

National Cultural Policy Submission

1469794

Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm worried about our lack of empathy as a country. When I grew up this place was a lot more systemically racist, sexist and anti-everything out of the ordinary. But it was also the land of the fair go and a place where I was able to make my way in the world with a lot of support from the society around me.

I worry that we're at risk of losing our society's values, because we don't read.

This consultation is a rare chance to get something right. I'd urge the Government to consider four things.

Fund national reading campaigns. For everyone, not just kids.

Reading connects people. Not in the vague, brochure sense. In the real sense. A person who reads widely develops empathy because they've lived, even briefly, inside someone else's life. That's how you break down stereotypes. Not with slogans. With stories. Literature holds a society's memory and passes it forward. Shared stories create shared conversations, and shared conversations are how a country stays together instead of falling apart.

Put libraries back in every school and fund them properly.

Not every public school in Australia has a library. That should embarrass us. A school library with a trained librarian is the intellectual engine of the building. The librarian isn't shelving books. They're teaching kids how to tell the difference between something true and something that merely sounds confident. That skill has never mattered more than it does right now. In fact it may be the only important skill for our kids!

Back our community bookshops and local libraries.

I'm very glad my kids grew up reading. I'm not so sure their peers and even some of their teachers did. Libraries are so important. Equality of access to books regardless of circumstance. Bookshops do something different but just as vital. They're small businesses curating collections, hosting events, keeping culture alive at street level. Take those two things out of a neighbourhood and you have something less than a community.

Support regional and First Nations reading initiatives.

For regional and First Nations communities, reading carries weight that goes well beyond literacy statistics. It preserves language. It maintains storytelling traditions that predate this country's constitution by tens of thousands of years. When young Indigenous Australians see their identity reflected in what they read, written by their own people, they understand that they can achieve a better life. Books bridge the gap between remote communities and urban centres.