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22 May 2026

## Submission from the **Australian Society of Authors** on National Cultural Policy

### About the ASA

The Australian Society of Authors (ASA) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Office for the Arts (OFTA) on the National Cultural Policy. With over 4,500 members, the ASA is the peak body, professional association, community, and voice of Australia's writers and illustrators. Our members are drawn from every sector of the writing and illustrating world, including: novelists, non-fiction writers, children's authors and illustrators, historians, graphic novelists, crime writers, science fiction writers, educational writers, biographers, poets, journalists and more.

### Terminology

In this submission:

- references to an "author" includes writers and illustrators as both are authors of their work;
- references to "literature" are intended as all encompassing and include all books in any format, for any age readership, of any genre and category, including both fiction and non-fiction.



## Executive summary

Ü^çîç^ placed a long-overdue spotlight on literature, beginning to address decades of chronic underfunding and establishing important structural support through Writing Australia. But the work has only just begun. The promise of Ü^çîç^ must now be rapidly amplified. Despite acknowledged funding scarcity for literature, Australia has world-class authors, leading independent bookshops, vibrant festivals, and extraordinary cultural diversity. Imagine what could be achieved with sustained strategic investment. We are poised at a moment of opportunity. Yet, to unlock the potential of the Australian literary industry, we must double down on the momentum injected by Ü^çîç^.

Over the last three years, authors have faced increasingly precarious conditions:

- fewer independent Australian publishers due to consolidation of publishing industry,
- dominance of overseas titles in local sales ,
- thin margins for publishers and booksellers,
- new AI technologies disrupting traditional models of creation, compensation, and discovery,
- declining earnings from an already critically low base,
- declining reading rates, which is an issue of concern not only for the Arts portfolio but across government. Increasingly, governments recognise that reading is not just a cultural activity, but is essential for economic participation and democratic resilience.

Only Australian authors can tell Australian stories, write Australian histories, or author Australian textbooks for students; we cannot import them. Our authors are at the heart of Australian entertainment, writing books, poems, scripts, comics, and articles that delight and move us. They are equally central to Australia's knowledge and information economy; writing textbooks, scholarly work, and journalism, including commentary and analysis. Australian authors hold a mirror to our society, helping us understand who we are and who we might become. They are among our most thoughtful and vital voices.

In our view, the next national cultural policy **must sustain the focus on literature**, which is still recovering from decades of being sidelined. We need to compensate authors for the rapacious and extractive practices of global AI companies, invest in authors' capacity to write, build capacity for First Nations-led publishing, support the industry with tax reform, adequately resource Writing Australia for the job ahead, and support arts education.



The ASA asks for the next cultural policy to deliver:

**1. Direct investment in authors via:**

- multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors by providing time to write
- seed money for emerging writers
- a top up to the Lending Rights budget
- a basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.

**2. Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.**

**3. Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies operating within Australia:**

- introduce a legislative *requirement* or an *incentive* to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders or collecting societies
- by way of interim measure, establish a time-limited emergency creator relief funded by a new AI levy.

**4. Tax reform to support authors, publishers, and booksellers**

**5. Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver meaningful change:**

- increased coordination between federal and state funding
- commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the whole industry
- express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that:
  - authors engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or higher than, ASA recommended rates
  - generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
- coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.

**6. Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:**

- nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets
- reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.



## Current government leadership through *Revive*

Following on from the landmark *Revive* it is exciting to have an unprecedented second consecutive national cultural policy being delivered. We welcome the Minister's commitment to a whole-of-government approach to the arts and the centering of culture as fundamental to a nation's wellbeing.

*Revive* was backed by \$286 million in dedicated funding over four years. It included the creation of Writing Australia, with \$26 million of investment over three years to support and promote the Australian literature sector. Writing Australia launched in July 2025 so it is still too early to evaluate any impact on authors' careers, but the establishment of a national strategic literature organisation within Creative Australia is itself a cause for celebration.

Australian authors applauded the expansion of the lending rights schemes to digital formats delivered under *Revive*. The ASA warmly supports the *Revive* which brings together the Public Lending Right and Educational Lending Right schemes into a single, contemporary legislative framework. Lending rights remains the single most important and meaningful way the federal government supports Australian authors.

The ASA looks forward to the upcoming announcement of the National Poet Laureate and we remain deeply supportive of the work being done by the Expert Working Group and OFTA to develop stand-alone legislation to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and cultural rights.

## Context for this submission

The ASA made a lengthy submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation for *Revive* and we note that the basic conditions and challenges for authors have not materially changed since then. However, by way of update, we summarise below the most significant industry developments relevant to authors since the launch of *Revive* in January 2023.

### Industry value

The industry has remained steady, with slight growth to 108 million units (book purchases) in 2024, and \$2.1 billion spent by Australian book buyers across all book formats.<sup>1</sup>

### Generative AI

Generative AI, launched in late 2022, has been rapidly adopted. According to a February 2025 ACCC consumer survey, among consumers who were aware of generative AI tools, 59% reported having used at least one of them in the last 6 months. The most widely used tools were ChatGPT

<sup>1</sup> NielsenIQ BookData Australia, [NielsenIQ Book Data Australia, Sydney, 2025, p 1.](#)



(used by 41% of consumers), Meta AI (within Facebook, Messenger or WhatsApp) (15%), and Microsoft Copilot (11%).<sup>2</sup>

The development of generative AI has been extractive and exploitative. Without compensating authors for the intellectual property on which this technology relies, generative AI has redefined the cost of creative production and information acquisition, displaced and diminished jobs for copywriters, illustrators, graphic designers, and translators, triggered over 100 cases<sup>3</sup> of copyright infringement litigation in the US<sup>4</sup> and resulted in a flood of AI slop into the book market.

