

Office for the Arts
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594 | CANBERRA ACT 2601

12 May 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am an full-time award winning author and founder/director of the Sketch and Scribe Festival for children's literature creators. I am an advocate for children's literacy and write stories that help children build empathy and understanding of the complex world around. My books tackle themes of refugee crises, consumerism, environmental choices and the impact on the decisions people make have on their world. They spark curiosity and critical thinking in children.

Over the past 8 years, I have tried to build a sustainable full-time career as a children's author. I facilitate school workshops, adult workshops, mentor writers and recently founded the Sketch and Scribe Festival to build and support the regional writing and publishing community. I have little time left for the craft of writing as I spend my time trying to scratch together an income. Through all my efforts, as a full-time author I am lucky if my annual income reaches \$20,000 per year. This includes a small grant from perhaps one of the many grants I have applied for spending hundreds of hours on their applications.

The children's novels I write are years in the making, however the hundreds of hours spent writing, editing and promoting a novel would possibly compensate me at \$1 an hour, if that. This is not a living wage.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in *Revive* to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of *Revive*, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia and, ultimately, literacy education for children.

I am calling for:

Direct investment in authors and illustrators via:

- Multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors by providing them with time to write.
- Seed money for emerging writers.
- A top up to the Lending Rights budget.
- A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.

Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:

- Nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets.

- **Tax reform to support author careers** including tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.

Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver:

- Increased coordination between federal and state funding.
- Commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the book industry.
- Express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that:
 - Authors and illustrators engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or above, ASA recommended rates
 - Generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
- Coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission. I also support *the book industry submission by Books Create Australia*].

Yours sincerely,

Stef Gemmill – Author, Presenter, Festival Director

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