

HEATHER ROSE

The Office of the Arts

GPO Box 594

Canberra, ACT 2601



May 22nd, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

Revive has some good notions but it fails to recognise the increasingly precarious nature of publishing, reading, writing and the book industry. Perhaps the fact we need to name our arts vision *Revive* in 2026 sums it up. Australian governments have been diminishing their support of the arts throughout my career as a novelist since 1998.

I am the author of nine published novels and a memoir. I am considered a bestselling author in Australia. My books have won The Stella Prize, The Christine Stead Prize and the Australian Book Association General Fiction Book of the Year. I have been continuously published since 1999. My books have been translated into more than ten languages. One book has been adapted for the stage, premiering at Sydney Festival, and is currently in pre-production for a major international film.

Through the writing of the first seven novels, until 2016, I worked full-time, raised three children, volunteered for significant arts organisations contributing to both tourism and community engagement, sat on paid and unpaid boards, and I mentored emerging writers. I wrote my books at night.

I received my first Australia Council grant in 2016 when I was 51 after nine prior unsuccessful applications over the past 25 years. I also received two significant literary prizes in 2016. Despite all that apparent success, and having ten books in print now, my royalties for the 6 month period from July to Dec 2025 were less than \$10,000. That is expected to support me to live and write for another 6 months.

Perhaps government officials do not understand the pay structure we writers work with.



HEATHER ROSE

We receive a 10% royalty on the sale price of our books less agents fees and tax. So, if a book sells for \$30 we receive \$3. Less tax. Royalties are calculated by our publishers who pay us twice a year. We never know how much that payment will be, preventing any future financial planning. Then we pay some 15% agent's fee for each book on our royalties.

All other income (while we are trying to write our next novel which can take many years of research and crafting) must arise from either publishing advances, adaptations of our works to screen or stage, or from an annual ELR/PLR payment if we are lucky enough to qualify. (That payment is also an unknown amount until we are advised.) Very, very rarely there is the windfall of a grant or a prize with money attached. Beyond that we do whatever it takes to meet our overheads while still trying to produce work of the highest literary standard.

The closure of state school libraries, the lack of funding of state school librarians, and the paucity of time given to the arts in the current education model, risks the future prosperity of our nation. Creativity and imagination are the tools we will need to navigate an increasingly complex world and contribute to the health and well-being of our nation.

Requests for the National Cultural Policy:

- Make all literary prizes tax free, in keeping with the Prime Minister's Prize. Prizes contribute to the time needed to do the extensive future research and writing over the many years it takes to write a book. It is an investment in the long-term cultural fabric of our nation.
- Give writers (who currently fall into the same tax code as primary producers) a lower tax rate so that when we have a very rare year of significant earnings we do not lose almost half of it to tax.
- Make all government literary grants tax free. Grant monies are modest, and quite out of touch with the cost of living. With tax deducted they are quickly eroded. This erodes the time writers can immerse themselves in the creative process required to write works of literary excellence.
- Create multi-year fellowships for writers of proven ability and long-term careers. The royalties we earn are insufficient for us to have any certainty over the many years it takes to develop and craft a novel. Australian novels are rarely published and translated internationally because Australian writers

•





cannot afford the time to write books that meet that critical international bar. Culturally this is an enormous loss for Australia.

- We writers are passionate, determined and resilient. But we are not super-human. The lack of any long term funding for Australian writers is almost negligible.
- With the private sector, the government could create a Macarthur Fellowship-style philanthropic funding program. American writers of proven ability who are recipients of a Macarthur Fellowship receive the sum of US \$800,000 paid in annual instalments over a 5 year period. This amounts to \$160,000 per annum. A modest salary over 5 years for people at the top of their field. It also allows writers to pay off mortgages and attain a level of financial certainty into the future.
- The Macarthur Fellowships have been responsible for the creation of extraordinary works of international fiction by writers such as Cormac McCarthy, Richard Powers, George Saunders, Octavia Butler and Ocean Vuong. These works have contributed to literacy, learning and the cultural fabric of our species.
- Artists in Australia also fail to benefit from a Lottery Fund (see Scotland) or any kind of sovereign wealth tax (see Norway).
- ELR/PLR rights have been an excellent contribution to our small incomes. A calculation that returns more to the writer would be a simple and very helpful to increase author incomes once each year.
- A pilot program over 3 – 5 years giving some 300 Australian writers with proven publishing capability a basic income would provide both a wonderful case-study for the arts in Australia and lead to exciting and possibly world-class outcomes when writers have sufficient income to allow them to simply do what they do best. Write books.
- This basic income model for writers has been enormously successful in Ireland and resulted in a burgeoning of Irish literature on the world stage with many major international awards and significant bestsellers flowing from this program.
-



HEATHER ROSE



- The Irish basic income pilot for artists (2022 – 2025) was made permanent and now some 2000 practicing artists and creative arts workers based in the Republic of Ireland who meet specific professional and creative criteria receive around \$AUS550 per week to support them in the production of their work.
- Ireland has a population of some 7 million people. We have almost 4 times that population and yet offer no such program to artists.
- As I outlined in a recent previous submission on AI, we require transparency on copyright inputs for and outputs from generative AI models.
- Australia writers need stringent government protection from the theft of our work and significant remuneration where our work has been stolen already.
- We also must be compensated for the theft of our work. This theft has already happened with the wholesale acquisition of our copyrighted works by Anthropic. Four of my novels have been stolen for this purpose. We remain unprotected by the scouring of AI models.

In the few hours it has taken me to write and prepare this submission, I could have been working on my new novel instead of begging the federal government for support for me and my fellow writers. We are weary of doing this. We are weary of applying for government grants with hundreds of submissions, only a few of which will be successful due to the lack of funding. We are weary of being underappreciated and underfunded by government despite the enduring importance of storytelling to our society. Despite the joy and learning our works bring to readers. Despite the rare international recognition which enhances our national profile.

Our writers, our publishers and our booksellers make a significant contribution to the economy, and yet we are watching a decline in both book buying, reading and in literacy rates. Perhaps because of the closure and defunding of school libraries and librarians, or the prioritising by the government of science and technology rather than the arts.

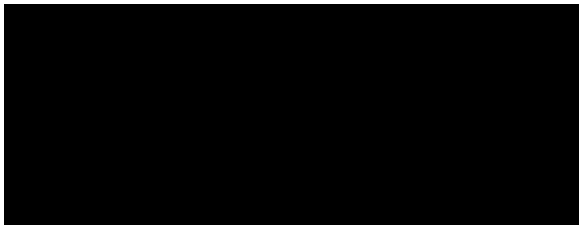
I urge you to think much *more long term* than those ideas outlined in the *Revive* program. You have the opportunity to create a robust, well-funded model of support to meet the varied needs of our writing communities for both emerging and established writers.



HEATHER ROSE

We need support to further excellence in literacy and writing for the current and coming generation. Perhaps the name says it all. We need *revival*, but more importantly we need to *Thrive*.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Rose

