

## Submission to the 2026 National Cultural Policy Consultation

### Thames & Hudson Australia

Thames & Hudson Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government's consultation on the next National Cultural Policy.

Thames & Hudson is Australia's leading illustrated book publisher, specialising in visual arts, architecture, photography, design, craft, culture, children's publishing and Indigenous storytelling. Through books, we help preserve, interpret and share Australian cultural identity both domestically and internationally.

Since its founding, Thames & Hudson has been guided by the philosophy of a "museum without walls" — the idea that books democratise access to art, ideas and culture by making them available beyond the physical confines of galleries, institutions and metropolitan centres. This mission remains highly relevant today.

Our publishing supports Australian artists, curators, writers, museums, galleries, educators and cultural institutions. We play an important role in elevating Australian visual culture and bringing Australian stories, ideas and creative practice to audiences nationally and internationally. This includes significant work supporting First Nations artists and communities through high-quality illustrated publishing that preserves and shares Indigenous knowledge, language, history and artistic practice.

Illustrated publishing creates substantial cultural value, but it also faces unique commercial pressures. High-quality visual books require significant upfront investment in editorial development, design, colour reproduction, image licensing, printing and freight. These books are expensive to manufacture and distribute, particularly in Australia given our geographic isolation and relatively small domestic market.

Over recent years, rising international freight costs, print costs, warehousing expenses and supply-chain pressures have materially increased the risk associated with publishing Australian illustrated books. At the same time, Australian publishers face growing pressure from parallel importation and offshore online retailers selling directly into the Australian market at heavily discounted prices, often without contributing to local cultural investment, marketing, employment, tax or infrastructure.

This weakens the commercial sustainability of Australian publishing and undermines local investment in Australian authors, artists and intellectual property.

We strongly support the APA's call for a National Plan for Books and Reading, including:

- a dedicated Australian Book Fund;
- stronger export and international rights support through Books Australia;
- investment in supply-chain and discoverability infrastructure;
- support for culturally significant publishing, including First Nations publishing;
- copyright and AI protections based on consent, licensing and fair remuneration.

We also believe there is a particular opportunity for government to better recognise illustrated publishing and visual arts publishing as an important part of Australia's broader cultural and creative industries strategy.

Australian illustrated books act as enduring cultural ambassadors. They support tourism, education, museums, galleries and international cultural diplomacy. They also create export opportunities through international rights licensing and co-edition publishing, helping Australian artists and stories reach global audiences.

Government support for export market development, international rights promotion and cultural export initiatives would significantly strengthen the global reach of Australian publishing and Australian visual culture.

Books remain one of the most accessible and enduring cultural forms. In an increasingly digital world, illustrated books continue to hold particular importance as physical cultural objects; collected, gifted, displayed, preserved and shared across generations.

A strong National Cultural Policy should recognise that Australian publishing is not simply a commercial activity. It is essential cultural infrastructure.

Support for Australian publishing is support for Australian culture itself.

Sincerely,

Daniel Watts  
Managing Director  
Thames & Hudson Australia  
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