

National Cultural Policy Submission

Author and independent publisher submission

Short 500 word submission

24 May 2026

To whom it concerns,

My name is Ruth Skilbeck. I am an author, illustrator and independent publisher and editor. My latest novel is *The Girls and the Ghosts of The Old Manse Revisited*, published in 2025, and is my third novel. I have also published my PhD thesis as a book (*The Writer's Fugue: Musicalization, Trauma and Subjectivity in the Literature of Modernity*). After working for decades as a freelance journalist and arts writer (later specialising in international contemporary art) in Sydney, London and Dublin, I published my first novel in 2014. I hold a BA Honours in Philosophy from Birkbeck, University of London and an MA Writing from the University of Technology Sydney. In Australia, I founded a small independent publishing house, now called Borderstream Books, and in addition to publishing books I founded and edited a literary journal, *Arts Features International*, and published works by dozens of highly regarded, and emerging, Australian and international authors, poets, and visual artists. For years I was an academic (part time lecturer), in addition to journalism work. Since then, despite the enormous amount of work I poured into my literary ventures over the past thirteen years I have made a comparative pittance from writing and publishing. The already high book production costs have increased: of printing books, distribution, and marketing, and the market is small. It is challenging to get books into libraries and bookshops. And there is now a new existential threat. Recently, from despair and incredulity, I felt compelled to write a footnote on Borderstream Books website, a cry from the heart:

“This site and its contents are human authored, created by humans, mainly Dr Ruth Skilbeck, through creativity, imagination, reflection, analysis, critique, self expression, enterprise, expertise, experimentation, philosophical inquiry, and determined work, all virtually unpaid, and many many all nighters, all without the use of “generative artificial intelligence” which she will never use. (Although her peer-reviewed journal work has been stolen by AI harvesters without any consultation with her, without her permission, to train generative AI large language models for whom? Those who have engineered the theft of her essay and maybe more of her works are most likely ‘tech billionaires’ or aiming to be, the people who apparently do not care about authors, their work, their souls, and their rights).” (Copyright © by Ruth Skilbeck)

I join the calls for support from the Australian Society of Authors: “Without immediate support we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia”.

I call for a basic income support scheme for authors.

I call for an end to the failed “Job Ready Graduates” scheme.

I am a full member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission. I am an associate member of the Australian Publishers Association (APA) and support its submission. I also support the book industry submission by Books Create Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ruth Skilbeck

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