

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

United Way South Australia Incorporated



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm Emma Brooke, and I'm CEO at United Way South Australia, distribution partner for Imagination Library.

In the next National Cultural Policy, I'm joining Australia Reads in calling for the Australian Government to invest in a reading nation.

Regularly reading with children supports early brain development, strengthens literacy and learning outcomes, supports wellbeing, and fosters connection within our communities.

Through our work in South Australia, we have seen how access to books can transform a family's connection through shared reading.

However, access to books and reading opportunities is not equal, and many children grow up in homes without children's books or bedtime stories.

Programs like Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Australia demonstrate how early, consistent access to books can help address these gaps, gifting age-appropriate books to children and supporting families to build a culture of reading from birth. In our community, this program helps families value and enjoy reading together, leading to improved confidence and skills at school entry.

That's why we need coordinated national action to support reading at every stage of life.

To ensure all Australians can access the benefits of reading, I would like to see the National Cultural Policy include:

- National reading initiatives that encourage reading for pleasure across all ages, supporting families, children and young people to build regular reading habits.
- Early childhood reading investment, ensuring every child has access to books in the home from birth, particularly in communities experiencing disadvantage.
- Stronger support for schools, libraries and educators, including school libraries with professional staff and sustainable book collection funding.
- Support for Australian stories and creators, showcasing diverse voices including First Nations authors and illustrators.

Investing in reading is an investment in Australia's future — strengthening education, wellbeing, and community connection.

Kind regards, Emma Brooke