### **Publisher consolidation**

There has been significant publisher consolidation in the Australian industry, leading to fewer independent Australian publishers:

- the acquisition of Affirm Press by Simon & Schuster Australia in 2024;
- the acquisition of Pantera Press by Australian independent Hardie Grant Publishing in 2024;
- the acquisition of Text Publishing by Penguin Random House Australia in 2025,
- the announcement of the closing down of Echo Publishing in 2026 which operates in Australia as an imprint of Bonnier Books UK Ltd.

Trade publishing is dominated by large multinationals at one end and very marginal small publishers at the other.

### **We're reading less and we're reading digitally**

The attention economy continues to be fiercely competitive, with rates of reading declining<sup>5</sup> due to competition from digital technologies, a problem that is increasingly recognised worldwide and which has resulted in many countries launching reading initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

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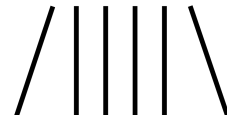
<sup>2</sup> Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, [Öä \\*äcæ/Ä/æc- / / {Ä • ^ / cä & ^ • Ää } ~ ä / 'Ä - ä } æ / Ä / ^ / / / icÄ Tæ / & @Ä GEG /](#), Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Canberra, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> ChatGPT is Eating the World, [AI Litigation Tracker: Copyright suits vs AI Companies](#). ChatGPT is Eating the World, accessed 13 May 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Relevantly for authors, the most recent [class action](#), filed on 5 May 2026, is brought by educational, scholarly and trade publishers Elsevier, Cengage Learning, Hachette Book Group, Macmillan Publishing Group, McGraw Hill LLC, and author Scott Turow on behalf of themselves and other plaintiffs in the class action against Meta Platforms, Inc. and Mark Zuckerberg.

<sup>5</sup> According to [Creative Australia's Pæcä / / } æ / Ä / c / c • Ä Ü æ / cä & ä / æcä / / } Ä Ü ~ / c ^ ^](#), Australians' engagement with reading had slightly decreased from 72% in the 2019 survey down to 69% in 2022. While older people read more often than younger people, the proportion of Australians aged 65 and over who read for pleasure has dropped significantly from 77% in 2019 to 68% in 2022, and the proportion who do not read print books at all has significantly increased from 25% in 2019 to 35% in 2022.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the [National Year of Reading 2026 announced in the UK](#) and the [Government Initiatives to Increase Reading and Interest in Reading Among Children and Young People in the Nordic Countries](#).



While print format sales remain dominant overall, Australians are increasingly reading digitally. Of those who read, three in five Australians read ebooks (60% up from 57% in 2019) and a third of Australians listen to audiobooks (34%, up from 31% in 2019).<sup>7</sup>

### Globalisation of reading market

Over the last three years, the trend towards a globalised consumer market has increased with Australian-authored titles comprising less than a quarter (21%) of the top 100 bestsellers in Australia between 2023-2025. Over the prior ten-year period, 2013-2022, Australian authored titles comprised, on average, 38.8% of the top 100 bestsellers in Australia.<sup>8</sup>

### Increased pressure on freedom of expression

Writers and artists have long grappled with the most complex and pressing issues of our time in their work. It is through artistic expression that we understand ourselves and our stories, build empathy, and critically reflect on our society. However, a growing number of authors have reported to the ASA that they have lost professional opportunities for expressing political views, particularly in relation to the war on Gaza.

This trend is of concern for a healthy democracy and does not reflect public sentiment. According to a survey by Creative Australia, 74% of respondents believe artists should have freedom of expression.<sup>9</sup>

### Importance of book adaptations

The trend in film and television to invest heavily into existing IP – adaptations of books, comics, games, sequels – has continued.<sup>10</sup> Book-to-screen adaptations continue to punch above their weight commercially, in box office terms, and as critically acclaimed prestige drama.<sup>11</sup> This provides an opportunity for increased pitching of Australian books for screen adaptation.

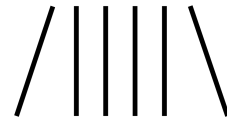
<sup>7</sup> Creative Australia, [Ó/ˈæci} \\*ÁXæ/ˈkÁÜ•~lc•Á\[-Ác@^ÁPæci/\]æ|ÁCE/c•ÁÚæ/cá&ã\]æci/\]ÁÜ~iç^](#), Creative Australia, Sydney, 2023, p 15.

<sup>8</sup> Based on data obtained by ASA from NielsenIQ BookData Australia.

<sup>9</sup> Creative Australia, [Ó/ˈæci} \\*ÁXæ/ˈkÁÜ•~lc•Á\[-Ác@^ÁPæci/\]æ|ÁCE/c•ÁÚæ/cá&ã\]æci/\]ÁÜ~iç^](#) Creative Australia, Sydney, 2023, p 11.

<sup>10</sup> B Katz, [V@^ÁÖ^ã}^Á\[-ÁÜ/ã\\*ã}æ|ãc~ãã}ÁP\[\[\], \[\[ãkããŠ\[\[Væcãc@^ÁP~{ã^i•](#), (Observer, 25 March 2025).

