

Mascara is an online literary journal that publishes excellent Australian writing, platforming & canvassing diversity. *Mascara* was established 18 years ago. It is one of Australia's foundational literary journals for the presentation & promotion of First Nations writers, CaLD writers, translators, and refugee writers.

Mascara has long held an Australian & international reputation having published writers such as Ocean Vuong, Behrouz Boochani, David Malouf, Fatima Bhutto & Edwidge Danticat. *Mascara* was the first Australian publication to publish Ellen van Neerven, Behrouz Boochani and Omar Musa. *Mascara's* track record has focused on writing and books by First Nations, CaLD, regional writers and writers with disability. Developing layered critical readings of books that are overlooked, sidelined or even neglected is a form of advocacy we have used to empower minorities and writers in regional areas.

This literary work is extremely important in uplifting writing from the margins, minorities, migrants and working-class writers. It contributes to harmony and social cohesion. Without cultural storytelling marginalised communities have a restricted and limited sense of belonging and fulfilment. It is the cumulative effect of all the spread of reviews and articles *Mascara* publishes that makes a difference, putting pressure on conservative frameworks within our sector to allow space for diverse voices.

However, for the last 19 years *Mascara* has been run for the most part by voluntary staff, who receive honorariums only. We have signed Diversity Australia's joint submission but would like to add the following:

Given the role of Writers Australia, as determined by Government in the National Cultural Policy (see page 69), the **top priority** that Writers Australia should focus on:

1. Specific strategic initiatives for the CaLD community with protected grant streams that recognises the extent to which structural discrimination impacts writers and editors of colour. By structural discrimination we refer to the disproportionately low representation of our cohort in universities, institutions, writers' festivals, publishing houses, media, paid literary editing positions compared to the demographics of the Australian nation. We also refer to the complete absence of means testing of Government spending that has been allocated to the literary arts, augmenting these barriers.

What are the measures of success *Mascara Literary Review* wants to have in place when Writers Australia is evaluated in 2026?

1. Minimum payment rates for editors of colour must be enabled, preferably by policy as a matter of urgency to support the survival of small organisations such as *Mascara Literary Review* which has been at the forefront of platforming POC writers, and publishing criticism of First Nations and POC publications.

2. Four-year Multi-Year investment grants should not require organisations to have a minimum \$100k per annum eligibility requirement. This effectively excludes small literary

organisations who are not affiliated with institutions, yet who are often undertaking vital, generative work to create opportunities for emerging and marginalised writers.

3. Creative Australia and Writing Australia should disclose all philanthropy with transparency on its website. The donors should sign disclosures, and they should not be involved in decision-making with respect to the outcomes of grant funding of public funds.