

ARTS to the Minister

Dear Minister Burke,

I'm an author who is being traditionally published in September. Here are the areas I believe need to be strongly considered in a new cultural policy:

1. School libraries are being closed, and otherwise made unavailable to kids during school hours. Libraries are underfunded, often staffed by admin staff who, while trying their best, lack the training of librarians or teachers, how can we expect children to read without access to a strong range of books, time to browse, and the leadership of passionate reading role models?
2. Discount department stores undercut booksellers. If there was a 3–6-month period during which all new books must be sold at RRP (instead of heavily discounted), this would support publishers, authors and bookstores. At the moment, discount department stores like Kmart and Big W slash the prices of all new books, using them as loss leaders to bring customers into their stores so they will buy other things. This is crippling the writing and book industry.
3. More arts grants and an easier assessment process. Remove frameworks causing nepotism and bias in grant assessment systems. Increase the number and breadth of arts grants to support career writers, artists and musicians.
4. Develop a robust AI data policy that protects creatives from theft of work to train LLMs and remunerates creatives appropriately if they opt to offer their work to train LLMs. Our work is being stolen and we aren't making any money from it - while the tech billionaires are.
5. Force art/book/music platforms (and the creatives using them) to declare all use of gen-AI in creative works. Many people want to support human artists but platforms offering art, books or music are not required to reveal to consumers which works are human-made and which are AI-generated. Help artists retain our careers and help consumers buy with their eyes open.
6. Investigate and have the hard conversations around AI and how it will impact our lives and livelihoods in the next 1, 10 and 100 years. Examine the environmental sustainability of AI servers and platforms. Look at how the unbridled use of AI may impact our critical thinking, mental health and even ability to make small decisions about life. Form policy based on hard data and facts, not pressures from the business and tech worlds.
7. Universal basic wage for career artists. I work more than 50 hours a week writing and supporting other writers. I'm currently drawing on my superannuation to pay my mortgage and put fuel in my car. Ireland has tested this basic wage for creatives and is already seeing good results: "For every €1 invested by the state, the wider economy gained €1.39 through administrative savings, reduced welfare reliance, and increased taxable earnings." (BBC). This would significantly reduce stress and career abandonment for creatives.

Sincerely,

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Author Name: [REDACTED]