<sup>11</sup> For producers managing risk in a crowded streaming environment, stories with proven audiences are appealing. Examples include Ó[ˈÁÜ, æ||[, •ÁW}ãç^/•ÉÁÓ]~^àæ&VÉÁV@^ÁŠ[•cÁØ][, ^i•Á[-ÁCE]ã&^ÁPæ/cá&ã]æci/]ÁÜ~iç^ and international productions Ú@[ \*~}ÉÁP[!{æ|ÁÜ^[]|ÉÁÖ~}^ (Úæ/cÁF&ã]æci/]ÁÜ~iç^ and Úæ/cÁG), Y@^/Ác@^ÁÖ/æ, áæã•ÁÜã} \*ÉÁV@^ÁÜ[, ^iÁ[-Ác@^ÁÖ[ \*ÉÁV@^ÁÜ~^}q•ÁÖæ { àãÉÁÖ/ãã \*^iç[ ]ÉÁV@^ÁŠã}&[[]ÁŠæ, ^ÁÉ



## Author earnings

The trend of declining earnings for authors has not been arrested and continues to be the major crisis of the publishing industry:

- In the early 2000s, writers earned, on average, \$22,000 per annum.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2022, writers earned, on average, \$18,200 from their creative practice.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2024, the average income for writers was \$16,100 (with the median gross creative income being \$6,500).<sup>14</sup>

This places writers as the lowest earning of all professional artists other than composers. This is despite the fact that writers have the highest qualifications of all professional artists, with 60 percent of them holding a postgraduate diploma, master's degree or doctorate.<sup>15</sup>

Authors typically manage portfolio careers, patching together various income streams, often including a 'day job'. These income streams may include advances and royalties, paid public appearances, Copyright Agency and Lending Rights payments, mentoring and workshop income, and literary prizes and grants. Over the last 5 years, for a tiny percentage of writers, Substack subscriptions have become a meaningful source of income, but this requires regularly publishing to a significant number of paid subscribers and having an already-established platform or profile.

The crisis in author earnings creates challenges for the whole industry. Authors who are working a 'day job' or multiple jobs to make ends meet are less able to meet tight publishing deadlines, less available for promotional work or events, and less able to immerse themselves into the sustained time required for writing or illustrating. Perilous earnings also risk losing authors across generational and class lines. We don't want to only hear from authors who can afford to write. Whose voices will we lose?

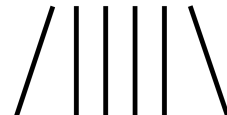
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<sup>12</sup> T Longden, D Throsby, and J Zwar., '[Australian Authors - Industry Brief No. 3: Authors' Income](#)', CE ~ c / æ | ð æ } Á C E ~ c @ [ / ! • q 0 } & [ { ^ Á Ü ^ } [ / c É Macquarie University, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> P Crosby, D Throsby, and J Zwar, '[Industry Brief No. 3: Authors' Income](#)' É Á P æ c á [ } æ | Á Ü ~ / ç ^ Á [ - Á C E ~ • c / æ | ð æ } Á Ó [ / [ Á C E ~ c @ [ / ! •, Macquarie University, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> D Throsby and K Petetskaya, [CE / c ä • c • Á æ • Á Y \[ / ! \ ^ / • K Á C E } Á Ö & \[ } \[ { ä & Á Ü c ~ ä ~ Á - Á Ü / \[ - \ • • ä \[ } æ | Á C E / c ä • c • Á æ } Á](#) CE ~ c / æ | ð æ É Macquarie University, 2024, p77.

<sup>15</sup> Throsby et al. [CE / c ä • c • Á æ • Á Y \[ / ! \ ^ / • É](#) p.29.



## Our asks

### 1. Direct investment in authors

1.1. We are consistently told by our members that direct financial investment is the most impactful way government can support writing careers. Authors are the engine of the creative economy, generating value and jobs across the entire supply chain. Nothing is possible without them at the centre and origin of creative work, yet too often they are taken for granted, underpaid, or overlooked as a funding priority.

1.2. Giving writers time to write yields significant returns. To list but a few examples:

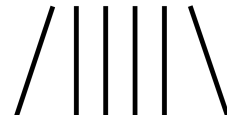
- [REDACTED] received an \$80,000 Copyright Agency Author Fellowship and wrote [REDACTED], which went on to win the 2019 Miles Franklin Award.
- [REDACTED] received a \$30,000 Create NSW grant, and the ASA's \$20,000 Blake-Beckett Trust Scholarship, which allowed [REDACTED] to write [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] novel went on to win the 2023 Miles Franklin Award.
- [REDACTED] was awarded the \$100,000 Judy Harris Writer-in-Residence at the Charles Perkins Centre, during which [REDACTED] wrote [REDACTED], which became a bestseller in Australia, received international acclaim, was translated into multiple languages, and adapted for the stage by Belvoir. This success enabled [REDACTED] to write [REDACTED], which was shortlisted for the international Booker Prize in 2024.
- [REDACTED] was awarded the \$80,000 Copyright Agency Fellowship to support [REDACTED] deeply researched non-fiction work [REDACTED] which explores environmental issues in the world's oceans and for which he won the Douglas Stewart Prize in 2025.

1.3. International evidence reinforces this proposition:

- Ireland's three-year basic income pilot for artists, in which a group of creators were paid €325 per week, has delivered strong returns. Government-commissioned analysis found that for every €1 invested, society received €1.39 in return (rising from €1.31 in 2023 to €1.75 in 2025).<sup>16</sup>
- Similarly, the Creatives Rebuild New York's Guaranteed Income for Artists Program, in which 2,400 artists across New York State were paid \$1,000 monthly for 18 months, found stunning improvement in artists' financial stress, productivity, intrinsic motivation, wellbeing, and community engagement.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Alma Economics, [Ó \[c f a ^\] ^ a c h a e } a e l ^ o i a - \[ / h c @ ^ i Ó a e o i & A O } & \[ { ^ A - \[ / h c @ ^ A C E / c o .](#) report to the Government of Island Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> S Cowan, L Hamilton, D Noonan, S Roll, J Woronkovicz, and G Zhang, [Ó { \[ \[ ^ i a } \\* h e e / c a i o i & A l a e a \[ / i K A @ \[ \\_ A \\* ~ a e / a e } c ^ h a h i } & \[ { ^ A ^ } @ a e } & ^ h a } c i i a } o i & A { \[ c i c a e c i \[ \] } h a e } a h - \[ c ^ i o A @ ~ { a e } A - \[ / i a o @ i } \\*](#), World Development Perspectives, Volume 42, 2026, 100778, ISSN 2452-2929.



