

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Organisation

Children's Book Council of Australia ACT Branch



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

CBCA ACT Branch welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a National Cultural Policy that recognises children's literature, reading, writing and storytelling as essential components of Australia's cultural life.

Children's literature is often the first point of access young people have to culture, creativity, language, and identity. Books help children develop empathy, imagination, literacy, and critical thinking, while also enabling them to see themselves, their communities, and their futures reflected in stories. A strong literary culture for children is therefore fundamental not only to educational outcomes, but also to social cohesion, civic participation, and cultural continuity.

The ACT has a vibrant community of writers, illustrators, educators, librarians, booksellers, publishers, and volunteers who work to connect children and young people with Australian stories. However, the sector faces significant challenges.

One major challenge is the declining visibility and support for Australian children's literature in an increasingly globalised and commercially concentrated media environment. Australian creators compete against heavily marketed international content, while local publishing, literary programming, and school and library engagement operate under growing financial pressure and in some instances, closure. Rising costs of living and reduced discretionary spending also affect families' ability to purchase books and participate in cultural activities.

Another challenge is inequitable access. Not all children have the same opportunities to encounter high-quality literature, attend author events, participate in festivals, or access well-resourced school and public libraries. If cultural participation is to be genuinely inclusive, children's access to literature and storytelling must be treated as a public good rather than a private privilege.

At the same time, there are significant opportunities. Investment in children's literature delivers long-term cultural, educational, and social benefits. Supporting Australian authors and illustrators strengthens national storytelling and helps preserve diverse voices, including First Nations stories and multilingual perspectives. Partnerships between arts organisations, libraries, schools, and community groups can expand participation and foster lifelong engagement with culture.

The CBCA ACT Branch encourages cultural policy that:

recognises children's literature as a vital artform and cultural practice;

supports sustainable careers for Australian writers and illustrators;

strengthens school and public libraries as cultural infrastructure;

invests in literary events, reading programs, and initiatives for children and young people;

promotes initiatives such as CBCA Book Week, Reader's Cup, and Shadow Judging

is aligned with Reading Challenges, NSS, Children's Laureate, Books and Reading Days, Writers' Festivals, and local book launches;

improves equitable access to books and literary experiences across all communities; and

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values volunteer-led cultural organisations that play a critical role in connecting communities with literature.

Children and young people are not only future audiences and creators — they are active cultural participants now. A strong cultural policy ensures every child has the opportunity to encounter stories that inspire curiosity, belonging, creativity, and understanding. Supporting children's literature is an investment in our cultural future.