

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

School Library Association of Victoria

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

A library in every school: supporting the National Cultural Policy

The School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV) is a dynamic professional organisation dedicated to supporting and empowering school library staff across Victoria. SLAV represents school library professionals working across all sectors and regions: Government, Catholic and Independent schools, metropolitan and regional, and advocates for equitable access to high-quality school library services that support literacy, learning and cultural engagement for all students.

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

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

Having well-resourced and staffed school libraries would directly support all five pillars of the National Cultural Policy:

- **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:** School libraries ensure equitable access to diverse stories, enabling all students to see themselves reflected in stories and engaging 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, media and information literacy and critical thinking. Access to this infrastructure remains inconsistent across Victoria and 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, SLAV recommends that the National Cultural Policy 2026:

- Recognise school libraries as an essential part of cultural infrastructure
- Commit to equitable provision of school libraries and resources across all Australian schools
- Support qualified school library staffing through national guidelines or standards

SLAV calls for a clear national commitment that every Australian student has access to a well-resourced school library including fully qualified library professionals, thus contributing to a literate, engaged and culturally rich future for all Australians.