1.4. Time and again, investment in authors delivers dividends; for writers themselves but also for the broader local publishing ecosystem and the reading public. When freed up from the pressures to scrape together a living, authors have time to work on their craft, but also to engage with the community such as through events at libraries, bookshops, and festivals. Investing in our primary creators is essential if Australian culture is to thrive.

1.5. Direct investment is needed as follows:

- **Seed investment program for early career authors:**  
For 50 emerging writers and illustrators, seed money of at least \$15,000 to upskill, engage in professional development, and undertake mentorships. <sup>18</sup>
- **New multi-year fellowships for mid-career writers/illustrators:**<sup>18</sup>  
The ASA calls for the urgent introduction of 30 new fellowships of \$80,000 (which could spread payment over 1 to 3 years) for authors and illustrators to take time to craft their next works. <sup>18</sup>
- **Top up lending rights budget**  
An efficient way to increase government support to authors is to top up the lending rights budget, which already smoothly delivers annual payments to Australian authors who have a threshold level of their books held in public and educational libraries.
- **Basic income pilot**  
To address the 25 year decline in author earnings, we call for the introduction of a basic income pilot to be rolled out in Australia. We suggest that 300 authors be involved in a three-year pilot delivered through this next national cultural policy. The economic, social and cultural impact of the pilot program could then inform the subsequent cultural policy, such as in Ireland, where the success of the Basic Income pilot has led to the establishment of a permanent nationwide scheme. <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In 2025, at the federal level, only four writing fellowships (\$80,000) were offered through Creative Australia and two writing fellowships were offered through Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund (\$80,000) along with a \$10,000 fellowship for a younger writer under 35 years. State-based libraries offer a range of predominantly research-based fellowships. State governments also offer various grants. Notably, the NSW Government recently introduced ten x \$50,000 writing fellowships in its *Y iacà } \*hæ } aÁŠac^ /æc ~ /^Á Úc /æc ^ \* ^Á- / iÁpÜ YÁGEGÍ* - an initiative highly supported by the ASA - and this benchmark ought to be adopted in all states and territories and amplified nationally.

<sup>19</sup> R Carroll, [Q / ^ / æ } a q • h à æ • i & h i } & \[ f ^ Á- / i Ác @ ^ h æ / c • Á • & @ ^ { ^ h à ^ & \[ { h • Á } ^ / { æ } ^ } c, V @ ^ Á Ö ~ æ / á i æ }](#), 11 February 2026.



## 2. Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing

- 2.1. Úḁḁḁ acknowledged that First Nations self-determination is vital and that programs run by First Nations people enhance connections to culture and Country, and improve Closing the Gap outcomes in education, employment, justice, health, wellbeing and languages.
- 2.2. To support the growth of First Nations publishing, we must support the pipeline:
  - fellowships for writers and illustrators,
  - mentored by experienced First Nations creators,
  - edited by First Nations editors, and
  - published by First Nations publishers.
- 2.3. The highly successful black&write! Indigenous Writing and Editing Project is currently transitioning to a new home after the State Library of Queensland board decided the initiative ought to be delivered by an industry organisation. The ASA supports the amplification of the black&write! program through Writing Australia supported by independent, arms-length funding and led by First Nations publishing professionals.

## 3. Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies

### 3.1. Background

For a comprehensive overview of the ASA's perspective on generative AI in Australia, please see [our submission to the Productivity Commission's Interim Report on harnessing data and digital technology](#). In short, multinational tech companies have engaged in an AI 'arms race' prompted by the release of ChatGPT onto the market in November 2022. They have illegally downloaded millions of copyright-protected books and articles from pirate sites and scraped from the internet to train their generative AI models. **It is the largest act of copyright theft in history, done willfully for commercial purposes.** Licensing options were ignored as the wealthiest companies in the world appropriated the economic value of creators' works without permission. The entire deployment of generative AI products – and its subsequent downstream iteration by commercial customers – is infected by this unprecedented extraction, which has created a reputational problem for generative AI products. More than three years on, authors remain uncompensated.

AI companies have admitted to being reliant on the published works of creators but have argued that they should be given a free pass to this intellectual property, by way of a new copyright exception.



In October 2025, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Attorney-General, rejected the introduction of a text and data mining exception to copyright for generative AI providers, stating, “We are ensuring AI companies can’t use the works of Aussie creatives for free and without permission.” This decision was warmly welcomed by Australian authors. The ASA thanks the government for its decision to reject a text and data mining exception and notes that this stance has been admirably referenced in other countries by creator advocates and has reportedly been influential in the policy direction taken in the UK.

The National AI Plan, published in December 2025, confirmed that a text and data mining exception has been ruled out.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2. So, is the problem solved?

Unfortunately, preserving the status quo in copyright law is not enough to ensure Australian creators are compensated for the use of their work in AI training, where the laws of other countries apply. Most infringing acts have occurred outside Australia, beyond the reach of the law.

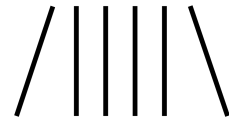
It is positive that copyright licensing is emerging at a global level. However, the licensing market for generative AI training appears to be dominated by global tech companies striking deals with large global rightsholder organisations. For example, NewsCorp has licensed its content to OpenAI for AI training and HarperCollins, a publisher within News Corp's global media portfolio, has struck a deal with Microsoft for training AI models on limited backlist non-fiction titles. Independent Australian trade publishers will struggle to enter licensing deals with multinational AI companies for training and do not enjoy the scale to do so in the future. Global agreements are likely to be limited in number, slow to emerge, and will not extend to Australian creators signed with an independent Australian publisher, raising a difficult question about who will be compensated and who will be left behind.

