

Dear Minister,

I write as an Aboriginal children's author/illustrator with three published picture books whose work connects with First Nations communities and students Australia-wide via bookshops, libraries, festivals and schools. I'm also writing to you as a freelance editor working primarily on First Nations books and with many of the top publishing houses in Australia.

I support Books Create Australia's call for a National Plan for Books and Reading, particularly its proposal in regard to respecting First Nations storytelling and cultural authority and supporting authors' careers.

Like many authors/illustrators, I am most concerned about poor discoverability of First Nations books, low author incomes, under-resourced libraries, weak support for emerging authors, and a decline in reading rates.

In my experience, average author income is under \$20k per year. This matters because it limits the ability of authors and illustrators, like myself, to dedicate their time to creating new work when they're having to supplement their income in other ways, or it means that authors are struggling to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis.

Government should increase funding for fellowships and consider a Basic Income for the Arts scheme to support writers for a set period while they focus on the creation of new work. Reducing financial instability would help authors to focus primarily on their work, which contributes to the important literary culture of this continent.

Books and reading deliver public benefits the market cannot secure alone, including learning, cultural participation, community connection, and access to Australian stories, ideas and knowledge. Action now would help ensure Australian stories, ideas and knowledge are created, published, discovered, read and valued.

Kind regards,

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