



Institute of Professional Editors Limited (IPEd) submission to the Australian Government consultation on the new National Cultural Policy

Introduction

Australia's story is shaped not only by artists and creators, but also by the professional ecosystems that support creativity, participation and the circulation of ideas. Editors are part of that ecosystem. Working alongside writers, artists and content creators, editors help ensure Australian stories are clear, accessible, ethical and ready to engage audiences.

The Institute of Professional Editors Limited (IPEd) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the new National Cultural Policy. IPEd is the professional association for editors in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, representing more than 1,300 editors working across publishing, government, education, research, media and the creative industries.

IPEd exists to advance the profession of editing and to support editors through professional standards, accreditation, training, advocacy and community. Our submission focuses on the role of professional editing as essential cultural infrastructure, and on the contribution editors make to cultural quality, accessibility, public trust and the long-term sustainability of Australian creative work.

Editors and the centrality of the artist

IPEd strongly supports the policy emphasis on the centrality of the artist. Editors play a critical role in enabling artists' voices to be heard clearly and accurately, without supplanting creative intent. At its best, editing is a collaborative process that strengthens creative work and helps artists reach audiences with confidence.

This principle is embedded in IPEd's professional standards, accreditation scheme and professional development program. The [*IPEd standards for editing practice*](#) emphasise author-centred relationships in which editors support creative intent while respecting authorship and voice. Through training, mentoring and accreditation, IPEd promotes editorial practices that strengthen creative work without displacing the artist at its centre.

Editors, like many writers and artists, often work freelance or on short-term contracts. They face shared challenges: income insecurity, unremunerated labour, time pressure and limited access to structured professional development. These conditions directly affect the sustainability of creative practice and, ultimately, the quality of cultural output. Without

sustainable pay and fair contracting conditions, the editorial workforce becomes increasingly precarious, with flow-on impacts for the diversity, quality and resilience of Australian cultural production.

A cultural policy that seeks to place artists at the centre must also recognise the interconnected labour that supports them. Explicit recognition of editors within creative workforce planning, skills strategies and sector consultation would better reflect the realities of contemporary cultural production and help sustain high-quality outcomes.

Editing as cultural infrastructure

Professional editing is part of the infrastructure that underpins how cultural work is made, shared and received. It is not an optional layer applied at the end of the creative process.

Through its stewardship of professional standards, its national accreditation scheme and its delivery of continuing professional development, IPEd provides structure, accountability and shared expectations for editorial practice across publishing, government, education and the creative industries. These systems support consistency and quality across Australian cultural production.

This work is supported by a network of IPEd committees that contribute specialist expertise across accreditation, professional development, standards and sector engagement. Drawing on practising editors from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, these committees play an important role in maintaining professional benchmarks, informing sector-wide initiatives and ensuring that editorial practice evolves in step with industry and technological change.

Editors contribute specialist skills, professional judgement and ethical oversight. Their work includes shaping structure and narrative, clarifying meaning, ensuring consistency and accuracy, and acting as informed first readers before stories enter the public domain.

In an environment characterised by digital-first publishing, accelerated production timelines and emerging technologies, editorial expertise is increasingly important in maintaining cultural quality and public trust. Recognising editing as cultural infrastructure would strengthen the policy foundations that support Australia's creative ecosystem.

Engaging audiences through quality and accessibility

Editors play a central role in ensuring Australian cultural content reaches and resonates with audiences. Their work helps make stories understandable, inclusive and accessible to people with diverse abilities, languages, cultural backgrounds and levels of subject familiarity.

For IPEd, accessibility is core to good editorial practice. This is reflected in our standards, professional development and advocacy.

A key example is [Books without barriers: a practical guide to inclusive publishing](#), authored by IPEd members Julie Ganner AE and Associate Professor Agata-Mrva Montoya. The guide has become a widely used resource for publishers and editors seeking to improve accessibility across formats. A substantially revised second edition is currently in

development under IPed's auspices, addressing developments in accessible publishing, artificial intelligence and new accessibility legislation in the United States and Europe.

The second edition has been designed as an accessible, openly licensed resource, with EPUB, PDF and Word formats to support usability and reach. It is already demonstrating international uptake and has attracted high-level sector support, including a foreword by the President of the International Publishers Association.

This work sits alongside broader initiatives such as professional development, presentations and ongoing sector engagement that support editors across industries to reduce barriers to participation and engage audiences more effectively.

Public trust in Australian cultural output depends on editorial quality. Editors help safeguard accuracy, reduce the spread of misinformation and ensure cultural materials meet appropriate ethical and professional standards. This contribution should be recognised as central to audience engagement and confidence in Australian stories.

First Nations First: culturally respectful editorial practice

IPed supports the principle of First Nations First and recognises the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in storytelling and cultural policy. Our role is to support culturally respectful editorial practice under First Nations direction, rather than to prescribe or lead.

This has included facilitating professional learning centred on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), cultural protocols and lived experience within publishing. Sessions informed by Terri Janke's *True Tracks*® principles provide practical guidance for working respectfully with First Nations stories, knowledge and data.

IPed has also engaged ██████████, a leading Aboriginal editor and publisher, to share perspectives grounded in Indigenous publishing practice. This work encourages editors to reflect on power, voice, consent and culturally appropriate processes from the standpoint of First Nations leadership within the industry.

In addition, IPed developed relationships with First Nations-led programs such as black&write!, contributing to ongoing professional dialogue about ethical editorial practice.

Across these initiatives, the focus has been on capacity-building rather than prescription by supporting sustained learning and culturally safe engagement rather than one-off interventions.

Emerging challenges and opportunities: Artificial intelligence and editorial ethics

Artificial intelligence presents both opportunities and significant challenges for Australia's cultural and creative sectors. Editors are already working at the interface between creative labour, technology and audience trust.

IPed has established a dedicated working party to consider the implications of AI for editorial practice, professional standards and ethics. This includes monitoring developments

in AI-assisted content creation, examining risks relating to accuracy, attribution, bias, copyright and cultural harm, and supporting informed discussion within the profession.

We have also engaged with sector partners, including the Australian Publishers Association, to contribute editorial perspectives to broader industry discussions. Across this work, IPEd has consistently emphasised the importance of human editorial judgement, transparency and accountability in maintaining cultural integrity and public trust.

In parallel, members are supported through professional development, conference programming and commentary that address AI in practical, non-speculative terms. This positions editors not as opponents of innovation but as essential contributors to human-centred approaches, where new technologies are used alongside, rather than instead of, professional expertise.

What IPEd would like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy

IPEd recommends that the new National Cultural Policy:

1. Recognise professional editing as essential cultural infrastructure supporting artists, audiences and Australian cultural output.
2. Include editors within creative workforce strategies, data collection, skills planning and consultation processes.
3. Support professional standards, accreditation and continuing professional development as mechanisms for maintaining quality, ethics and accessibility.
4. Embed accessibility and inclusive communication as core principles of audience engagement, drawing on established editorial expertise.
5. Adopt a human-centred approach to artificial intelligence, recognising editorial judgement as critical to cultural integrity, creator rights and public trust.

Conclusion

Editors play an indispensable role in Australia's cultural life. They help ensure that Australian stories are not only created, but shared with clarity, integrity and care.

Recognising editing as cultural infrastructure and supporting the professional workforce behind it will strengthen outcomes for artists, audiences and the broader community.

IPEd welcomes the opportunity to contribute further to consultation and policy development.