

Office for the Arts
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
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May 22nd, 2026

I am an author of two published novels, short fiction and essays, and an academic who has written a nonfiction book and scholarly essays on Australian writing. I've been supported by Australia Council for the Arts grants and residencies and have been extremely grateful for the opportunity to develop my practice, and to support the development of emerging writers. Despite my gratitude for the support my writing has received, I would note that the cultural environment feels far more competitive than it was when I was starting out, and free speech about weighty matters such as genocide feels threatened.

I am thankful for the initiatives introduced in *Revive* to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. As noted by the ASA, since the introduction of *Revive*, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions.

In addition, we now live in an atmosphere where debate and respectful exchange of ideas is becoming difficult, with the cancellation of writers' festivals and the actions of publishers aligned with universities seeking to—at times—cancel books and attenuate the exchange of views. This is partly a consequence of a new cultural environment, which includes the actions of lobby groups and the press, and what could be termed grandstanding on social media. In addition, the decline in the cultural support for reading across all age groups, and generative AI and its capacity to generate texts, as well as social media and other posts, pose challenges for the book industry in Australia.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission. I wholeheartedly agree with their calls to increase support to writers, which include:

- **Direct investment in authors and illustrators** via: multi-year fellowships, a top-up of the lending rights budget; seed money for emerging writers and especially a basic income pilot. These kinds of investments would make a huge difference to Australian writing.
- **Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing:** much of the most important and interesting writing produced now is created by Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander writers and illustrators. Their work is internationally distinctive and socially transformative. I advocate for further sustained investment in this area.
- **Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies** operating within Australia. My work, like the work of many other Australian authors has been stolen to train AI.
- **Tax reform to support author careers** including tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators. This would make an enormous

difference. Like colleagues of mine, I've ended up with an ATO tax debt as a result of receiving a grant.

- **Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia**
- **Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:** These include a nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets; this would make a difference to reading rates and engagement with Australian writing in schools. I've seen first-hand the effects of the Jobs Ready graduates program on struggling students and would wholeheartedly support the abolition of this legislation.

In addition, a **commitment to the protection of free speech for all authors and illustrators would make a difference to the vibrancy of Australian literary culture.**

Some research into the effects of the cancellation of book festivals and publishing contracts, and an accreditation system, whereby publishers and festivals were accredited based on their support of freedom of speech, would go some way towards changing the culture in the arts, which is currently stifling, and will have long-term effects on the kind of work published and its ability to engage with international debates.

Yours sincerely,

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