

Office for the Arts
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
 Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
 GPO Box 594 | CANBERRA ACT 2601

[REDACTED]

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I am an award-winning children's author, [REDACTED] and a bookseller. But in order to survive I supplement my meagre writing income with 4 jobs - touring schools and libraries, casual work in a bookstore, freelance writing and developing education resources. I juggle jobs to pay the bills. All while I live regionally, support a family and continue to create new works that are respected mentor texts and reading experiences by educators, libraries and families.

On a monthly basis I worry about maintaining my mortgage, how to resource my writing time and sustain a creative life, the state of our reading connection and industry, and the threat of theft of original works to AI.

Authors like me are at risk.

While I am internationally published, and I have had to self-fund all national and international travel opportunities to expand my skill set and networks. I have also self-funded every single professional development opportunity, taking out loans from family members or an extra job to pay for it. These development opportunities have written books that have gone on to win respected Australian writing awards.

I have sadly had minimal success with grant applications – most are residencies and fellowships that are unpaid and all take time to prepare and or call for submission costs to apply for. Tax free reform focusing on tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators would provide an outcome that would grow instead of shrink Australia's respected storytelling.

My income is precarious. As a children's picture book writer, the shared royalties and PLR / ELR fees with illustrations also reduces my income. While I am grateful for our government program of ELR / PLR, I share that payment with my illustrator and it's not enough for either of us to live on, it usually gets swallowed up by the tax bill. It's certainly nowhere near Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts for example.

I share any speakers' fees with an agency. I am constantly asked to contribute as a speaker or donate my books free of charge. I pay for my own state by state Working with children checks (all costly, and not all are able to be applied for online), and also liability insurances. There is no coordinated Federal system. And talking about systems, there's also no Federal educational intervention that support Australian authors and writing careers either.

I worry for us as a reading nation and for how human creativity is diminished. I am watching it fade weekly.

As of this week, the bookstore I work in my coastal town also closed its doors, declaring insolvency. I am out of one of my jobs, one that contributed to addressing Australia's reading crisis, and our community has now lost a valued place of culture connection and storytelling. Customers were speaking of buying book books online which perpetuates a crisis for a small town's regional economy.

And while I have loved face-to-face championing books for families in our bookstore, I have watched parents grappling with household budgets instead shop in Discount Department stores as Australia does not adhere to a Fixed Pricing Scheme for books in several European countries.

As [REDACTED] I tour libraries across the state (and nationally) and am witness to the challenges for resourcing in communities, as well as school libraries. And I see all libraries work hard to engage readers of all ages and stages, while not always able to offer representative books communities deserve.

I watched my old children's school library close, which made way for a now redundant computer room. That same school now as NAPLAN reported below standard level reading and comprehension outcomes, and I personally witness an apathy towards books and reading by its students.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in *Revive* to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of *Revive*, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia, and the places and organisations that support us are at threat too.

I am calling for:

Direct investment in authors and illustrators via:

- Multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors by providing them with time to write
- Seed money for emerging writers
- A top up to the Lending Rights budget
- A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors

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

- Transparency on copyright inputs for, and outputs from, generative AI models
- Research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers and Australian cultural output
- Structural solutions to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders.

Tax reform to support author careers

This includes tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.

Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.

Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver:

- Increased coordination between federal and state funding.
- Commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the book industry.
- Express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that authors and illustrators engaged in funded projects will be paid at or above the ASA recommended rate, and that generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
- Coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.

Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:

- Nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets.
- Reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission and the book industry submission by Books Create Australia ensuring Australian stories and ideas are created, discovered and read.

Please help us save and shape an improved National Cultural policy for our writers and readers.

Yours sincerely,

