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I am an author of fiction. My debut novel, *The Skeleton House*, won the 2023 Fogarty Literary Award and was shortlisted for the WA Premier's Book Awards. I hold an MA and BA in Creative Writing, and my short work has been published in journals and anthologies in Australia and internationally. Despite these successes, I have never been able to rely on writing as a reliable income stream. My husband is also an award-winning author, but between us, we have three day jobs unrelated to writing to support our household. Our writing careers are shoved into the tiny margins of our life. We persist, but we are exhausted from the unrelenting pressure to produce art for pennies, and the lack of protection against the theft of our intellectual property.

Literature and books are vital to a good life and are an essential part of the Australian cultural landscape. Humanity is facing complex, difficult challenges such as geopolitical instability, climate change, the regression of human rights, rising inequality and cost of living, and the ever-growing power and wealth of billionaires and tech oligarchs who flaunt the law and face no repercussions. We need the arts to help us navigate and make sense of these challenges. Literature is uniquely situated to explore complex issues and research shows that fiction helps us develop empathy and critical thinking skills. During times of trouble, people turn to the arts for comfort, understanding, and escapism. We read poems at funerals; we use stories to make sense of our experiences.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in *Revive* to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of *Revive*, authors have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry in Australia.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and support its submission which includes the following requests:

- Direct investment in authors and illustrators through initiatives such as:
 - Multi-year fellowships to support mid-career authors by providing them with time to write.
 - Seed money for emerging writers.
 - A top up to the Lending Rights budget.
 - A basic income pilot, involving 300 authors.
- Investment in First Nations-led writing and publishing.
- Solutions to the unprecedented theft of Australian authors' work by multinational tech companies operating within Australia. For instance:
 - Transparency on copyright inputs for, and outputs from, generative AI models.
 - Research into the impact of generative AI on creative careers and Australian cultural output.

- Structural solutions to bring multinational AI companies to the licensing table with Australian rightsholders, and hold them to account.
- Tax reform to support author careers – in particular, tax-free literary prizes and grants, and a tax-free threshold for writers and illustrators.
- Adequate resourcing for Writing Australia to deliver:
 - Increased coordination between federal and state funding.
 - Commissioning of critically-needed research to provide baseline data from which to measure impact for the book industry.
 - Express guarantees included in every funding grant, ensuring that:
 - Authors and illustrators engaged in funded projects will be paid at, or above, ASA recommended rates
 - Generative AI will not be used to replace or diminish the role of human creators in government-funded projects.
 - Coordination of a book-to-screen pipeline.
- Commitment to educational interventions that support Australian authors and writing careers:
 - Nationwide authors-in-schools program funded out of education budgets.
 - Reversal of the failed Job-Ready Graduates program.

I acknowledge the comprehensive 29-page report submitted by the Society of Authors which includes the following graphic under the section titled “Authors are the primary producers who drive the creative economy” (p.6), which illustrates the magnitude of impact authors have on the arts industry. If authors are not supported, every single one of these other professions suffer:



I have devoted my life to literature; as a small child, I discovered the magic of reading, and English was my favourite and best subject in school. I pursued degrees in Creative Writing because this is my calling. I have dreamed of being an author since I was a child, but due to the increasing pressures faced by writers, I have had to make difficult choices and compromises, which has slowed my writing progress and reduced the amount of time and energy I have available for writing-related activities.

Writing and other artistic and creative pursuits desperately need support to ensure they are a viable career path, not diminished into a mere hobby for the privileged—or worse, output generated by plagiarism machines.

Yours sincerely,
Katherine Allum