

Australian Young Adult Literature Alliance Ltd. “LoveOzYA”



Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation May 24, 2026

The **Australian Young Adult Literature Alliance**, known popularly as **LoveOzYA**, is a national organisation connecting more readers with Australian youth literature. Our purpose is to:

- Promote national and international awareness of Australian YA books and Australian authors of youth and teen literature
- Encourage readers of all ages to discover and read Australian youth literature
- Undertake collaborative initiatives with institutions in the education and arts and cultural sectors, including schools, publishers, booksellers, libraries, arts and cultural organisations and communities
- Advocate for diversity, success and reputation of Australian YA authors and Australian youth literature in all its varied forms

LoveOzYA strongly supports the development of a National Plan for Reading as a priority action of the next National Cultural Policy.

We endorse the recommendations advanced by Books Create Australia and Australia Reads calling for coordinated national investment in reading, Australian books and literary culture.

- **Declining reading engagement among young people should be treated as a national cultural, educational and social emergency.**

At a time of rapid technological change and the proliferation of generative AI, reading plays a critical role in developing the human capabilities Australia will increasingly need: critical thinking, judgement, empathy, attention, creativity and emotional literacy.

Reading for pleasure is linked to stronger school achievement across all subject areas, including mathematics, as well as improved employment and career outcomes.¹

Reading also supports teenagers' social and emotional development, helping young people explore identity, relationships, and values.²

And yet, as cited by Australia Reads, one in three Australian students cannot read proficiently, 30% of Australians did not read or listen to a book last year, and one in four Australian children does not receive a bedtime story at home³.

¹ Cited in Rutherford, Leonie, Merga, Margaret Kristin and Singleton, Andrew 2018, Influences on Australian adolescents' recreational reading, *The Australian journal of language and literacy*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 44-56.

² Howard, V. 2011, The importance of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens: Self-identification, self-construction and self-awareness, *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 46-55.

³ Cited in Australia Reads, 2026, National Cultural Policy Submission, <https://australiareads.org.au/news/national-cultural-policy-submission-2026/>

- **Australian young people deserve access to Australian stories.**

Young readers need to see their lives, communities and concerns reflected in the books available to them. Australian YA literature helps young people understand themselves and the society around them. It builds empathy, cultural understanding and connection across difference. Australian-authored narratives allow Australian teens to self-conceptualise and to explore and interrogate Australian identity.

The US publishing industry is colossal in comparison to Australia's. The YA book market is crowded with US titles which dominate media coverage and shelf space.

In crowding out our stories and our landscapes, international books are silent on Australian life. They provide little that resembles the experience of young people living in regional towns, or with disabilities, or in homes where English is the second language.

The more diverse the stories that are published, the wider the scope of teen experiences captured. This supports young people to arrive at a nuanced and empathetic insight into the experiences of people from minority and diverse backgrounds.

It's not only vital to have good home-grown narratives, but to ensure the home-grown narratives authentically reflect the entirety of *who we are*.

- **The careers of Australian YA authors are at risk**

International publishing and digital platforms dominate retail visibility, online discovery and recommendation algorithms. Australian YA authors typically receive small advances and low royalties, and many rely on school visits, festivals, libraries and teaching work to sustain careers.

At the same time, schools, libraries and independent bookshops — the infrastructure that connects young readers with Australian stories — are operating under growing financial pressure.

Schools and libraries are an essential component of any meaningful plan to address the income security of Australian children's and YA authors, yet these sectors do not have an easy mechanism for engaging on a policy level with the arts and creative industries.

Children and young people as audiences have little if any direct voice, or even effective representation, at state or federal level for arts policy, strategy and funding.

Commonwealth and state arts agencies tend to focus on cultural production, primarily artists and institutions. Young readers have no effective advocate in these domains, neither do the schools and libraries sector who engage more extensively with young readers than cultural organisations do.

Without intervention, Australia risks losing both a generation of YA writers and a generation of young readers connected to Australian stories, perspectives and experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Fund a National Plan for Reading with dedicated actions for children and young people.**
- **Increased investment in Australian literature through Writing Australia, including targeted support for YA authors, school libraries and youth literary organisations**
- **Develop an Art in Schools policy that prioritises arts and humanities education for children and young people, that provides meaningful employment for writers and promotes Australian literature for young people**
- **Dedicated funding for First Nations authors, illustrators, editors and publishers, including First Nations-led publishing organisations and reading programs**
- **Ensure local government, the jurisdiction of our essential public library network and youth engagement programs, has formal representation in the Cultural Ministers Council or any revitalized national cultural governance frameworks.**
- **Foster stronger cross-government relationships between Arts and: Education, Health, Indigenous Australians, Skills and Training, Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, Youth and Early Childhood Education**

The Australian YA stories available to young Australians help shape how they understand themselves, each other and the nation. The capabilities built from reading help young people resist misinformation, disinformation and manipulation. If we want informed civic participation and a strong democracy, we need a nation of readers.

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