



Office for the Arts
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594 | CANBERRA ACT 2601

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I write regarding the proposed **National Cultural Policy** both on behalf of the [Australian Association for Literary Translation Inc \(AALITRA\)](#) as its current President and as an award-winning literary translator (Spanish to English).

The Australian Association for Literary Translation Inc is a national organisation whose purpose is to promote an interest in all aspects of literary translation. We pursue this goal in multiple ways. We sponsor public lectures, symposia and other events concerned with literary translation. We distribute news of events, conferences and other initiatives relevant to translators. We publish an online journal ([The AALITRA Review](#)) carrying peer-reviewed articles and translations. We maintain a [database](#) of Australian literary translators. We periodically offer [translation awards](#) on the basis of a competition for the best translation of a short prose text or a selected poem from a designated LOTE.

The creation of a National Cultural Policy is to be applauded, and we are grateful for the initiatives already introduced in *Revive*, particularly in light of the limited opportunities available to writers. What does seem to be lacking in the current cultural policies of both government and non-government arts-focused bodies, however, is a recognition of the critical role and contribution of literary translation and translators to Australia's literary culture. Rarely do the words "literary translation" or "literary translators" even appear in these documents.

Literary translators can only hope that they, in fact, are included in – and recognised under – the broad category of "writers". For literary translators are writers or re-writers, and literary translation is a creative practice. But nowhere is this clearly stated, so this at best leaves us with the option of endlessly having to inquire if we are eligible to apply for opportunities promoted as available to "writers".

The members of AALITRA (and literary translators generally) find this both surprising and disappointing given that Australia prides itself on being a diverse, multicultural and multilingual country – something *Revive* seemingly acknowledges in several of its five pillars. Literary translation is a powerful tool in facilitating a better understanding of non-English-speaking societies and cultures in Australia and world-wide increasingly available, which can only help to mitigate the excesses of the current debate about immigration.

While AALITRA recognises that recently there have been advances for literary translators in certain areas, there have also been steps backward in others. On the plus side, Creative Australia has provided new initiatives which benefit Australian literary translators (such as the translation grants available to publishers looking to publish translations of works

by Australian authors into Languages Other Than English [LOTE], as long as the publishers contract Australian translators). And UWA School of Humanities has recently established the Jaccomard Literary Translation Residency – an initiative to be applauded!

On the minus side, however, there are currently very few opportunities for residencies, prizes, awards or grants specifically open to literary translators or for literary translation. Indeed, those that are available are primarily offered and subsidised by non-government organisations such as The Australian Academy for the Humanities (a biennial award) or by the occasional State government, such as the biennial NSW Premier’s Translation Prize. The NSW prize is to be commended, especially given that a Victorian Premier’s Prize for Literary Translation has not been offered since 2003.

The Prime Minister’s Literary Awards, which “celebrate the exceptional talents of emerging and established Australian writers, illustrators, poets, and historians”, neither mentions translators nor does it include literary translation as one of the award categories despite the fact that literary translation does “offer new (and otherwise unavailable) ways to think about the world around us” ([Winona Byrne, Director, Writing Australia, acknowledging the 2025 winners](#)).

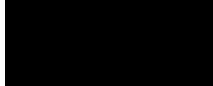
So, AALITRA would like to see the following included in the National Cultural Policy:

- **visible** recognition and promotion of literary translators and their critical contribution to the cultural life of Australia -- ideally in all cultural policies and documents;
- increased **funding** of prizes, awards, grants and residencies specifically targeted at literary translators, whether they are translating into or from English;
- **establishment, (partial) funding and promotion** of an annual Australian Book Fair similar to those held in the UK, Europe, the USA, and Latin America where publishers and literary agents could promote and sell “foreign” rights to works by their writers. Such a Book Fair (which usually has an annual guest country as its focus) could either be tacked on to one of Australia’s significant Writers’ Festivals or become part of the annual Australian publishers’ conference. Many countries offer grants to enable their own publishers and agents to attend such events and, more to the point for an organisation such as AALITRA, many of these book fairs include a day dedicated solely to literary translation;
- funding to enable literary translators and their work to feature more prominently in Writers’ Festivals and similar events (e.g. sessions which feature both writers and their translators together; Translation Slams such as were featured in the recent Melbourne Writers’ Festival; conversations with translators about their craft). These have proven very popular where they have been introduced; and,
- a statement of the importance to the Australian Government of protecting the copyright of all writers from AI, including those of literary translators.

AALITRA supports the submissions of Creative Australia, Australia Reads, the Australian Society of Authors the Australian Publishers Association. We note, however, that even in these submissions there is no specific mention of literary translation, an area which we believe all such organisations, and publishers and authors in particular, should promote and support as it can only benefit them, and all Australians.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Lilit Žekulin THWAITES, on behalf of AALITRA

President, [Australian Association for Literary Translation Inc \(AALITRA\)](http://aallitra.org.au)

