

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I have worked in the publishing and creative industries for thirty years as an author, editor, mentor and teacher of creative writing. Since 1998 I have had 25 books professionally published. Many of these titles were also published internationally – in the USA, UK, Germany, India and China and other territories. Despite receiving accolades and awards for my work, my current income is marginal. Sadly, this is an enduring problem for many Australian writers who dedicate their life to writing.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in Revive to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers, despite the fact they have delivered very little personal benefits. Conditions for Australian authors have always been precarious, but they are no less so now than before the introduction of Revive as new challenges have continued to arise. Without immediate support, the viability of a local book industry is jeopardised.

Writing is not a vanity project – it is a vocation that leads committed authors into an economic minefield. The centrality of the artist in the creation of new work is given lip service but poorly funded and the current programs that support authors do not help them sustain careers across decades. Too many promising authors abandon their craft when they discover how difficult it is to generate a viable income across a lifetime. It's painful to watch young writers enter the industry full of hope and then, after a few books, face the fact that they can't support themselves through the thousands of hours it takes to create new work.

I call for the following initiatives to be included in the revised arts policy:

- A top up to the Lending Rights budget and an extension of Digital Rights to include work published in digital format prior to 2017. Two generations of Australian writers derived small benefit from the introduction of DLR as the bulk of their body of work was published as e-books prior to 2017. Thousands of these works are held as ebooks in libraries across the country, yet the authors currently receive no compensation.
- Tax reform to benefit creators in the literary arts including making grants and prizes in the literary sector tax-free, compulsory superannuation contributions added to all literary grants, an increased tax-threshold for creators, and a review of tax incentives that will assist authors in sustaining their careers
- A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.
- Solutions to the theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies and legislation to protect copyrighted work against unlawful use in training AI.

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