



Growing Readers and Writers

Your Kid's Next Read: Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation by Allison Tait, Allison Rushby and Megan Daley

Your Kid's Next Read is a podcast, community, and content platform dedicated to children's literature and reading culture in Australia. Founded in 2017, the YKNR Facebook community has grown to 40,000 members, made up of parents, educators, teacher librarians, booksellers, authors, publishers, and others united by a shared commitment to getting and keeping children reading.

The podcast, co-hosted by author Allison Tait and teacher librarian and author Megan Daley, releases weekly episodes focused on books and reading for children of all ages. Your Kid's Next Read also publishes a monthly newsletter and has recently partnered with Affirm Press/Simon & Schuster Australia to develop Your Next Read, a new junior fiction series featuring Australian authors and illustrators.

The three founders bring complementary expertise; Allison Tait is an internationally published bestselling author of 12 middle-grade novels and has many years' experience in magazines, newspapers and online publishing; Allison Rushby is an award-winning children's, YA and adult fiction author writing under several pseudonyms, with more than 30 books published over a twenty-year career; and Megan Daley is an author and teacher librarian who has been recognised as Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year, Queensland Teacher Librarian of the Year, and recipient of the national Dromkeen Librarian's Award.

Your Kid's Next Read welcomes the opportunity to articulate our views on the challenges and opportunities we see in the pillars outlined in Revive and why these pillars matter to our practice, and what we would like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy. In support of the Australia Reads submission, we at Your Kid's Next Read call on the Australian Government to invest in a reading nation through these five pillars.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

Your Kid's Next Read makes conscious and deliberate choices to elevate First Nations voices in our podcast, our newsletter, and our community recommendations. We believe that children's literature is one of the most powerful vehicles for ensuring First Nations stories reach the next generation of Australian readers, and we are committed to playing our part in making those voices visible.

We support cultural policy that funds and promotes First Nations authors and illustrators working in children's and young adult literature, ensures First Nations titles are represented

in school and public library collections, and invests in pathways for emerging First Nations creators to enter and sustain careers in children's publishing. Australian children deserve to grow up reading stories that reflect the full breadth of this country's cultures and voices and First Nations storytelling is at the heart of that.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Your Kid's Next Read was built on the belief that there is always a great next read for every young reader but the challenge lies in supporting young readers, and the adults who support them as readers, to find those stories. Our community exists precisely to bridge this gap. Every week, through our podcast, newsletter, and social channels, we help parents, carers, and educators navigate the extraordinary range of Australian children's literature and find the book that will connect with the child in front of them.

The barriers to finding that book are real and are growing. Digital platforms, recommendation algorithms, and streaming services are designed to capture attention and they are largely designed and owned overseas. Australian children's books compete in an environment where algorithmic discovery systematically favours international content at scale. A child browsing for their next read online is far more likely to encounter a recommendation from a US-based platform featuring US titles than to discover a book by an Australian author about an Australian experience.

Among others, academic, author and YKNR member Danielle Binks writes extensively about how bestsellers in recent years have been driven by algorithm and reader-led hype in spaces like BookTok, with overseas platforms and US-based content dominating those discovery pathways.

We strongly support the call for investment in targeted national campaigns that showcase Australian stories for children and young people, including campaigns specifically designed to counter the dominance of overseas content in digital spaces.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Australian children's authors and illustrators produce work of world-class quality, yet they remain among the most financially precarious of all creative workers. Your Kid's Next Read has seen first-hand, through years of conversations with Australian authors and illustrators on our podcast, how few are able to sustain a full-time creative practice.

The Your Kid's Next Read podcast regularly features Australian authors and illustrators in conversation, and we observe consistently that episodes connecting readers to creators generate strong community responses.

We support the following measures as central to sustaining Australian creators working for young audiences:

- Reform and expansion of Public Lending Rights (PLR) and Educational Lending Rights (ELR) to include digital lending, reflecting the reality of how children now access books through school and public libraries.
- Support for the Your Next Read series and similar Australian-led initiatives that deliberately pair Australian authors and illustrators with young readers and showcase Australian stories.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Here, Your Kid's Next Read has the most urgent and specific call to make.

Australia does not currently guarantee a library in every school. The result is a profound and inequitable gap in children's access to books, reading guidance, and literary culture. We strongly endorse the recommendation made by Australia Reads that the next National

Cultural Policy mandate a library in every school with qualified staff and appropriate collection funding.

We go further: we call specifically for a qualified teacher librarian in every school. A teacher librarian is not simply a book custodian. They are a trained educator with dual qualifications in both teaching and information services. They know their school community, they know their collection, and they know which book will reach which child at which moment. A well-resourced school library, led by a qualified teacher librarian, is one of the most effective interventions available for improving both literacy outcomes and the development of a lifelong reading habit.

The erosion of school library resourcing and teacher librarian positions in recent decades represents a systemic failure with long-term consequences for Australian reading culture. The next National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to reverse this trend with a clear, funded mandate.

We also support investment in the broader infrastructure that connects Australian books to readers, including:

- Funded and maintained school library collections with adequate budgets to purchase contemporary Australian titles, including First Nations and other diverse voices.
- Digital infrastructure to increase the discoverability of Australian children's books across platforms.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Your Kid's Next Read is, at its core, an audience-engagement initiative. Our 40,000-strong community represents a self-selected group of people who care deeply about children's reading and even within this motivated group, we see the daily challenge of competing with screens, algorithms, and the sheer volume of entertainment choices available to children and their families.

We know from our community that many Australian families want to read more and want their children to read more, but feel overwhelmed, unsure of what to choose, or simply do not know how to build a reading culture at home. This is a failure of support and infrastructure.

We support the call for targeted, research-backed national reading campaigns aimed at families with children, and we note that independent voices such as podcasts, community platforms, and trusted educators have a demonstrated ability to reach audiences that formal government campaigns may not. Policy should consider how to partner with and amplify existing trusted voices in the children's reading space, not only fund large-scale broadcast campaigns.

We also urge the government to track reading engagement data for children and young people as part of any national reading strategy, so that the impact of investment can be assessed and refined over time.

Your Kid's Next Read is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. We are happy for this submission to be made public and available to inform the next National Cultural Policy. We endorse the submissions of Australia Reads and Books Create Australia as complementary voices from the broader reading and literature sector.

Allison Tait, Allison Rushby and Megan Daley | May 2026

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