

23 May 2026

I write in response to the *Towards a new National Cultural Policy* public consultation paper as an Australian author and literary translator, as the Deputy Editor of *Sydney Review of Books*, and as a recently appointed member of the Public Lending Right Committee.

Below are my recommendations regarding some of the priorities laid out in the aforementioned paper. It is heartening to see the thought and care being put into shaping Australian arts and culture.

- Regarding Pillar 1 – First Nations First. A thriving artistic community requires a thriving critical culture – the latter not only equipped to appreciate and critique what the former produces, but to model to the general public how to do so. It is very likely that the same will apply in the First Nations context: that is, in order for the First Nations artistic community to truly thrive, it must also have a flourishing community of First Nations critics able to appreciate and critique First Nations art on its own terms, and to model to non-Indigenous Australians how to engage with First Nations art. More initiatives to support First Nations critics will be helpful in achieving this.
- Regarding Pillar 2 – A Place for Every Story; and Pillar 5 – Engaging the Audience. When it comes to literary translation, Australia punches well above its weight. An astonishing number of internationally renowned and award-winning literary translators claim Australia as their home or have Australian citizenship or connections. Given this fact, I think that much more can be done in the way of publicising this contribution of Australia's to the world of letters. Much more can be done, also, in the way of officially supporting burgeoning literary translation via centres and grants dedicated specifically to nurturing and sustaining literary translators.
- Regarding Pillar 3 – Centrality of the Artist. Clear regulations need to be put in place around the usage of AI in the arts and culture. At this point in time, Australia is in a good position to safeguard its most valuable possession and resource – its human beings – in order to prevent them from being not only replaced but atrophied ability-wise by the increasing normalisation of dependence on AI.

- Regarding Pillar 4 – Strong Cultural Infrastructure. It is my sense that current funding schemes often prioritise funding new projects while leaving those already ‘established’ or ‘up and running’ to flounder – much to the detriment of the latter. A healthy forest requires not only that saplings grow, but that older members of the forest receive nutrients and care as well.

Many thanks for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tiffany Tsao