

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am an Australian literary agent and reading advocate writing to express my support for books, publishing and reading as part of the next National Cultural Policy.

For too long, books and publishing have been the 'poor cousin' of the arts in Australia, consistently receiving less funding and attention from Government than its counterparts.

We're now facing a national reading crisis – 30% of Australians haven't read in the last year, 44% have low literacy, and 1 in 3 Australian students can't read proficiently – the fall-out from which has major and long-lasting ramifications for education, employment, social cohesion, and health.

In addition to this, the threat of AI to creators and workers, as well as exponential increases in printing, shipping and warehousing costs have threatened the viability of our local publishing houses, and falling author and illustrator incomes have made the dream of being a full-time writer near impossible for the vast majority of authors.

The books and publishing sector is in urgent need of Government support to ensure it can continue to survive and thrive.

We need a robust, well thought-through strategy that supports the sector at all levels: from writers and creators, to publishing houses, libraries and literary festivals, to readers and audience development.

As such, as part of the next National Cultural Policy, I'd like to see support for:

- Large-scale promotions of Australian books for children, teens and adults - making books visible to all Australians
- National reading campaigns and programs, which a particular focus on less frequent readers and readers in rural and regional communities
- Australian authors and creators to create new work, with a particular focus on mid-career authors
- First Nations publishing houses, authors, and reading initiatives
- Literary festivals and author touring initiatives, driving community engagement and providing additional income for authors
- School and public libraries, with a library mandated for every school
- Small and independent publishers

A nation of readers is a more thoughtful, empathetic, educated and creative country. With the support of the Australian Government, we can empower our authors and publishers to thrive, and spread the joys and benefits of reading with more Australians.