Additionally, the licensing predominantly taking place in the literary sector for training, fine-tuning, or RAG concerns educational, academic, or trade non-fiction works.<sup>21</sup> Large language models are capable of generating text with complex language structures in part because they’ve been trained on fiction work, which is often rich in sophisticated expression and lyricism. Yet, the fiction authors whose work has been stolen to develop this capability in LLMs are not being included in licensing deals.

As a result, a copyright ‘gap’ is emerging. Australian authors and illustrators who are not represented by a major multinational publisher or who are otherwise not included in licensing arrangements, will not receive compensation for the offshore ingestion of their

<sup>20</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources, [Copyright and Generative AI](#), Australian Government, 2025, p 29.

<sup>21</sup> Copyright Alliance, [AI Licensing by Copyright Owners](#), Copyright Alliance, accessed 23 May 2026.



work in AI training. And those same individuals lack the ability to take any remedial action due to the jurisdictional issue described above.

The result is that the widespread theft of Australian copyright works by multinational AI companies will largely evade any repercussions unless the government intervenes.

### 3.3. What are our asks of government?

#### 3.3.1. Introduce a *requirement* or an *incentive* to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders or collecting societies

As explained above, the ASA is concerned that a significant swathe of Australian authors are going to fall through the cracks of copyright licensing for offshore AI training. One way to stand behind Australian creator is to prescribe conditions for all generative AI providers who operate in this market. As the ASA has previously submitted,<sup>22</sup> one option is for the Government to introduce a new Code of Conduct designed to arrest the information asymmetry and profound unequal bargaining power between creators and Big Tech and to insist that all Australian copyright works ingested into AI models that are offered in this market – must be appropriately licensed.

Whether by mandatory code or other legislation, the government must insist on transparency, consent and compensation:

##### (a) Transparency obligations on both inputs and outputs of generative AI:

- an obligation to disclose AI training data and where it was sourced;<sup>23</sup>
- an obligation to disclose to users when an AI system is being used to interact with them;
- an obligation to disclose to users when content is AI-generated, by clear labelling or watermarking.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For example, in the ASA submission to the Productivity Commission in response to its *Productivity Commission Inquiry into Artificial Intelligence* in 2024, and the NSW Inquiry into Artificial Intelligence (AI) in 2023.

<sup>23</sup> In the absence of strict transparency requirements, the government could follow the precedent set by France and the UK of all published copyright works by AI developers unless demonstrated otherwise by AI developers.

<sup>24</sup> These obligations were set out in the voluntary guardrails recommended by the *AI Guardrails* in 2023, Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources. In our submission, they ought to be made mandatory.



**(b) Compensation for past use:**

With respect to Australian copyright material which has already been ingested to train AI models offshore, and for which consent was not sought, the relevant AI company must pay to each relevant Australian copyright owner fair compensation, which continues for as long as the work remains ingested in the AI model.

**(c) A pathway for consent and payment for future use:**

Multinational AI companies carrying on business in Australia must be legislatively required – or incentivised – to enter into agreements with all Australian copyright owners whose work has been used in offshore training of their models, whether by direct licence or voluntary collective licence.<sup>25</sup> This would act as a signal from the Government that all creators' rights are worth protecting and that entering into a few global deals is not sufficient to address the industry-wide harm. It is broadly agreed that licensing is the mechanism that will deliver desirable, high-quality content to AI companies and economic sustainability to creators. Therefore the Government must insist on licensing as a condition of doing business in Australia.

**(d) Protections for individual creators:**

Licensing revenue must actually flow to the original authors whose copyright work has been exploited. Minimum percentage entitlements to authors must be established upfront so that any intermediary – such as a collecting society or publisher – is required to deliver the full benefit of new licensing revenue to creators, subject only to a small agency fee.

**(e) Compliance with First Nations Protocols:**

The Code must include an obligation on AI developers to observe Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocols. Essentially, this will require AI companies to consult with the communities who collectively own the ICIP in a work before ingesting that work.

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<sup>25</sup> A voluntary collective licence is typically administered by a collective management organisation (collecting society) authorised by copyright owners to negotiate on their behalf and collect and distribute royalties. Authors are not compelled to participate but may voluntarily do so.



### **3.3.2. Interim measure: establish an emergency creator relief funded by AI levy**

Legal and commercial resolutions to the global copyright battle being waged by AI companies against creators will take time to emerge. Meanwhile, our creators face an immediate threat to their business models and a decimation of long held assumptions about the cost of production.

Therefore, we need the government to deliver an interim emergency relief package for creators in order to ensure the sustainability of the creative sector. Creators are the most vulnerable participants in the creative economy – with already marginal careers – and we must ensure we don't lose valuable skilled creators while navigating the disruption caused by generative AI. To lose them would leave Australian culture hollowed out and publishers without their essential business asset: new IP.

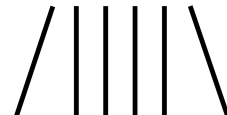
The ASA submits that a temporary emergency relief fund to support Australian creative careers is a necessary response to the profound disruption caused by generative AI. We propose:

- The fund should be financed through a temporary three-year levy on generative AI providers operating in Australia that have exploited Australian copyright works to develop commercial products.
- This fund ought to provide an annual payment to eligible individual creators for 3 years, after which time a review should be scheduled.
- Levy proceeds can be distributed to individual creators through collecting societies.

Precedents for imposing a levy for a defined public purpose include the major bank levy and the proposed News Bargaining Incentive, both introduced to address market imbalances and broader public harms.

