

24 May 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I make this submission to the Australian Cultural Policy 2026 as a mid-career author of four works of fiction and creative nonfiction, as a frequent judge and peer assessor of creative works and research for organisations including Writing Australia and the National Library of Australia, and as a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Technology Sydney.

First, I wish to support and amplify the key points made by the Australian Society of Authors in its submission. It requests that the next cultural policy deliver:

- Direct investment to authors and illustrators (via multi-year fellowship support for mid-career authors, seed money for emerging writers, a top up of the Lending Rights budget, and a basic income pilot for 300 authors);
- Investment for First Nations writing and publishing;
- Solutions to the theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies operating in Australia;
- Tax reform in regard to authors' careers (such as making literary prizes tax-free);
- Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia; and
- Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian artists and careers.

As a creative writing academic who has worked in Australian tertiary institutions for over thirty years, I wish to expand on this last point. Over my career I have witnessed **the vital importance of humanities and writing degrees in the development hundreds of writers and books**. While it is important to support a range of other mechanisms such as grants, mentorships and grass-roots writing workshops, **tertiary education in writing and thinking does very heavy lifting in supporting and feeding the cultural sector**, not only in terms of acting as a vital spawning-ground of writers who are able to make important and informed interventions in telling Australian stories, but in growing audiences for them (Pillar 6). While government- and sector-led programs to promote reading are helpful, I would argue that **the most important and long-lasting development of networks of writers and readers occur in the tertiary sector**. It has been distressing to observe the great damage to the continuity of teaching and learning in the arts and humanities that has been caused by the Job-ready Graduates Package. In my view, not abolishing Job-ready Graduates was the fundamental flaw of Revive and, as a writer, teacher, and reader, I would find it hard to have faith in a new cultural policy unless it repeals Job-ready Graduates under Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure and directs funding to tertiary arts and humanities specifically to redress this damage.

Second, I ask those working to frame the new policy to explicitly address freedom of expression as a vital to the health of Australian culture. The Australian cultural industries have been deeply traumatised and damaged since Revive by heavy-handed government interventions into the decisions of grant bodies, research bodies, and festivals; damage that has been compounded by interventions by universities' and state boards into artistic decisions and which occurs in the context of a drive internationally towards increasing censorship. While I was cheered by the new Federal commitment to supporting the independence and freedom of libraries to control their collections without interference, announced at the NSW Literary Awards this week, I request that **further commitments are made in the new cultural policy in regard to respecting the expression of a multiplicity of views and supporting and respecting the decisions of expert panels** under both Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story and Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist. Pillar 2 must commit fearlessly to telling every story to promote a robust literary culture while Pillar 3 is only meaningful if artists are also respected, in arms-length processes, as judges and experts in literary culture.

Thirdly, in respect of the Pillar 3, I also urge those framing the Cultural Policy to undertake a review of the boards of our major cultural institutions with the aim of designing mechanisms and inducements to assure artist representation, so that artists are not token members but strongly represented. Centrality of the Artist cannot be taken seriously as a pillar unless artists are also central to—and take the lead in—decision-making.

Finally, as I did in my submission to the previous Cultural Policy, I urge you to consider the means by which our cultural and environmental heritage can be explicitly supported and for this to be tied to sustained funding. I would urge you to:

- Incorporate culture-keeping institutions such as the National Archives, National Film and Sound Archive, and libraries into your definition of culture with distinct plans and commit to long-term sustained funding for supporting and activating cultural heritage.

Project Ireland 2040, which allocated EURO 1.2 billion to safeguarding cultural and archaeological collections and enhancing cultural infrastructure offers strong leadership in this regard;

- Explicitly centre the importance of Australia's diverse environmental heritage in your definitions of both 'place' and 'culture'—and, guided by First Nations leadership, consider both discursive and practical ways in which stewardship of the environment and its nonhuman lifeforms can be a proud and central part of Australian stories. I would ask you to follow the lead of UNESCO and the EU in mandating the protection of biocultural heritage as part of the cultural policy.

Yours faithfully,

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