

National Cultural Policy submission
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My name is Nick Tapper. I am writing this submission on behalf of Giramondo Publishing, where I am the Associate Publisher. Giramondo is an independent literary publisher, renowned for the quality of its writing, editing and book design. Giramondo was established in 1996 to publish the literary journal HEAT, and began its book publishing program in 2002. This year marks our thirtieth anniversary. Since 2006 Giramondo has been based in the Writing & Society Research Centre at Western Sydney University, in Parramatta. We are a member of the Australian Publishers Association, where I sit on the Independent Publishers Committee.

Giramondo is known for publishing writing at the highest level of literary achievement: writing that contributes to Australian literature, and shapes its reception internationally. We publish between fifteen and twenty titles per year, across Australian fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as select works in translation. We also publish five issues of HEAT each year. Our books, and HEAT, are known for their use of innovative literary forms, and for their introduction of new voices and traditions to Australian literature. They build and educate readers in writing that goes beyond the expectations of the market, and creates new possibilities in imagination and language. Giramondo is also a major publisher of Australian poetry. We are committed to authors over the span of their careers, and take a long view of the Australian literary tradition, publishing groundbreaking Australian writers of diverse backgrounds whose work has fallen out of circulation or is yet to receive recognition. As a literary magazine, HEAT has been central to Giramondo's literary identity, and an important site for the discovery and development of new authors, publishing Australian and international authors alongside one another.

Our books have won all the major Australian literary awards. The authors who have done most to establish Giramondo's reputation, Gerald Murnane and Alexis Wright, are both considered potential Nobel Prize winners. We publish writers who have classic status in Australian literature, as well as emerging writers whose work with us has won them awards and career opportunities. We have sold rights for our authors across Europe, the US and UK, Asia, and Latin America. This success, and our collaborations with publishers in the US and UK, has earned us a prominent international reputation.

Giramondo has long been known for its commitment to writers from Indigenous and migrant backgrounds, and from regions not previously known to Australian literature. Our dedication to writers from Western Sydney represents a commitment to the literary voices of a historically underrepresented area. We run two international literary awards, in collaboration with esteemed international publishers in the UK the US: The Novel Prize, first awarded in 2021, to Melbourne writer Jessica Au for her acclaimed novel *Cold Enough for Snow*; and the Poetry in Translation Prize, launched in 2025.

The vision which guides Giramondo's activities is necessarily accompanied by our awareness of the precarity of literary publishing in Australia, as a fact of life for publishers, and for authors. We operate at a distance from the centres of English-language literary publishing in London and New York: in the territory occupied by literature in Australia, at the outer edge of commercial publishing, the community of readers is small, and authors cannot make a living from writing alone.

Our publishing program ranks literary quality above the commercial imperatives of the marketplace. Despite our growing reputation and the quality of our books, we continually confront a diminishing literary readership in Australia, easily intimidated by books which might seem 'difficult', the complaint to which literary works are usually subject. Our poetry titles are often poorly served by bookshops, and our poets are for the most part ignored by literary festivals. Poetry's limited commercial appeal applies to other genres we publish too, such as short story collections, essay collections, novellas, literary translations and works that cross genre boundaries. Our titles rarely go above 1500 copies in sales, and in some of the genres mentioned above, particularly poetry, essays and story collections, the norm can be under 500 copies.

The space for reviews and discussion of books in the media continues to shrink too: the mainstream press rarely carries reviews of poetry or other ostensibly challenging literary genres, leaving critical response largely to independent and online publications. The demise of Australian literature as an entity for study in the universities, together with the loss of readers, throws into stark relief the fact that the ideal we are serving – that of an Australian literature which stands above time and fashion – has to contend with a growing indifference.

This crisis is fuelled too by economic conditions. In recent years we have seen a rapid increase in costs, especially in the production of books. The modest sales of Australian literary titles rarely match the expense of their production. Overall, our printing costs per book are more than 50% higher than prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, we are seeing similar rises in freight and distribution costs. These are pressures we have made our best efforts to mitigate, changing our production and distribution strategies where we can, but in a small and consolidated environment like Australia our options are limited.

Unfortunately, these cost increases seem set to continue for the foreseeable future, exacerbated by international crises. While we can raise book prices to a certain degree, we cannot account for such a rise in costs. Literary publishers like Giramondo are increasingly squeezed, to the point of unsustainability. This is a problem we will be managing for years to come.

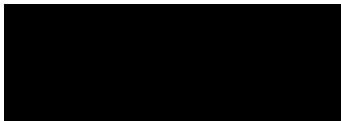
The advent of Writing Australia within Creative Australia under the Revive program has led to some improvement in the outlook for literary publishing in Australia. However, its gains are incremental and uncertain. We hope that in the upcoming National Cultural Policy, the support for Writing Australia can not only be sustained but significantly improved, with funding for books and reading supported at the level required by the challenges facing the publishing industry and particularly the literary sector.

The proposal by the Australian Publishers Association for an Australian Book Fund

seems an appropriate vehicle for such an ambition, to support publication and promotion of new Australian literature, including culturally significant works and literary journals. We hope it will also support the republication of out-of-print classics, to enhance the public's awareness of Australia's literary traditions. We also support further funding for the promotion of Australian literary works, and the education of Australian audiences. It should support forms of public discussion and education, such as lecture series, discussion in the media, and new forms of engagement, in order to heighten awareness of how literature works, and how it contributes to our cultural understanding. And we support enhanced funding for book export and rights sales to overseas markets, to ensure Australian literature is read and understood internationally.

The implementation of an Australian Book Fund would allow Giramondo to continue and strengthen its commitment to Australian writing, authors and readers. It will allow us to continue building a publishing program of diverse works – diverse in the cultural background of the authors and readers we serve, and diverse in the genres and forms we can continue to publish. It will allow us to continue to do the complex, time-consuming and necessary work with Australian authors, to produce books of outstanding quality for Australian readers.

Sincerely,



Nick Tapper
Associate Publisher
Giramondo Publishing



www.giramondopublishing.com