AI companies have a direct vested interest in preserving the creative sector by paying into a fund, as their technologies depend on a continuing supply of high-quality human-created content.

Our proposed relief package must be understood as a temporary measure and ought not interrupt or delay ongoing conversations about the longer term structural solution needed from the government.



### 3.3.3 Research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers and Australian cultural output

To address the harm to our cultural output, we need a way to measure it. The ASA is aware of a flood of AI-generated books on Amazon<sup>26</sup> and know that this must be undermining both the earnings and discoverability of professional writers. Once large language models were released, the number of new titles “appearing each month [on Amazon] nearly tripled between 2022 and late 2025 and rose by a factor of ten in some categories.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, research into a large image marketplace shows that generative-AI tools sharply displaces output of non-AI images.<sup>28</sup>

AI-generated mimics, knock offs, summaries, and derivations of original works not only substitute for, but also devalue, the original human-authored works on which the AI model was trained. To date, there has been no attempt in Australia to quantify this displacement and substitution effect on writers and artists.

In the UK, the creative industries recently published a report, *Ó!æç^ÁB^, Á Y [!|ãÑÁR ~•cá&^Á ~[!Á&!^æc [!•Áã }Ác@^Áæ \*^Á [-ÁCEQ*, showing large numbers of authors are reporting reduced earnings due to generative AI (86%), or lost job opportunities (72%), and illustrators and literary translators are reporting cancelled or redirected commissions (26% and 36%, respectively).<sup>29</sup> According to data from Harvard Business Review, the launch of ChatGPT has led to a 30% decline in writing jobs and a 17% drop in image creation jobs.<sup>30</sup>

We request government support to conduct research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers, which will inform further interventions required to support creators.

<sup>26</sup> Both Draft2Digital (online distributor) and Amazon have changed their policies to deal with a significant increase in automated and low-quality account creation in recent years. In an [announcement to authors](#) on 14 April 2026 explaining new account activation and maintenance fees, Draft2Digital stated, “This onslaught from automated content farms threatens reader trust in indie titles and risks indies being associated with low-quality ‘slop.’”

<sup>27</sup> I Reimers and J Waldfogel, [\(E\)Áæ }áÁV@^ÁÜ ~æ }cáç ^Áæ }áÁÜ ~æ }cáç ^ÁU-ÁÖ!^æcáç^ÁÜ! \[á ~&c•^ÁPæç^ÁŠŠT•ÁÖ \[!•c^áÁ Ö!^æcá \[ }ÁU-ÁXæ \] æá!^ÁÖ \[!•Ñ](#) National Bureau of Economic Research, 2026, p 2.

<sup>28</sup> Reimers et al., [\(E\)Áæ }áÁV@^ÁÜ ~æ }cáç ^Áæ }áÁÜ ~æ }cáç ^ÁU-ÁÖ!^æcáç^ÁÜ! \[á ~&c•](#), p 8.

<sup>29</sup> Society of Authors UK, [Ó!æç^ÁB^, Á Y \[!|ãÑÁR ~•cá&^Á- \[!Á&!^æc \[!•Áã }Ác@^Áæ \\*^Á \[-ÁÖ^}CEQ](#), Society of Authors UK, London, 2026.

<sup>30</sup> O Demirci, J Hannane and X Zhu, [P \[ , ÁÖ^}ÁCEVÁQ•ÁCE!/^æá ^ÁQ { \]æ&cá } \\*Ác@^ÁŠæá \[!Á Tæ!^Ác](#), Harvard Business Review, 2024.



### 3.4. Why should government act?

Generative AI threatens Australian culture. Technology companies have stolen copyright works to build commercial AI models that can directly compete with the creators of those copyright works, without a monetisation strategy (and very rarely any attribution) back to the creators who laboured to create the original copyright works. Generative AI is parasitic. It is creating asymmetric commercial returns. It is untenable to expect Australian creators to continue investing in cultural production without addressing this imbalance.

## 4. Tax reform to support authors, publishers, and booksellers

Government has incentivised local investment into the screen and digital games sectors by way of tax offsets<sup>31</sup> because it recognises the large capital investment required for these projects and the economic impact of these projects is measurable.

The ASA submits that literature has not received the same support because it has lower upfront costs, a highly fragmented workforce of freelancers (authors), and the benefits of literature are more diffuse. Despite authors being the upstream source of much of the IP that powers our creative economy, the longer term gains in culture and education are harder to measure. It is now timely to introduce tax reform for authors because to do so directly tackles the income decline that threatens author careers.

### 4.1. Tax free literary prizes and grants

At the recent Art of Tax Reform Summit hosted by the NSW Government, the most prominent ask was to make literary and artistic prizes tax exempt, supported by multiple peak bodies. Relieving authors from paying income tax on the rare literary prizes and grant opportunities they receive significantly enhances the financial value of these opportunities, which are intended to support authors' creative careers and ensure they are able to continue writing.

Consistent with the tax concessions granted for the recipients of the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, we propose a tax-free status for all major literary awards in Australia, including but not limited to:

- All State Premiers' Literary Awards
- The Miles Franklin Literary Award
- The Stella Prize
- The ARA Historical Novel Prize
- The Barbara Jefferis Literary Award

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<sup>31</sup> Producer Offset, Location Offset, Post, Digital and Visual effects (PDV) tax offset, Digital Games Tax Offset.



While tax averaging over a five-year period is available to authors, we hear from our members that the specialist tax advice required to access this provision is cost-prohibitive.

Tax relief on both literary prizes and government grants would represent additional support for Australian authors and send a strong message about the value of their work to society, while being a negligible cost to the government.

