

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm Emily Paull and I'm an author and a librarian, as well as a reader and lover of Australian books, films, music and plays.

In the next National Cultural Policy, I'm joining Australia Reads in calling for the Australian Government to invest in a reading nation.

Reading provides better education and employment outcomes, reduces our stress and loneliness, supports social connection, and increases our empathy for others.

Books have been my way to understand the world around me, and have contributed to my sense of identity as a person and as an Australian. They have made me a better family member, a better friend and a better citizen, as well as teaching me about a range of fascinating subjects through the power of story.

But reading rates are in decline. 30% of Australians didn't read or listen to a book last year, 1 in 3 students can't read proficiently, and 25% of Australian kids don't get a bedtime story. On top of this, Australian writers are struggling to break through the noise when it comes to which books are being selected by readers in a narrowing field - I think we need more Australian stories reaching readers, so that our national identity won't be drowned out.

That's why we need urgent action from the Albanese Government to turn the tide on reading.

To ensure all Australians have access to the life-changing benefits of reading, I'd like to see the National Cultural Policy include interventions that provide:

- National reading campaigns for adults, children and young people, helping them overcome the barriers to regular reading.
- A library in every school, with professional staff and collection budgets, and more support for educators and parents to create strong reading cultures for students.
- Greater community access to books and reading through author touring initiatives, voucher schemes, and book club programs.
- Promotions that showcase Australian stories, highlighting contemporary titles and First Nations creators.

We'll all be better for it, if you invest in Australian books.

Kind regards, and hoping that whoever is reading this has a great book to read before bed tonight,

Emily