

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Independent Publishers Network Australia

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I write as Chair of the Independent Publishers Network Australia (IPNA), representing over 100 small and independent publishers (founded as the Small Press Network in 2006).

We have been involved in discussions pertaining to Books Create Australia's call for a National Plan for Books and Reading, and we support this approach.

Our organisation has a particular focus on encouraging the development of an increasingly diverse body of publishers and published voices within our nation. We endorse the spirit and broad goals of Revive's pillar 2.

IPNA's members range from very small or micro publishers of niche subjects or genres, through small and medium teams seeking to compete and grow within the marketplace of Australia's book and magazine retail sector, and up to large, established Australian publishing firms.

As our name suggests, we seek to encourage and facilitate the building of networks, shared knowledge and forms of cooperation – consistent with the principles of fair competition – to provide pathways into the publishing industry; skills and resources to enable faster company growth and to avoid the endless 'forgetting' of corporate and industry lessons; to reduce costs through group negotiation and bargaining; and to promote the value of supporting diverse local voices.

Common challenges faced by our members include:

- gaining access to relevant knowledge and training;
- rising input costs across the supply chain, an issue impacting publishers in direct proportion to their size and thus experienced most acutely by the smallest publishers, with their relatively higher unit costs;
- reduced local print options;
- volume-linked and capital-linked distribution disadvantages;
- running effective marketing and publicity campaigns within a new media landscape dominated by Big Tech and, not coincidentally, rapidly transitioning from locally centred media;
- and the acquisition of cost-effective, professional standard e-infrastructure.

Alongside these uncertainties are macro-level challenges to long-form reading, observed in numerous research studies and data from many contemporary societies.

We find it encouraging that the Government is listening to our industry and that peak bodies within the industry are working together, as appropriate, to find ways of strengthening the production, reading and discussion of long-form writing and publishing in this nation: the value of which we all seem to agree.

IPNA believes there is a need for government and our industry to continue to actively facilitate forms of collective negotiation, such as in the acquisition of print services and paper stock, to enable lower unit costs for smaller publishers and more effective competition and diversity within the sector.

And we would like to see increased support at the local level to help our industry express the value of culturally distinct voices and operations would yield an exponential return for our society by strengthening social cohesion and pride in Australian identity and lifting consumption and production of Australian literary and other long-form writing.

Nathan Hollier