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I am a working author and writing teacher. Since my first book was published in 2016, I have published four novels and a picture book with Australian publishers. While my books have achieved considerable critical and commercial success, being listed for numerous awards including the ABIA's, Stella Prize, Voss Literary Prize and Indie Book Awards; like most other Australian authors, my income from advances is 'lumpy' and I teach writing in schools and universities and take paid work whenever it is available to me to ensure that I can support myself and my family. My skills as a podcast host and moderator means I am regularly invited to appear at literary festivals and host events and I am always grateful when festivals and organisers are able to pay ASA rates for my time. This year, for the first time, I have made the decision to stop launching books and hosting bookshop events which are for the most part unpaid. Supporting other writers and their work is a key part of how I see my role within the Australian literary community; however, the unpaid labour asked of writers in supporting their peers through unpaid publicity (reading and endorsing books, preparing for and hosting events, offering publicity through podcast and social media) has reached a point for me where I recognise the real financial hit I am taking when I choose to support my peers, rather than writing my next book. A basic income pilot for Australian authors and illustrators would allow us to not only do the work for which we are recognised and celebrated, but also allow us the time to participate equitably and fully in our literary community to support our peers and particularly, emerging writers.

Since I was first published in 2016 I have watched as budgets within publishing houses have shrunk. To tour and publicise my books, I now employ my own admin/publicist who takes on the lion's share of the work my publishers once did. I know many other authors who have taken this option; however the financial outlay of employing a publicist is not possible for the vast majority of Australian authors.

I was both lucky and grateful to receive Creative Australia funding this year for work on my next novel after multiple unsuccessful applications. This was a much-needed financial boost to pay myself – as I outline in the budget – a minimum wage over a period to write the book. The budget tool in the application does not allow for budgeting for tax, despite the fact that as soon as that income hit my account I put a chunk of it aside to allow for tax at the end of the financial year. Tax reform in relation to literary prizes and grants feels like one very simple reform that would make a big difference to those of us lucky enough to be recipients.

To ensure a thriving literary sector however, investment must be made at all levels – from authors visiting schools, to support for emerging authors, to building strong and culturally safe structures for First-Nations led writing and publishing, to having the backs of mid-career

authors who are finding themselves, multiple books in, having to pull back on their writing careers to find other employment that will pay the bills.

I also note and lament the precarious position our independent bookshops are in; without the passionate booksellers who continue to hand-sell Australian authors across all genres and career-stages, Australian authors and illustrators will not survive.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in *Revive* to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of *Revive*, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia.

As per the submissions on behalf of the ASA, I am calling for:

- **Direct investment in authors and illustrators** via:
 - Multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors by providing them with time to write.
 - Seed money for emerging writers.
 - A top up to the Lending Rights budget.
 - A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.

- **Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.**

- **Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies** operating within Australia. For instance:
 - Transparency on copyright inputs for, and outputs from, generative AI models.
 - Research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers and Australian cultural output.
 - Structural solutions to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders.

- **Tax reform to support author careers** including tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.

- **Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia** to deliver:
 - Increased coordination between federal and state funding.
 - Commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the book industry.
 - Express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that:
 - Authors and illustrators engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or above, ASA recommended rates
 - Generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
 - Coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.

- **Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:**
 - Nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets.
 - Reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Mildenhall