenous stories and make a living.

"The suggested changes will have a detrimental impact on the stories, imagery, knowledge and heritage which is embodied in our story-telling and artistic works. Ownership is also a way of economic empowerment for those artists who earn money from selling, reselling and reproducing their works."



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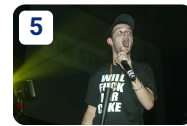
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The signees are asking that all of the proposed changes be ruled out for the reasons specified.

42 individuals have signed the letter, alongside six different organisations. Alongside Briggs, Sultan and Mauboy, a host of other musicians including Troy Cassar-Daley, Gina Williams and Dave Arden have also signed on. The full list includes writers, directors, artists and curators.

The Australian Government is yet to respond to the open letter.

This isn't the first critique of the proposed 'Safe Harbour' laws. Last year [**APRA AMCOS labelled the proposed changes**](#) "a blunt attack on Australia's creative industries, unashamedly promoting the interests of those who exploit Australian content over those who create it".

After a draft report was released in October last year a raft of musicians including Delta Goodrem, John Farnham, Guy Sebastian and Gotye rallied against a suggestion that Australia introduce 'Safe Harbour' laws, which protect Internet Service Providers from liability if their customers upload copyrighted content using their services.

Read the full open letter from Indigenous artists, below:

OPEN LETTER: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, PERFORMERS, FILMMAKERS AND WRITERS OPPOSE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS ON COPYRIGHT IN AUSTRALIA.

We the undersigned unanimously reject the Productivity Commission's

Recommendations on copyright in Australia. The recommendations to change copyright protections will harm the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander film and television makers, writers, artists, musicians and journalists to tell Indigenous stories and make a living.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creators have a right to receive fair payment for their work. The changes to Australian copyright laws being pushed by the Productivity Commission, large organisations and big technology companies will greatly diminish these protections.

This is not just unfair, it is a threat to the artistic mob and means it may be even harder to make a living for the next generation of artists. Our kids should be able to grow up inspired by artists like Albert Namatjira and Emily Kame Kngwarreye, listening to music from artists like Dan Sultan and Jessica Mauboy and watching movies like Bran Nue Dae and Samson and Delilah and TV shows like Black Comedy and Basically Black and reading books like Shake a Leg and My Place.

Ownership, responsibility and control by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of their cultural heritage is paramount. The suggested changes will have a detrimental impact on the stories, imagery, knowledge and heritage which is embodied in our story-telling and artistic works.

Ownership is also a way of economic empowerment for those artists who earn money from selling, reselling and reproducing their works.

We call on the Australian Government and parliament to rule out these proposed changes from the Productivity Commission.

SIGNED

- Vernon Ah Kee (Artist)
- Jada Alberts (Actor, Writer, Director)
- Dave Arden (Musician)

- Bronwyn Bancroft (Artist, Fashion Designer and Copyright Agency Board Member)
- Bibi Barba (Artist)
- William Baron (Performer, Composer)
- Larissa Behrendt (Filmmaker, Academic)
- Richard Bell (Artist)
- Kevin Bennett (Musician)
- Rachel Bin Salleh (Publisher)
- Mervyn Bishop (Filmmaker)
- Wayne Blair (Filmmaker, Director, Actor)
- Brendon Boney (Singer, Songwriter)
- Adam Briggs (Musician, Writer and Actor)
- Troy Cassar-Daley (Musician)
- Beck Cole (Director and Screenwriter)
- Brenda Croft (Curator, Academic)
- Julie Dowling (Artist)

- Leah Flanagan (Singer,Songwriter)
- Julie Gough (Artist, Writer and Curator)
- Aroha Groves (Artist, Designer)
- Anita Heiss (Author, Presenter and Commentator)
- Rarriwuy Hicks (Actor)
- Terri Janke (Copyright Lawyer)
- Melissa Lucashenko (Writer)
- Jessica Mauboy (Singer, songwriter, Actress)
- Rachael Maza (Artistic Director, Actor, Narrator)
- Philip McLaren (Author,Academic)
- Sally Morgan (Author, Dramatist)
- Hunter Page-Lochard (Actor)
- Bruce Pascoe (Writer, Teacher,Historian)
- Sandra Phillips (Academic, Chair of the First Nations Australia Writers' Network (FNAWN) and Chair of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Indigenous Story)
- Leah Purcell (Actor, Director, Writer)

- Kim Scott (Novelist, Writer)
- Shari Sebbens (Actor)
- Bjorn Stewart (Actor, Writer)
- Dan Sultan (Singer, Songwriter)
- Jared Thomas (Author, Playwright, Poet, Academic)
- Gina Williams (Singer, Songwriter)
- Tara June Winch (Writer)
- Jason Wing (Artist)

ORGANISATIONS

- AACHWA (Peak body for Aboriginal Art Centres across Western Australia)
- Boomalli (Aboriginal Artists Co-operative representing 50 artists)
- Desart (representing over 40 Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres)
- Indigenous Art Centre Alliance (Representing 13 arts centres across far north Queensland)
- Koori Heritage Trust
- Moogahlin Performing Arts Incorporated



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Briggs Dan Sultan Jessica Mauboy

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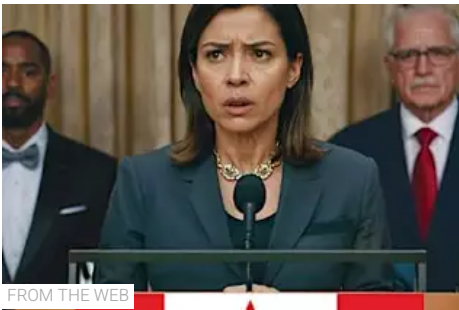
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