

Mark Brandi



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Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
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Dear Minister,

Submission in support of a new National Cultural Policy

I am the author of five novels (*Wimmera*, *The Rip*, *The Others*, *Southern Aurora* and *Eden*) and my shorter work has been published in various journals, newspapers, and magazines. I am a peer assessor on the literature panel for Creative Australia and a mentor and manuscript assessor for the Australian Society of Authors. I am also a member of the Australian Society of Authors and Writers Victoria.

I am fortunate that my novels have been relatively successful in reaching a wide readership. Despite this, earning a basic living in a small market like Australia is increasingly difficult. Without the support of grants programs, such as those administered by Creative Australia, it would be near impossible for me to continue writing.

But competitive grants programs, while valuable, cannot be relied upon to support the creation work that is truly representative of Australian society. Indeed, in my role as a peer assessor for Creative Australia, I see my many promising projects miss out on funding.

Given the precarity of a career as an author or illustrator, the risk is that only those with significant financial resources will be able to dedicate the time required to produce quality creative work. With the cost of living increasing, most authors depend on other streams of income to support their writing, or are otherwise financially secure. As a consequence, the danger is that we see only a narrow range of experiences represented in works that are published.

If we truly value a diversity of Australian stories, we need new ideas.

I appreciate the efforts of the government in seeking to improve the viability of career in the arts, including the establishment of Writing Australia. Despite this, it's becoming tougher for most

authors to pay the bills. A trial of a basic income for authors and illustrators (such as has been permanently implemented in Ireland) would provide a solid foundation for a diversity of Australian storytelling to thrive into the future. As part of any trial, there should be a particular focus on authors from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as these voices are increasingly marginalised.

While a trial of a basic income is undertaken and evaluated, there is some low hanging fruit that could help improve the sustainability of author and illustrator careers:

- Tax free prizes and grants, with dedicated grants for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Increased overall funding for grants programs, as too many promising projects miss out on funding
- Increased payments for lending rights, which is an important stream of author income
- Increased support for new and emerging writers, with targeted programs for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Increased support for independent booksellers, who are an essential part of the Australian literary ecosystem.

In recent years, the growth of AI (and the related theft of author works) has emerged as a new threat to the livelihood of authors, illustrators, and other creators. It is essential there is transparency around the inputs for training generative AI models and – where appropriate – adequate remuneration for those who allow their work to be used. It's also important that peak bodies, such as the Australian Society of Authors, are consulted in the development of AI policies that impact creators.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Brandi