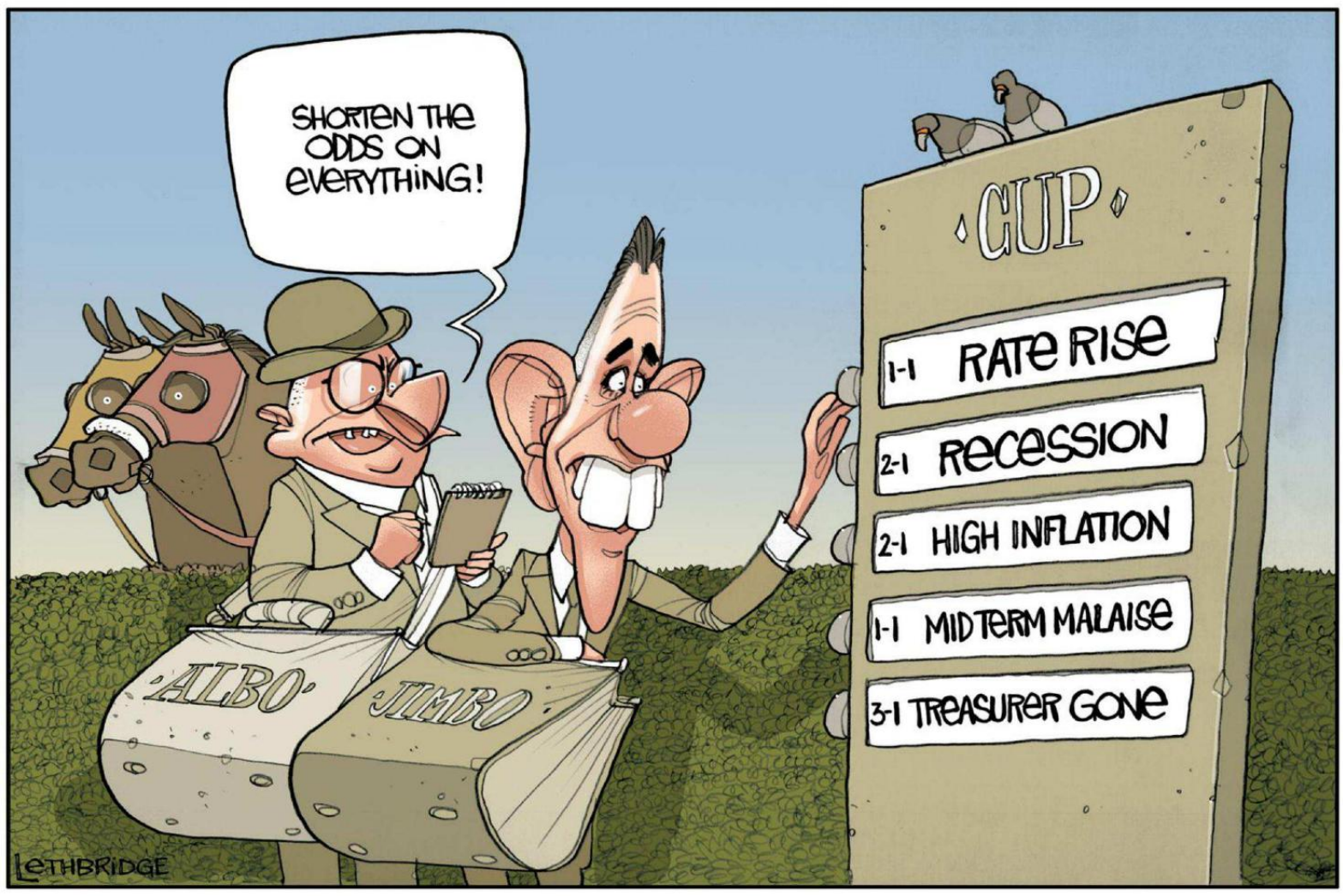
Brett Lethbridge



When will we start taking arts and culture seriously



Mike Gambaro

I can almost hear some of you already. You've seen the word "arts" in the headline and thought, "Oh, here we go".

Maybe you've already decided this column isn't for you. But before you turn the page, let me ask you something.

Have you ever spent hundreds of dollars to see your favourite musician? Lost your voice singing along at a concert? Cried watching a movie? Or sat proudly watching your child perform in a school musical?

Congratulations. You're an arts lover. You just might not realise it.

And that's exactly the problem.

Someone in the creative industry once told me the Olympic and Paralympic Games needs the arts more than the arts needs the Games. It's a statement that's stuck with me ever since, and one I couldn't agree with more. Because imagine hosting the biggest sporting event on the planet without music, theatre, dance, art or any sort of cultural celebration. Just sporting competitions, medal ceremonies and everyone going home afterwards.

