

12 May 2026

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

Dear Minister

Submission to the National Cultural Policy 2026

I write on behalf of Fremantle Press, an independent not-for-profit Australian publisher of 50 years standing, which publishes approximately 40 books annually, across genres and age ranges, with a focus on West Australian stories, including works by First Nations writers and illustrators, and by less represented voices. We represent 400 authors and illustrators, as part of Australia's literary and cultural heritage, and an integral part of the vibrant writing and reading community of WA.

Fremantle Press is a member of the Australian Publisher's Association (APA) and is fully supportive of its submissions to the National Cultural Policy consultation, including the call for a **National Plan for Books and Reading**, which will allow publishers to invest in Australian stories, knowledge, research, education and ideas.

Fremantle Press's mission to publish Australian stories is challenged by many forces including rising costs of printing, freight, paper, distribution and staffing. **A major threat is the continued decline of reading participation and the dominance of large-scale global publishing brands which compete directly with local stories for what has become very limited reader attention.** It is increasingly difficult to make books by Australian authors discoverable without significant investment in audience development through face-to-face events, and major on the ground promotions.

The threats to independent Australian publishing are exacerbated for Fremantle Press, due to its geographical isolation. Participation in the domestic market is hindered by increasingly high travel costs, which deter major event planners and festivals from booking our WA authors and prevent us from easy access to major industry buyers, and decision makers. Due to the vast size of our State, reaching audiences even within WA brings Fremantle Press extreme cost pressures on travel, shipping and postage, and access challenges given the limitations on the reading infrastructure (e.g. libraries, independent booksellers) which support publishers.

Ongoing investment is needed if we are to continue to support our existing community of readers and writers and to ensure that there is "A Place for Every Story and a Story for Every Place". The larger challenge, we believe, is that without high level, strategic investment in our sector, via a **National Plan for Books and Reading**, the future sustainability of Fremantle Press, and indeed Australian publishing more generally, will be in jeopardy.

Fremantle Press welcomed the **Revive: National Cultural Policy** which addressed many of the challenges faced by the arts and culture sector and has provided a strong framework for investment, including the establishment of Writing Australia. Our ask in the next iteration of the policy, is for books and reading to take centre stage: writing is the foundation art form upon which many other forms rely; every original Australian story, play, performance and film begins with a writer.


Investment in Australian writers, stories, and the publishers, libraries and booksellers which support them, is critical if the whole arts and cultural sector is to survive and flourish.

Like the APA and others, Fremantle Press believes that strong protection of intellectual property rights for Australian writers and creators is a fundamental part of any National Cultural Policy, particularly in the light of the rise of AI. **Without strong protection for Australian writers and artists, and without investment in proper revenue models via licensing, our local stories and culture will be at risk.**

Some of the specific measures proposed by the APA, which we support are:

- a stronger role for Writing Australia, with major books-and-reading measures funded separately and at the scale required.
- copyright and AI settings based on consent, licensing, fair payment, transparency and enforcement;
- an Australian Book Fund to support new Australian works, First Nations publishing, culturally significant books, literary journals, promotion, discoverability and accessibility;
- increased support for Public Lending Right and Educational Lending Right;
- investment in national book data, metadata, rights and supply-chain infrastructure;
- a dedicated Books Australia export and rights program;
- funding for accessible publishing and inclusive discoverability.

Yours sincerely,


CEO