

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472437

Public

Individual

Susan Francis



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Office for the Arts

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,

Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

GPO Box 594 | CANBERRA ACT 2601



23 May 2026

I am a late to it stage age author of two traditionally published books, many short stories and nonfiction pieces and feel much gratitude to have been published in my late fifties, and again when I turned sixty-four. I live alone and support my life, and my writing as a part time tutor, but as you can imagine, earning under \$40,000 annually does not stretch far. My two biggest concerns are the encroachment of AI and frankly, to make enough money to be able to keep writing. The Lending Rights initiative has been the most consistent income stream for me in terms of my writing. With royalties only twice a year, and dependent on earning out an advance, which is of course taxed, as is any prize money, writing is a precarious living.

I am also grateful for the initiatives introduced in Revive to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of Revive, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia.

I am calling for:

- Direct investment in authors and illustrators via:
 - o Multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career authors by providing them with time to write.
 - o Seed money for emerging writers.
 - o A top up to the Lending Rights budget.
 - o A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.
- Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.
- Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies operating within Australia. For instance:
 - o Transparency on copyright inputs for, and outputs from, generative AI models.
 - o Research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers and Australian cultural output.
 - o Structural solutions to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders.
- Tax reform to support author careers including tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.
- Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver:

- o Increased coordination between federal and state funding.
- o Commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the book industry.
- o Express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that:
 - Authors and illustrators engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or above, ASA recommended rates
 - Generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
- o Coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.
- Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:
 - o Nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets.
 - o Reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Francis