

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public

Organisation

The Literature Centre



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am the CEO of The Literature Centre a small to medium not for profit creative arts organisation that works across the arts and education sectors, with a focus on the development of literacy and creative skills for young people, inspired by the stories of professional writers and storytellers across Australia. My views are expressed as representing this organisation but also informed by nearly forty years working as a professional performer, a playwright and later in government in arts funding and development across multiple art forms and community engagement areas.

The five pillars of the National Cultural Policy are clear and relevant in their vision and focus and the process of consultation to date has been open and encouraging. It is exciting to see the establishment of Writing Australia for an industry that often feels overlooked in government policy and investment.

To date the support through Writing Australia has been focused on investment in publishing, editing and support for established artists such as the National Poet Laureate. It is exciting to see services for playwrights emerging and a fund to support travel for regional writers to festivals. All of this is much needed in the ecology of the sector and will build new audiences and strategic investment.

It is concerning to see to date no support indicated for emerging writers and storytellers, who struggle to compete in Creative Australia project grant rounds. I have observed this first hand both as a peer assessor and as an organisation who has submitted several unsuccessful applications to support young writers to develop their skills or to support access to literature for young people to inspire them and develop their careers as artists. Unless funding is directed towards the development of whole of life creative skills there will be a failure to develop, sustain and inspire the next generation of writers and storytellers. The focus on diverse stories should surely include the voices of young people, and the development of audience should also be focused on future generations.

I would also like to comment on the work done so far to address low reading levels. The research published by Australia Reads and its recommendation to focus on specific demographics of readers is a refreshing marketing based approach and one that aims to build excitement about reading. We need to go a lot deeper and focus on low levels of literacy and reluctant young readers whose capacity to engage with reading is caused by so many social, cultural, economic and learning circumstances. Literacy and reading is a whole of life journey and the earlier young people can engage with story, with writing and with reading the stronger their capacity to thrive, to become the storytellers, audience and readers of the future. I would like to see investment in young readers and writers working with professional writers and storytellers to develop confidence, literacy, reading and creative engagement.

Finally I would like to speak to the tyranny of distance and the role of Creative Australia in growing its networks and support for the whole of Australia. To do this requires more representation across states on boards, on panels and more research with each state to understand their trends, ecology and needs.