

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a writer, researcher, educator and university professor with a longstanding commitment to creative writing, literary culture and the teaching of writing. My perspective is shaped by work with students, emerging writers and the broader literary community. I write in support of a National Cultural Policy that gives stronger and more explicit recognition to creative writing, literature, and the literary arts as central to Australia's cultural life.

Creative writing matters because it is one of the primary ways a society thinks about itself. Fiction, poetry, essays, memoir, drama and hybrid forms allow Australians to examine memory, identity, place, history, conflict, humour, grief and hope. Literature is not an ornamental addition to national life. It is a means through which citizens interpret experience, test ideas, encounter difference, and imagine possible futures. For this reason, writing should be treated not only as an industry or educational activity, but as a foundational cultural practice.

The major challenge facing writers is that literary work is culturally valued but economically fragile. Many writers produce work of public value under conditions of low or intermittent income, limited institutional support, and increasing pressure to promote, publish, and distribute their work through digital platforms that often do not fairly reward creators. The growth of artificial intelligence also raises urgent questions about copyright, authorship, consent, and remuneration. The new National Cultural Policy should therefore include strong protections for writers' intellectual property, clear safeguards around the use of creative work in AI training, and practical mechanisms to ensure that writers are paid fairly when their work is used, taught, adapted, or distributed.

There is also a need to strengthen literary infrastructure. Writing Australia is a welcome development, but its work should be supported by sustained investment in writers' festivals, literary journals, small presses, regional writing centres, libraries, residencies, mentorships and grants for both emerging and established writers. These are not peripheral activities. They are the systems that allow Australian literature to develop beyond the commercial pressures of the marketplace. A strong literary culture depends on the existence of spaces where risk, experimentation, criticism, and craft can flourish.

Creative writing also has an important role in education. Students need sustained encounters with Australian literature, including First Nations writing, regional writing, migrant writing, and work from diverse communities. They also need opportunities to write creatively. Creative writing develops imagination, linguistic precision, empathy, interpretive skill, and civic understanding. These capacities are essential in a democratic society.

I would like the new National Cultural Policy to affirm that Australian stories require Australian writers, and that writers require time, income, rights, readers, and institutions. A serious cultural policy should support the conditions under which literature can be made, published, read, taught, and preserved. In doing so, it will strengthen not only the arts sector but also the nation's cultural intelligence and democratic imagination.