

Australia's National Cultural Policy – submission

24 May 2026

To the panel

I write as an author and avid reader. My life as a child was changed by reading and my life as an adult has been changed by becoming an author. I support Books Create Australia's call for a National Plan for Books and Reading. I have read the research conducted by Australia Reads and BehaviourWorks Australia (including *Reaching Australian readers*) and think it offers so many worthwhile, accessible, feasible options to boost reading among different segments of the community.

I work at a large public library and think there are many ways these research outcomes could be implemented with the right resourcing. I have also spent years running literary awards and fellowships programs in my day job as a public servant. I know first-hand the difference that awards funding makes to authors, illustrators and publishers.

Books and reading deliver public benefits the market cannot secure alone, including literacy, learning, cultural participation, democratic debate, community connection, and access to Australian stories, ideas and knowledge.

The issues I am most concerned about are:

- authors' capacities to find funded time to write
- the near-uncontested uptake of iPads and other technology in schools, which reduces children's reading rates
- artificial intelligence and theft of authors' works to feed large-language models with no compensation for creatives.

I believe the Government should offer:

- multi-year fellowships that support mid-career authors with time to write
- greater seed money for emerging writers (I think the simplest way to do this is via well-resourced literary journals, magazines, and prizes)
- funding to boost First Nations writing and editing, with clear pathways into careers in the publishing industry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander editors
- a coordinated National Plan for Books and Reading.

Particularly important to me, personally, are state schools having access to author visits, and state schools having teacher-librarians and well-stocked libraries, with access to professional

development. These embed a love of reading and culture where books are valued. Helping children find the right book at the right time is a gift.

We know that literary festivals and events are vital to connect readers, writers and communities. My entire writing career, I have been supported by local writers' centres and organisations, Australian small presses, and journals and magazines that offered me pathways for new work. Here in Meanjin/Brisbane I feel so lucky to be part of a thriving literary culture centred around bookshops and festivals. These places and their workers deserve funding that recognises the vital spaces they offer writers and readers.

I look forward to the coming years where Australian stories, ideas and knowledge are created, published, discovered, read and valued. So many brilliant creatives are working in the Australian literary landscape in 2026 – it is easy to get excited. But writing happens when authors, illustrators, journals, publishers and festivals are funded – they cannot do it alone. Another consideration is the Cultural Olympiad for Brisbane 2032 where highlighting Australian stories will be vital.

My thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

