

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Western Australian School Library Association



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

A library in every school: supporting the National Cultural Policy

The Western Australian School Library Association (WASLA) represents school library professionals working across metropolitan, regional and remote schools. WASLA advocates for equitable access to high-quality school library services that support literacy, learning and cultural engagement for all students.

WASLA supports the National Cultural Policy. However, a key gap remains: the absence of a coordinated national commitment to school libraries as foundational cultural infrastructure.

Across Australia, many schools do not have a library or qualified staff. This inequity limits students' access to books, information and cultural experiences, undermining national efforts to address declining literacy and build a strong reading culture.

School libraries directly support all five pillars:

**First Nations First:** School libraries embed First Nations voices through curated collections and programs, supporting truth-telling and cultural understanding from an early age.

**A Place for Every Story:** Libraries ensure equitable access to diverse stories, enabling all students to see themselves reflected and to engage with the experiences of others, regardless of background or location.

**Centrality of the Artist:** School libraries connect students with Australian authors and illustrators, building awareness of, and demand for, Australian stories while nurturing future creators.

**Strong Cultural Infrastructure:** A well-resourced library staffed by qualified professionals delivers significant improvements in literacy, digital and information literacy and critical thinking. Yet access to this infrastructure remains inconsistent across the country.

**Engaging the Audience:** School libraries foster reading for pleasure and lifelong engagement with culture, helping to build future audiences for Australian arts and literature.

To address these challenges, WASLA recommends that the National Cultural Policy 2026:

Recognise school libraries as essential cultural infrastructure

Commit to equitable provision across all Australian schools

Support qualified staffing through national guidelines or standards

WASLA calls for a clear national commitment that every Australian student has access to a well-resourced school library, staffed by fully qualified professionals.