

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As a public librarian for more than 30 years, I am passionate about the role of reading in adding depth, emotion and knowledge to the lives of people of all ages. Reading is good for everyone from babies to children, teens, parents, workers and our oldest residents.

With more than a thousand free public libraries in our wide country, these busy places could be positioned as national reading 'incubators' and reading 'extenders'. Additional support for libraries to provide more:

- * adult literacy classes,
- * readers advisory services,
- * early childhood and parenting activities,
- * teen spaces,
- * employment and technology hubs, and
- * seniors' happy places

could assist in social participation, workforce development and lifelong learning.

A broad-based promotion campaign including:

- * print that can be taken into private homes (newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, flyers),
- * socials (Websites, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, reading blogs),
- * radio (ABC features, community radio, podcasts),
- * visuals (live TV, streaming, roadside billboards, pillars at stations, carparks, airports, malls)
- * fairs, fetes and functions dedicated to reading
- * media stunts like skywriting, light shows, celebrity endorsements, vox-pop surveys, sound-bites, long and short interviews – anything it takes to make show reading as an enjoyable and mainstream activity

To encourage reading as mainstream, workplaces could be incentivised to provide:

- * lunchroom bookshelves,
- * time in the workday for personal reading,
- * water-cooler/coffee machine conversation-starting displays,
- * challenges to put down your phone and pick up a book,
- * intergenerational reading opportunities (kids in the workplace, workers in schools?)
- * staff picks
- * social reading-based activities

The book industry would benefit from government support and leadership. This may involve possibilities such as:

- * Tax incentives for authors, publishers and bookshops,
- * Discounts for book buyers, especially children
- * Opportunities to position bookshops in high-visibility locations in shopping centres and towns,
- * Grant money for author visits, reading competitions, creative displays, in-residence programs

* Consistent and creative presence when scrolling

On a strategic level, a National Reading Policy within a National Cultural Policy could be modelled on Scandinavian protocols, or policy directives in Singapore, Japan and other developed countries: These include:

* Reading promotion initiatives that aim to raise literacy levels and make literature a natural part of daily life

* A Reading Strategy that emphasises foundational reading skills and includes improving access to quality literature for everyone

* Development of the best reading instruction techniques to ensure students are equipped with both the skills and the motivation to read for pleasure

* Government support of public and school libraries

I am hoping that my recent (2023) PhD research could be used as a springboard for further research or work in the reading arena. I would be interested in taking part in any workshops, panels, symposia, conferences, surveys, interviews or other activities that promote the reading portion of Australia's cultural policy.

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