

## The Brazen Left's Bid to Kill Quadrant

By Jeremy Sammut, Quadrant Online, 1 June 2016

One by one, the institutions have been colonised and brought to heel: the press, schools, universities, public broadcasters, even police and armed forces. That same agenda demanded Quadrant's independent voice be defunded and silenced. It cannot be allowed to happen, but we need your help.

The Australia Council's decision to not approve the funding application of *Quadrant* — the nation's oldest and leading conservative magazine of ideas and opinions — is a sign of the increasingly intolerant times. From Safe Schools to The Greens' unholy war on religious freedom, the cultural space conservatives are being permitted to operate within is being shrunk to enforce politically correct conformity.

There is debate about the merits of public funding of the arts and letters, but that is separate to the issue of even-handed distribution of funding free of political bias.

The decision to leave the *Quadrant* bereft of taxpayer-support for the first time in 60 years is a grossly politicised act. It is designed to try to eliminate one of the few cultural institutions that allows dissenters to challenge Leftist thinking — despite a genuine contest of ideas being essential, or else the quality of the national debate and the resulting political and policy outcomes will suffer.

The breeding ground of the new intolerance is, of course, the universities, through which the Left has long marched and captured since the 1970s. Humanities academics across all fields present themselves as champions of diversity in everything from race to gender. But the vast majority have no time for the kind of diversity that really matters in a democratic society — political diversity.

They also like to think of themselves as pluralistic, and as critical and reflective thinkers open to new and challenging ideas. But in these circles, daring to think for oneself, to question the prevailing groupthink, is a recipe for alienation and marginalisation. The political is personal. Deviation from the charmed circle of allegedly enlightened opinion is punished with non-person status — with social and professional death.

These attitudes are foreign to the culture of *Quadrant* and its long track record of discussing taboo subjects and disputing orthodox pieties. While its stance is broadly conservative, *Quadrant* hardly serves a partisan cheer squad toeing party-political lines. The real focus of the magazine and its website, Quadrant Online, is on collecting and collating heterodoxies across various subjects. Political 'purity' tests therefore don't apply, which allows for contributions to be made by writers with genuinely diverse perspectives.

**Keith Windschuttle: [The Australia Council's Revenge](#)**

Take *Quadrant's* influence on Indigenous affairs. This isn't just the magazine that has published Keith Windschuttle's work on frontier conflict and the Stolen Generations. It also published the pioneering 1994 article *The Five Fallacies of Aboriginal Policy* by the eminent Australian historian, **John Hirst**, which initiated the modern debate about the flaws in

indigenous policy. *Quadrant* was also where Noel Pearson's searing revisionist account of the source and nature of Indigenous disadvantage was published.

The stock standard Left view is that Indigenous disadvantage persists in Australia due to the failure to address the legacy of racism dating back to the original sins of colonisation. If we believe this, then the answer to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage is achieving symbolic reconciliation via the Recognition and Treaty movements. But this gets history the wrong way round. The true sources of the worst Indigenous disadvantage lies in the impact of the policies of Aboriginal Self-Determination of the 1970s. These policies were specifically designed to address the historic wrongs of dispossession by enabling Aborigines to live in the 'homeland' communities. But the result has been that these communities have become bywords for the welfare dependence, social dysfunction, and appalling gaps in health and welfare outcomes.

The real answers to Indigenous disadvantage lie in practical reconciliation — and in heeding the central message of the work of the '*Quadrant* school' of revisionists, which includes not only Hirst and Pearson, but also, among others, **Gary Johns**, **Helen Hughes**, **Anthony Dillon** and **Kerryn Pholi**.

The broader question to consider: where would the Indigenous debate be if the Left is able — as it wants — to get away with shutting down alternative points of view. The answer is that the wrong solutions to the wrong problems would be pursued, at the expense of the perpetual suffering of the most disadvantaged Indigenous people.

Genuine political diversity is the only way to ensure error is detected and corrected, especially when the stakes are so high for the nation. The de-funding of *Quadrant* will make the task of correcting Leftist error even harder. Intellectual life in this country must consist of more than just a festival of Lefties talking to themselves in furious agreement.

-----

Jeremy Sammut is Senior Research Fellow at The Centre for Independent Studies. His article, *Not So Black and White: Stan Grant's Nostalgia for Injustice*, will appear in the June edition of *Quadrant*