#### **4.2. Tax free threshold for authors and illustrators**

A broader tax reform required to alleviate Australian authors' financial precarity is a **tax exemption scheme**, similar to the Artists' Exemption scheme offered in Ireland, whereby income earned from literary and artistic work, such as advances, book sales, or grants, awards, or prizes are tax exempt up to the maximum amount of €50,000 per year (equivalent to AU\$82,000).

In Ireland, the scheme provides that the government can make determinations of eligibility in respect of original works that have artistic or cultural merit in the following categories only:

- (a) a book or other writing;
- (b) a play;
- (c) a musical composition;
- (d) a painting or other like picture;
- (e) a sculpture.

Non-fiction work may also qualify for the scheme but textbooks and works of journalism are excluded.

The purpose of the scheme is to recognise the reality that artistic and cultural output is not financially remunerated commensurate with the value of the contribution the artist is making to a nation's wellbeing, and that government has a role in supporting and encouraging such cultural production.

Such a scheme in Australia will help to enable more sustainable author and illustrator careers, and ensure the long-term viability of Australian storytelling. It would also be significantly easier to use and administrate than the burdensome income averaging calculations that are currently available to creatives. We already have a definition of special professional income that can be used for this purpose.



### 4.3. Publisher and bookseller tax relief

The ASA endorses the Australian Publishers' Association proposal for a targeted tax offset for Australian publishers investing in Australian-authored books. We ask that such offsets be conditional upon payment to authors of fair advances and industry-standard royalties.

The ASA also endorses the submission of the Australian Booksellers Association and regards independent bookshops as <sup>^••^}cæ/</sup> cultural infrastructure. We support an Australian Independent Bookshop Tax Offset (a refundable tax rebate on core operating expenses including wages, rent, and capital expenditure).

## 5. Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver meaningful change

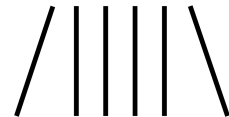
5.1. To unlock the potential of the Australian literary sector, Writing Australia faces a significant task and must be appropriately resourced. It must be empowered to commission critical research into the publishing industry, develop strategies to arrest declining reading rates, build export markets, support literary infrastructure – such as writers centres and literary journals – through coordinated federal and state funding, and facilitate stronger connections between industry and government agencies and departments. Most importantly, it must make bold, sustained investments in Australian authors – as mentioned above – to address the two-decade decline in author earnings.

### 5.2. Coordinate with the states and territories

The ASA is excited by the number of states and territories which have developed cultural plans aligning with the national <sup>Ü^çç^Á</sup> policy, including Queensland's <sup>Ô/^æç^ÁV/ \*^c@^/Á</sup> <sup>G€G€ . G€H€ÉÁ</sup> South Australia's <sup>sÁCEÁÚjæ&^Ác [ÁÔ/^æc^,</sup> NSW's <sup>Ô/^æçç^ÁÔ [ { { }äcá^•ÁG€G IÉG€HH</sup> and the Northern Territory's <sup>Œ/c•ÁÚc/æc^ \* ^ÁG€HI,</sup> demonstrating unprecedented policy coordination across all levels of government.

Building on this momentum, the ASA calls for the reform of commonwealth and state government investment into literature to introduce coordinated programs and matched funding allocation targets to achieve better efficiencies and increased investment into the literary sector. Other major artforms (performing arts, visual arts and crafts) have negotiated **federal and state government funding agreements** and a similar approach in literature should amplify overall investment.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> A good example of coordination is the LitUp project which began as an initiative through Creative Australia and Copyright Agency and now will be also supported by a funding contribution from the State Government of NSW.



### 5.3. Commission research and establish baseline data

To analyse the impact of the evolving national cultural policies, we need vital baseline data from which we can measure change. The ASA repeats our submission from 2022: we need a revival of data collection through the Australian Bureau of Statistics for both book publishing and book selling (categories which were discontinued in 2014).<sup>33</sup>

Similar to research commissioned by Music Australia,<sup>34</sup> the literature sector will benefit from a comprehensive analysis of the economic contribution of the Australian literary industry. To properly advocate for our industry, we must understand the Australian literary industry's direct and indirect economic contribution, including domestic and export income, jobs supported across the sector, and jobs generated in related industries.

We do not have data on the total export value of Australian books. Nor do we have data on the value of film and television adaptations of Australian books which attracts considerable investment and creates jobs. We don't know the total value of writers festivals across Australia, either in ticketed revenue or the broader impact of 'book tourism'. We don't know the size and scope of the growing self-publishing industry.<sup>35</sup> To increase the efficacy of interventions, baseline data is critical.

### 5.4. Enforce rates of pay as funding conditions

It is no coincidence that writers and composers – two creator groups not protected by a union in Australia – are our lowest paid creators.<sup>36</sup> More must be done to ensure minimum rates of pay for authors who, as independent contractors, are vulnerable. Authors have no access to sick leave, annual leave, and infrequent entitlements to superannuation. They don't fall under the protection of Awards or industrial agreements. They negotiate for payment individually without the ability to collectively bargain.

In 2024, the Australian Government introduced legislation<sup>37</sup> to regulate conditions for gig workers – including minimum standards and collective bargaining rights – acknowledging that independent contractors are vulnerable to exploitation. While this reform did not include authors, there are complementary steps Writing Australia can take to embed protections when awarding government funds.

<sup>33</sup> We again endorse the recommendation made by the Standing Committee of Communications and the Arts in their 2021 report, [U&~|\]cá} \\*AæA Pæcá \[ }æ\]hÖ~|c~|æ\]hUæ}](#) for funding to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to produce the Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts annually, gather and publish data on levels and type of employment, trends, revenue, geographic trends across the creative and cultural industries: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts.