Sounds pretty boring, doesn't it?

As conversations gather momentum around Brisbane 2032's Cultural Olympiad, I keep coming back to one question. When will we start taking arts and culture seriously?

We've spent years debating stadiums, infrastructure, transport and just about everything else needed to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. And rightly so.

But while we're busy talking about what we're going to build, shouldn't we be just as excited about what we're going to create? Because we can build all the stadiums in the world, but it's people who bring them to life. And people need a reason to show up.

Think about the thousands who pack Suncorp Stadium to see their favourite musician. For some, that concert is more exciting than watching their football team win a grand final. They'll spend months looking forward to it, travel across the country for it and talk about it for years afterwards.

That's the power of culture.

Yet somehow, the moment we call it "the arts", people start switching off.

I've written before about the frustrating perception that arts and culture are only for the elite. That theatre is for wealthy people, galleries for intellectuals and appreciating art requires some special qualification. What absolute nonsense.

Culture is the band at your local pub, the movie you can't stop talking about, the festival you plan your year around and the song you sing in your car. It's not something reserved for a select few. It belongs to all of us.

That's why I left a recent Flying Arts Alliance panel at QPAC, exploring the cultural opportunities for Brisbane 2032, feeling excited.

Former Edinburgh International Festival director Sir Jonathan Mills spoke about the potential to create a cultural force field across the state, extending the celebrations far beyond Brisbane. Now that's the sort of ambition I want to hear.

A Cultural Olympiad shouldn't just be a few performances squeezed between sporting events. It should be an extraordinary celebration of everything that makes Queensland special.

Imagine our streets filled with music, theatres packed with audiences and Queensland artists performing for people from every corner of the globe. Imagine Brisbane coming alive with concerts, festivals and performances, turning the entire city into one enormous celebration of everything we have to offer.

> "You're an arts lover. You just might not realise it

Imagine visitors leaving Brisbane talking just as passionately about the performances they experienced as the medals they watched being won. That's the Brisbane 2032 I want to see.

I love this city, and having spent countless nights in its theatres, concert venues and creative spaces, I know how much extraordinary talent exists here.

I've watched audiences moved to tears, strangers brought together by music and performers receive standing ovations they'll remember forever. Those moments matter.

And I want the world to experience them. But more importantly, I want Queenslanders to value them.

Because I don't want us suddenly celebrating our artists when the world's cameras arrive in 2032.

I want us celebrating them now.

I want children growing up believing a career in music, theatre or film is just as worthwhile as becoming a professional athlete. And I want us to stop treating culture as an optional extra.

The Olympic and Paralympic flame will eventually go out. The athletes will go home. The cameras will move on. But our artists will still be here. The Games need the arts more than the arts needs the Games. And if Brisbane 2032 can finally make people understand that, what a legacy that would be.

But will it Herald a change in opinions?



Joe Hildebrand

On Friday a bombshell report was courageously splashed across the front page of The Sydney Morning Herald.

It opened with the explosive sentence: "The most pervasive form of discrimination against Jewish Australians comes from progressives motivated by social justice who give anti-Semitism a 'respectable veneer'."

The reason it was explosive is because, of course, many of those progressives are Herald readers.

As Anti-Semitism Envoy Jillian Segal told the paper: "It's really conflating criticism of policies of the government of Israel on to Jewish Australians. And actually Jewish Australians have got no influence on the state of Israel. They may not support any of those policies, and yet, they are suffering."

This has been obvious to many of us for years.

But boy oh boy was it news to the progressives.

They lit up like a fair-trade secular Christmas tree on social media, demanding that Segal be sacked.

In response to the report, self-described "social-political commentator" Ronni Salt posted an account of Israeli settler violence on X, accompanied by the words: "Scoop – this could save the Australian govt millions in resources. Just in case Jillian Segal, Albo, et al were wondering where the rise in anti-Israel sentiment is coming from. It's not caused by the ABC or SBS or progressives or anybody else. It's driven by Israel itself."

But Jillian Segal is not the "anti-Israel" envoy. She is the anti-Semitism envoy – appointed to understand and prevent attacks on Jewish Australians.

Then we have human rights professor Sarah Joseph, who was tweeting away like the Energiser Bunny in the wake of the anti-Semitism report.

"She should be sacked. She's been a thoroughly inappropriate appointee," the professor wrote on the day of the report's release.

But it is another ultra-succinct point of outrage that is again even more revealing.

"Segal's report mentions Gaza once," Joseph posted, which presumably they think is not enough.

Again, it is like speaking two different languages. Segal is not the "What is happening in Gaza" envoy. Her job is to protect Jewish Australians.

Progressives simply cannot get that Jews here and the government in Israel are two different things.