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I am an award-winning writer of literary fiction and my novels are published in Australia and internationally.

Like many authors, I have been alarmed by the rise of AI and the theft of authors' writing to train language models. I am dismayed that my novels are among the many that have been stolen.

The writing world faces numerous challenges, among them the decline in reading skills and cognitive thinking in students – the result of overreliance on AI summaries and reading short social media posts. For instance, teachers at elite US colleges suggest that many students have lost the ability to read for extended periods and are unable to identify or compare the ideas presented in books, or to read critically. Reading levels are declining and students are losing the ability to process written information, with some students watching summaries on YouTube instead of reading. I imagine the situation is similar in Australia or soon will be.

Clearly this is in part an educational issue, but it also reflects a decline in the status of books and reading. The impacts, says the author of one paper, amount to 'a civilizational catastrophe' that will affect society and, in the end, a nation's productivity. Books create thinking, creative people. Supporting writers and writing supports Australia.

It should go without saying that writers are a key part of a multi-million dollar industry in Australia. This industry creates and supports thousands of jobs in many areas, the loss of which would be financially and socially catastrophic. The arts are the soul of a country, reflecting its values and heart.

Australia Council grants have made an enormous difference in my writing life, as they do in any author's. They provide the time to create without the disruption of chasing other work, but their value is significantly reduced by their being taxable income. Ideally, they would support a writer over two years, not the single year in which they are paid. Instead, they become part of a writer's taxable income and much of their value is lost.

Many talented writers miss out on grants despite repeated applications, itself a time-consuming process. A more equitable system of multi-year fellowships supporting mid-career writers would provide certainty and the time to write. Ireland is the benchmark in this space. For every €1 invested, [wider society received €1.39](#) in return. The program more than pays for itself. Canada is considering adopting this model and Australia should too. An

increase to Lending Rights author/illustrator payments would also be a welcome mechanism for boosting incomes.

Writers are unlikely to win prizes, but if they do, must declare that income. There is no requirement for winners of lotteries or prizes in game shows to declare their winnings as income, unless they do this regularly. The suggestion is that for authors prize money is a regular part of their income. (This is not a joke.) The inconsistency here should be addressed. I support a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.

Seed money for emerging writers, including in Australia's rich diversity of cultural communities is desperately needed. Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing should also be a priority. Australians need to read and hear these voices, in part to address the rising tide of racism in this country.

As other writers have previously noted, schools programs are a useful income source for authors and illustrators. As a matter of social equity, these need to be government funded since these visits are less affordable for budget-stressed state schools.

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

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Treloar