<sup>34</sup> McAtamney & Advisors and Music Australia, [V@^hÓæ••AŠã}^kÁÖ@æ/cá} \\*Ac@^h^& \[ \] \[ {ã&h& \[ \]c/iã~cá \[ }Á \[-Á CE~c/æ\]ææ•Á { ~•ã&hã}ã~c/i~](#), Music Australia, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> We don't have figures for Australia but at least 3 million out of the 4 million books published in the US in 2025 were self published. J Milliot, [Ó\[\[\AU~c\] cAV\]\]^ãáØ \[ ~\]hTã\]h \[ \]hã}ÁGEGÍ](#), Publishers Weekly, 2026.

<sup>36</sup> Throsby et al., [CE/cá•c•Aæ•Á Y \[ / \^/•KÁCE}ÁÖ & \[ \] \[ {ã&AUc~ã^Á\[-ÁU\] \[-~••ã \[ \]æ\]ÁCE/cá•c•hã}ÁCE~c/æ\]ææÉp.78.](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Øæã/hÁ Y \[ / \ÁŠ^ã~|æcá \[ \]ÁCE { ^}ã { ^}cÁÇÖ\] \[ •ã} \\*ÁŠ \[ \] \[ \]@ \[ / \^•Á P \[ÉÁGDACE&cÁGEG IÁ](#)



It needs to be an express condition of government grants that:

- Authors engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or higher than, ASA recommended rates. (This has long been a precondition of funding but the reality is that authors continue to be underpaid without any consequence for the funded entity.)
- Generative AI will not be used by the funded entity to replace or diminish human contribution. (Government money ought not fund projects that rely on technology that has exploited the rights of copyright owners.)

### **5.5. Develop a book-to-screen pipeline**

Given the interest in, and strong track record of book-to-screen adaptations, and new streaming quotas, we support Writing Australia collaborating with Screen Australia and state-based equivalents to develop opportunities for writers, publishers, and literary agents to pitch to film, television, and theatre producers, creating a book-to-stage-and-screen pipeline. The involvement of Writing Australia ought to ensure that participating producers commit to fair payment of writers, including the authors of the source material and the downstream screenwriters who must be offered Australian Writers Guild-approved rates and contract conditions.

## **6. Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers**

### **6.1. Fund nationwide authors-in-schools programs through education budgets**

We applaud the commencement of LitUp; a pilot program supported by Creative Australia, Copyright Agency and Create NSW which will fund author visits to schools and libraries in Queensland and NSW. Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback from previous authors-in-schools programs, we anticipate national interest in this program. However, we know that arts budgets cannot hope to meet this demand and ask that a nationwide authors-in-schools program be funded through education budgets.



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- [REDACTED], Author

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- [REDACTED], Author and Illustrator

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**6.2. Reverse Job-Ready Graduates Package**

We refer to the joint submission made by the Australian Society of Authors, Australian Publishers Association, Australian Booksellers Association, and Australian Library and Information Association under the **Books Create Australia** coalition to the Senate Committee on Employment and Education in support of the private member's bill: Pá \*@^/Á Òâ ~ &æcã [ ] ÁÛ ~ ] ] /!cÁcE { ^ } â { ^ } cÁçÛ^ç^/•ÁR [ àÉÛ^æâ ^ÁÏ/æâ ~ æc^Á•ÁØ^ÁPâ \ ^•Áæ } âÁÏ } âÁ / € \ Á cE/ c•ÁÏ^ \* / ^Á•DÁÓâ/ /!ÁG€G /ÉÁ

We ask the Government to review its commitment to arts education funding. Arts-based education significantly helps the development of intellectual skills now in demand: creativity, innovation, imagination, critical thinking, communication.

The Albanese Government has committed to reform the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) program but has not yet reversed the high cost of humanities degrees, instead establishing the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) to manage government funding. We know the JRG program has failed in its objectives, discouraged students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from pursuing a university education,<sup>38</sup> caused ballooning HECS debts and is disproportionately penalising arts-based students which in turn erodes the long-term foundations of Australia's reading, intellectual, creative and civic culture. The government must act urgently to abandon the JRG program.

<sup>38</sup> K Dhanji, [Pæ/ ^ÁG€Á^ ^Á/ /! ^Á/ \[ /!Á& \[ /! \] \] { â&Á•c ~ â^ } c•Á•c ~ â ^ } \\*Á/æ , Áæ•ÁÛ/ \[ /!Á&æ/ /!Ác \[ /!•&/æ \] Á T \[ /!â• \[ \] É^/æb/ àÉ/ ^æâ ^Á&@^ { ^ÉÁV@^ÁÏ ~ æ/âæ } , 2026.](#)



## Conclusion

Study after study shows the economic precarity of authors' lives, few financial safety nets, and no labour protections of employment. Yet we know authors are vital: to the success of Australian publishers' commercial enterprises, to the viability of literary festivals, to the entertainment and education of our population and the enrichment of our culture. Authors are the primary producers of the creative economy. We need to grasp the levers which will actually make a material difference to their professional lives: abandon trickle-down economics and invest in them directly, resource Writing Australia to research opportunities and deliver bold strategic plans, entrench fair pay, and implement tax relief.

Additionally, this cultural policy must respond to the parasitic nature of generative AI by addressing the injustice at the heart of the AI economy: the unauthorised appropriation of Australian copyright works for the commercial benefit of multinational technology companies. The Australian Government should hold companies operating in this market to the standards of our laws and make participation conditional on respecting the property rights of Australian creators through a new legislative framework requiring licensing arrangements.

The ASA also supports the National Plan for Books and Reading outlined in the Books Create Australia submission.

We are pleased to consult further on these issues and provide any additional information.

**Lucy Hayward**

CEO

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[REDACTED] [asauthors.org.au](http://asauthors.org.au)