

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a secondary school teacher-librarian with over 20 years experience. Australian students are growing up in a difficult reading and information environment. Reading engagement is weakening, literacy levels are falling, and young people are increasingly surrounded by low-quality synthetic content that can be produced, amplified and circulated at scale.

This makes well-resourced school libraries more important, not less. Students need access to rich, high-quality literature and the guidance of qualified staff who can help them develop reading stamina, cultural knowledge, critical literacy and the capacity to distinguish meaningful, reliable information from synthetic noise.

Well-resourced and professionally staffed school libraries must be recognised as essential cultural infrastructure. For many young people, the school library is their most consistent point of access to high-quality literature, diverse Australian stories, cultural knowledge, creative experiences and the skills needed to participate fully in civic and cultural life. Investment in school libraries is therefore an investment in equity: it ensures that access to books, reading cultures, information literacy, author visits, exhibitions, creative programs and cultural opportunities is not dependent on a student's postcode or family income. A national cultural policy should explicitly support the role of school libraries and qualified teacher librarians in building a strong reading culture and widening every student's access to Australia's cultural life.