

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

In the next National Cultural Policy, we're calling on the Australian Government to invest in a reading nation. Reading is an urgent issue which – left untended – will cost our economy over \$40 billion a year. As reading rates decline, many Australians miss out on the extensive economic and social benefits - from community connection and family bonding to improved job prospects, health and wellbeing, and empathy for others. Many Australians want to read more - but over half of us struggle. We lack skills and confidence, get distracted by devices and addictive algorithms that push overseas content, or simply don't know how to access or discover books we'll enjoy.

Australians need support to overcome the barriers to reading. The next National Cultural Policy can address these reading barriers through: Investing in targeted national reading campaigns to increase reading participation for adults, children and young people. Equipping public libraries and schools to create a reading culture. Supporting access to books and reading for all communities. Showcasing Australian stories and First Nations creators.

Pillar 1: First Nations first

Support First Nations-led reading programs in Indigenous communities and languages. Launch a diverse and inclusive 'Australian stories' promotion that highlights First Nations writers. Fund school library collections to purchase contemporary First Nations titles and related teacher support materials. Support a First Nations author touring program, through bookshops, libraries and schools.

Pillar 2: A place for every story

Communities around Australia, particularly in rural and regional areas, need support to access the high-quality books, authors and events that build a love of reading. Fund an Australian Book Voucher program for school students and young adults, redeemable at bookshops nationwide.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the artist

Fund national campaigns promoting Australian stories and creators, championed by our country's bookshops and libraries. Track the impact on reading engagement rates of Australians seeing themselves represented in a wide variety of Australian literature.

Pillar 4: Strong cultural infrastructure

A healthy reading culture relies on a strong infrastructure of bookshops, libraries, schools and publishers. With rising costs and changing social and digital pressures, these institutions need support to continue inspiring today's readers and facilitating access to books in communities. Mandate a library in every school, with qualified staff and collection funds. Ensure strong funding of public libraries across the country to continue access to books for lifelong learning and access to literature.

Pillar 5: Engaging the audience

To get more Australians reading more often, we need targeted campaigns that increase the visibility of reading and empower more Australians – from children to adults – to add books into their daily lives. Invest in a series of targeted, research-backed campaigns for adults, young adults, children and families that address barriers to reading. Track reading rates across age groups, monitoring uptake and capturing how Australians discover, access and interact with books. Back a national book club program to reach new readers, through existing library and bookshop infrastructure. Provide schools with tools and resources to help parents create positive home reading environments.