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The next generation of arts lovers and culturally engaged citizens will not just magically appear—young people need exposure to positive and engaging experiences with the arts, ideally from a young age. Where they exist, school libraries and their professional staff play a vital role in connecting young people with Australian and international writers, illustrators and artists who are creating both traditional and evolving text forms.

For Australian children lucky enough to have school libraries, their first encounter with First Nations stories is likely to be in these nurturing environments, and they may even be lucky enough to hear these stories recounted by respected Elders themselves.

Teacher librarians within Australian schools facilitate visits from local writers and artists so that students can see how their own cultures and environments are creatively imagined and interpreted in ways that resonate meaningfully. Read the 2025 internationally peer-reviewed research on Australian school library professionals' insights into fuelling advocacy for writer visits [here](#).

Teacher librarians are also the key educators on protection of creative rights in the digital environment. As dual qualified persons in education and library/information sciences, they remain across evolving requirements, policies and issues in this space, and they are responsible for their school's compliance and subscriptions. They use their skills to promote ongoing and ethical exposure to creative arts within the school.

Australian school libraries are facing dire closures, underfunding and understaffing, becoming a privilege for a wealthy few. While England recognises the contribution to learning and culture of school libraries, introducing [a new mandate](#) for schools, it is vital that Australian schools also mandate the existence of school libraries and qualified staff, but for all students, at all schools.

Given that the government is explicitly seeking views on how Australia's cultural infrastructure can support long-term sustainability of our creative communities, investing in school libraries is a meaningful and substantial way to ensure that this badly depleted but valuable resource not only endures, but also thrives to offer maximum benefit for the next generation. These children and teenagers are our next creatives, and the experiences they have in the library introduce this possibility. For example, in the [linked 2025 research paper](#), a teacher librarian described writer visits as having the following impact.

She described a writer who will “bring in the books that she wrote when she was at their age,” “and suddenly the kids are going, ‘Oh, if you did that at my age, well,

then I could potentially be an author as well.” Students were also felt to be inspired by feedback from a writer, “to get that feedback from someone who’s doing it professionally I think is invaluable and can ignite a lot in a student.” (Merga, 2025, p. 273)

Without investment in school libraries, these possibilities are simply not on the radar for young people not brought up in households where arts and culture are celebrated, as is the case for many young Australians. Please fund our school libraries.