

National Cultural Policy Submission

1470321

Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am an academic and author who published my first novel with an Australian publisher in 2024. My next novel is due out with the same publisher next year. Since beginning my fiction writing career, I have been shocked and dismayed at how precarious the financial, social, and cultural conditions are for creative workers in this country. As you must be aware, surveys and studies consistently find income levels for creatives unsustainably low. According to the Australian Society of Authors, their survey results in 2025 'align(ed) with our findings year on year: earnings for authors and illustrators remain unsustainably low.' Added to this, we face a crisis in Australian independent publishing houses and the closure of literary journals. The sector also has great challenges ahead of it, posed by Artificial Intelligence. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia.

The arts sector in this country has over the past few years been subjected to censorship, and we have seen substantial career implications for artists who exercise their democratic right of freedom of speech, freedom of artistic expression, and the right to protest government policy. Taking their lead from the Australian Government, arts and cultural organisations have recently discovered a newfound duty to preserve 'social cohesion' – over and above their stated purpose or values, and apparently redefined to mean social consensus, conformity and coercion. Australia has entered its 'cultural McCarthyism' era, characterised by rising authoritarianism, regressive legislative change, deepening cultural unsafety, racism and religious intolerance, and an unprecedented increase in arts and cultural censorship.

At last count, 66 Australian arts and cultural organisations initiatives and groups have been accused of many more instances of censoring, threatening or otherwise harming their own artists, cultural workers or audiences between 2023 and 2026 alone (on top of many others harmed by those outside our sector).

This has not only happened in the time of Revive, but been explicitly enacted by Premiers, Ministers and statutory authorities – making hypocrites of policy makers, funders and cultural organisations, and increasing the risks they hoped their actions would avoid.

I am calling for the immediate stoppage and reversal of problematic and inconsistent definitions of 'social cohesion' and a genuine addressing of the impact that these definitions have had on organisational purpose and basic human rights.

I also call for:

1. Direct investment in authors and illustrators via:

Multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors

Seed money for emerging writers.

A top up to the Lending Rights budget.

A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.

2. Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.

3. Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies operating within Australia. For instance:

Transparency on copyright inputs for, and outputs from, generative AI models.

Structural solutions to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders.

4. Tax reform to support author careers including tax-free literary prizes and grants.

5. Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia

6. Reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors and support their submission.