

National Cultural Policy Submission

1470035

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Reading (and writing by extension) are critical to Australian life and culture and Australia must actively support reading, authors, libraries, literacy, festivals and bookshops through the National Cultural Policy.

I urge the Government to adopt the following key priorities:

1. Invest in targeted national reading campaigns to increase participation for adults, children, and young people.

Culturally and socially, reading connects individuals to their communities and the wider world. Socially, it builds empathy by allowing readers to step into the shoes of characters from diverse backgrounds and breaks down stereotypes. Culturally, literature preserves a society's history, values, and diverse voices. By creating shared stories and conversations, reading transforms watchers into participants in a unified and culturally rich society.

2. Equip schools to foster a reading culture by building and properly funding school libraries.

Not every public school in Australia has a library. A school library staffed by a trained librarian is vital for both academic success. While a library provides equal access to books, technology, and study spaces, a trained librarian teaches students how to use the resource. Research shows that schools with credentialed librarians have higher reading scores and academic achievement, making them irreplaceable partners in student success.

3. Support our community bookshops and local libraries.

Libraries and bookstores serve as both equalisers of opportunity and hubs of local culture. Libraries are one of the only spaces in a community where you can just go and sit for free. They act as spaces that provide everyone, regardless of income, with free access to books, technology, and community workshops. Bookstores are small businesses that bond communities, work with local schools, host author events, and keep money circulating locally.

4. Provide dedicated support for regional and First Nations reading initiatives.

For First Nations communities, reading is vital for preserving culture, strengthening self-determination, and overcoming geographic isolation. Engaging with literature, especially by Indigenous creators, maintains storytelling traditions, preserves language, and reflects their identity. Books act as powerful educational equalisers in remote areas. Fostering a strong reading culture empowers local voices and ensures Australia's diverse heritage thrives from the ground up.