



Garth Nix OAM

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

22 May 2026

To Whom It May Concern

Submission to the National Cultural Arts Policy

“A country without its own creators is not a nation.”

I am an Australian writer with more than forty books published in Australia and around the world (particularly in the USA and UK) since 1991, with many of them also translated, currently into 42 languages. Though I have been a fulltime writer since 2001, I have also previously worked in the publishing industry as a bookseller, book editor and literary agent, and I am still a small shareholder in Curtis Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd, Australia's largest and oldest literary agency.

As a writer, I have been extremely fortunate to have an international career while remaining based in Australia. But as with any creative career, there are no certainties and

many challenges, and the overall environment for Australian writers has become more and more difficult in recent years. Somewhat more challenging for me, insulated by a long-established career, but a great deal more challenging for many others, particularly those writers just starting out.

Australian writers have always done it tough. For the majority of our history we have been effectively a creative colony of Britain. Striking out more and more on our own since the 1970s, we have had to contend with being a very small part of the English-language world. I have sometimes said being an Australian author (and this also applies to our publishers) is like being at the bottom of a gravity well, trying to fire our books upwards as the Americans and British dump theirs down from orbit. They have an advantage. We have to work harder and better and more intelligently simply to have a chance for our works to be published or produced and arrive in front of an audience, whether it is here in Australia or in other countries.

That said, it is possible to succeed in the global English language world, and beyond. Australians have done it, seen their works succeed in the much larger markets, be translated, be adapted into other media, and more. I myself have been very fortunate to be widely published internationally, and like others who have done so, am effectively an exporter of Australian-produced intellectual property to the world —and the money comes home to Australia.

But in order to succeed, we need to have a secure home base. We need Australia to value Australian writers and writing, and we need the government to assist creators, just as it assists many other Australian industries.

One of the key differences in this respect is that writing by Australians has economic *and* cultural value. Both tend to be discounted, the former because writing is not often thought of in this way, and the latter because cultural value is hard to quantify.

The National Cultural Arts Policy needs to practically demonstrate that Australian creators *are* valued, and to assist them in continuing to create, to add cultural and economic value to our nation.

This is particularly important right now because there are new challenges that face Australian authors, along with all the old challenges that stem from living in a small, remote (both geographically and in terms of mind share) country, competing with writers and creative industries from far more economically and informationally powerful nations.

Perhaps the most significant new challenge is the advent of AI, a technology based upon the theft of writers' work, including my own (there are 192 of my works in the LibGen pirate database used to train most AI agents, practically everything I have ever written and many of my works in translation as well), and the brazen refusal of big tech to abide by international and Australian laws of copyright. It is straightforward theft, massive multinationals strip mining the intellectual property of Australians (and everyone else) for their own profit, giving nothing back.

Protecting copyright is thus of paramount importance and I call upon the Australian government to protect Australian writers from this pillaging, and also to ensure that nothing created by the plagiarism machines of OpenAI, Meta, Anthropic and others gains the protection of copyright, which ironically they think they should have. In their book it is OK to steal from writers, but these insanely wealthy companies want the protection they have ignored. This is the exact opposite of the fabled Aussie "Fair Go".

AI is one very big challenge, but there are others, particularly for young (and not-so-young) Australian writers starting out, and for those in mid-career who have not yet met with success. Writing is one of those activities where it can take a long time and the creation of many works before finding an audience, both in terms of industry partners

(agents, publishers, screen producers, booksellers, librarians) and a public readership or audience. This also applies to the works becoming export earners in other countries. The successful novel published around the world, the produced screenplay, the acclaimed play that goes on to Broadway and the West End from here, are rarely the first works of a writer. They're often not the second or third works, either.

One of the key aspects of writing success, whether it is books, screenplays, plays, games or something else is that *no one knows what will happen*. Will any given work be successful and/or culturally important? No one can predict or guarantee success. It might be that first novel. It might be the third or fourth or tenth. Someone might slave away writing for years, creating numerous works, before one sparks sufficient fire to become successful and significant, even in moderate terms.

For Australian writers to be able to continue with their work, and have some chance of becoming successful, of contributing works of cultural and economic importance to our nation and perhaps the world, they need help.

For writers, time to write is of paramount importance. If, due to economic circumstances and the sheer difficulty of life, a writer gives up, as so many do, we won't get their significant works. Who knows what we will miss out on? They, and our nation, and perhaps the whole world, will be the poorer.

What can be done to help Australian writers?

The Australian Society of Authors has a very good list of recommendations, and I support everything in their more detailed submission.

I want to particularly single out the following:

- Direct investment in authors and illustrators (grants and fellowships)
- A top-up to the Lending Rights Budget (of particular importance for later stage authors with a backlist but declining new opportunities)
- Investment in First Nations writing and publishing
- Addressing the intellectual property theft by AI multinationals, by investigating and implementing long-term solutions, so creators get a fair go, as opposed to the AI companies getting a free ride.
- Make grants and all literary/creative prizes (not just the Prime Minister's Literary Awards) tax free.
- Look at the Irish tax free threshold for creators, as a potential model to follow here. Also look at Universal Basic Income initiatives in other countries.
- Increase support and resources for key institutions, particularly Writing Australia, and also Books Create Australia and Australia Reads, State Writers Centres, and other grassroots organisations.

In conclusion, I urge the government to secure the future of Australian writers and writing by adopting the recommendations of the ASA, Books Create Australia, and Australia Reads.

Yours faithfully

Garth Nix OAM