

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 author, scholar, and educator working across fiction, literary criticism, law, and cultural studies. My work engages with Australian storytelling, feminist and First Nations justice, law and literature, popular culture, and emerging questions concerning technology and artificial intelligence. I am deeply concerned about the increasing precarity facing Australian writers, illustrators, and publishing professionals, and I strongly support the Australian Society of Authors' recommendations for the next National Cultural Policy.

Australian writers are being asked to produce culturally vital work within conditions that are becoming increasingly unsustainable. The economic realities of writing and publishing in Australia mean that many authors are unable to sustain long-term creative careers despite significant cultural contribution, professional recognition, and public engagement. This has profound implications not only for individual creators, but for Australia's literary culture, public discourse, and national identity.

I call for:

- Direct investment in Australian authors and illustrators through grants, fellowships, lending rights, commissioning opportunities, and long-term career support.
- Sustained investment in First Nations-led writing, publishing, editing, and storytelling initiatives, including support for community-controlled and culturally safe publishing structures.
- Strong legislative and regulatory responses to the unauthorised use of Australian authors' work by multinational technology companies for generative AI systems. Australian creators must retain meaningful control over their intellectual property, and consent, transparency, attribution, and compensation frameworks must be established urgently.
- Tax reform that recognises the irregular and insecure nature of creative labour, including reforms that better support freelance and portfolio careers in the arts.
- Adequate and ongoing resourcing for Writing Australia and related literary infrastructure, including independent publishers, literary journals, festivals, libraries, and educational programs that sustain Australian literary culture.
- Educational investment that supports Australian reading and writing cultures from primary school through to tertiary education. Australian students should encounter contemporary Australian writers, including diverse and regional voices, throughout their education.
- Recognition that writing is foundational cultural infrastructure. Literature is not a luxury product. It shapes public imagination, democratic discourse, historical understanding, empathy, and national memory.

I am also concerned about the broader impact of AI-generated content on literary culture, educational systems, and creative labour. Generative AI systems trained on unlicensed creative work risk undermining already fragile writing economies while simultaneously flooding public culture with synthetic content. Any future-facing cultural policy must protect human creativity, support ethical technological development, and ensure that Australian authors remain central to Australia's cultural future.

Australian stories matter. Australian writers matter. Without meaningful structural support, Australia risks losing not only individual careers but the diversity, complexity, and independence of its literary culture.

Sincerely,

Dr Honni van Rijswijk

