

COURIER ADDRESS

UNSW Randwick Campus
Building R1F
22-32 King St
Randwick NSW 2031 Australia

POSTAL ADDRESS

University of New South Wales
Sydney NSW 2052 Australia
[REDACTED]
ABN 40 000 382 669

<https://unsw.press>

SUBMISSION: National Cultural Policy

From: UNSW Press Ltd
NewSouth Publishing — NewSouth Books — UNSW Bookshop
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Who we are:

The operations of University of New South Wales Press Limited (UNSW Press Ltd) span three inter-connected areas:

- book publishing under the UNSW Press and NewSouth imprints
- distribution and representation in Australia for local and international publishers
- retail bookselling through UNSW Bookshop on the Kensington campus in Sydney.

Given this broad experience in the publishing and retail sector, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the National Cultural Policy.

Operating since 1962 as a company limited by guarantee, UNSW Press Ltd is a wholly owned entity of UNSW. The UNSW Press constitution requires that its income be applied to furthering the objectives of the company.

The mission of UNSW Press is to contribute to intellectual and cultural development in a sustainable environment by providing publishing and bookselling services which will promote the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and scholarship and enhance the international reputation of UNSW.

A bibliographic listing of all titles published since 1962, including many significant award-winning books, is featured in *UNSW Press A History 1962–2012* and it is available at <https://unsw.press/about/>

As an Australian university press, we have a strong commitment to publishing Australian research and defining Australian experiences. We strive to bring stories to Australian audiences and to readers around the world. Most of the books published in recent decades are by Australian authors, including by First Nations authors and contributors, debut and emerging writers.

Our resilience, enthusiasm and commitment to the skilled work we do is evident across all areas of the business.

The company has an excellent reputation for publishing Australian narrative non-fiction for a broad readership, books published in partnership with libraries and museums, and scholarly titles. Releasing about 35 books a year, it is active in biography, Australian history, First Nations history, military history, politics, philosophy, popular science, art and design.

NewSouth Books is a top tier supplier of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's books, academic monographs, professional and specialist books to the Australian book trade. Its wide range of lists is available in retail outlets, including chain stores, independent booksellers, online booksellers, educational and library wholesalers, museums and galleries.

NewSouth Books currently provides sales and distribution services for Australian publishers such as CSIRO Publishing, National Library of Australia, Aboriginal Studies Press, Monash University Publishing, Giramondo, Transit Lounge, Wombat Books and Puncher & Wattmann.

UNSW Press retains responsibility for management of UNSW's bookshop, as well as its online retail facility (which is currently being upgraded). It works with university stakeholders to ensure the Bookshop's educational, social and cultural contribution to campus life remains significant.

UNSW Bookshop provides a curated range of books and targeted services in a welcoming and stimulating environment. It is a popular venue for author events and book clubs and regarded as a base for members of the university and broader community to meet and engage with one another.

UNSW Press is a fully accredited member of the Association of University Presses, an international community of publishing professionals and institutions committed to the highest calibre of research-based scholarship. UNSW Press is also a member of the Australian Publishers Association and the Australian Booksellers Association and notes their submissions to the National Cultural Policy consultation.

Based on our extensive experiences in the sector, there is widespread support across several generations for active development of a National Plan for Books and Reading, which should lie at the heart of a contemporary national cultural policy.

Current challenges:

Our capacity to publish our own list, as well as represent, distribute and sell books by other independent Australian publishers is being directly impacted by:

- rising production costs, especially printing, paper and freight;
- pressure on margins;
- difficulty achieving viable print runs, without external financial subsidy, grants or philanthropic support;
- high investment risk for new Australian titles;
- undercapitalisation of independent publishers and independent booksellers;
- high cost of upgrading digital infrastructure to remain financially viable and compliant;
- market concentration and discoverability challenges;
- reduced long-form review and media coverage;
- school and library purchasing pressures;
- piracy, unauthorised copying and AI scraping;
- challenges in exporting Australian books;
- soft or declining reading participation;
- difficulty sustaining culturally important but commercially marginal titles.

What we support and what government should do

UNSW Press supports further exploration of the initiatives outlined in more detail in submissions from the Australian Publishers Association and the Australian Booksellers Association.

A few are highlighted in this submission that would have positive long-term and tangible benefits:

- An Australian Book Fund to assist with the development of new Australian works, First Nations publishing, culturally significant books, literary journals, promotion, discoverability and accessibility.
- Increased support for Public Lending Right and Educational Lending Right across print and digital formats.
- Investment in national book data, metadata, rights and supply-chain infrastructure. It is vital for the industry and government to continue investing in refreshing legacy data systems across the Australian book supply chain. This increases visibility for Australian books, reducing ordering costs and environmental wastage. It creates a robust technological base for Australian companies to compete globally.
- Copyright and AI settings based on consent, licensing, fair payment, transparency and enforcement. Like most small to medium-sized independent publishers, we have limited means to manage an escalating number of copyright infringement and piracy matters largely relating to AI systems.
- A dedicated Books Australia export and rights program. While UNSW Press invests in representation at the London and Frankfurt Books Fairs annually and has benefited from small government grants at various times to help support this activity, we do not generally have the resources and capacity to attend other international book fairs and further develop these global networks. We need to improve access for independent Australian companies to international sales and licensing channels.
- Funding for accessible publishing and inclusive book discovery so readers with disability and other access needs can read Australian books in suitable formats.
- Funding to support bookshop event delivery including author events, in-house book clubs, workshops, story times, and other community programs. This benefits audiences and the entire literature ecosystem, including authors, moderators and publishers.
- A stronger role for Writing Australia, with major books-and-reading measures funded separately and at the scale required.

What would improve

A cultural policy that acknowledges and addresses these issues, would assist to give companies like ours capacity to invest in Australian authors and titles; a stronger local intellectual property framework; more diverse Australian books to publish, distribute and sell; improved viability for small and independent publishers; stronger First Nations publishing; better educational resources; greater export potential; more resilient book supply chains; better discoverability of Australian books; and, most importantly for a democratic future, a stronger reading culture.

We have achieved so much in our innovative Australian book industry in the past 50 years. In this time of rapid technological and social change, let's make sure we build on this foundation and get the potential benefits as writers, publishers, creators and readers.

Sincerely,



KATHY BAIL
Chief Executive Officer
UNSW Press Ltd

