

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As a retired academic who maintains a writing practice and has contact with a community of young writers and musicians, I have two areas of concern:

(1) The dispiritingly small attention given to writing and support for writers at a time when literary journals struggle to survive and the precarity of university employment in the humanities makes it less likely that poets and fiction writers can support themselves through teaching. There is an urgent need for the funding of literary publication, and for providing creative writers with financial support. If we are to have Australian literature, we have to change the current situation in which, for a young person, choosing writing as a career is only an option for people with access to ongoing family support.

We also need to make sure that established journals that depend on the support of universities cannot suddenly find themselves without funding, as happened to Meanjin. Such journals are crucial to providing the opportunities for publication that serve to launch a writing career. So too with organizations like Writers Victoria and Australian Poetry, which serve an important role in facilitating creative writing but cannot rely on continuous funding.

Support for writing spaces is also an issue given the cost of rental space in our cities; it is difficult to maintain a creative project in a situation of rental precarity. There is urgent need for material support of the kind available in France or Germany if Australian writing is to flourish.

2. The live music scenes that give character and vibrancy to Australian cities is currently under threat due to the cost of liability insurance for live venues. While this might seem distant from the issues raised about writing, there are parallel material problems relating to the cost of space for rehearsal and performance, which greatly limit opportunity. Economic hardship is undermining the old structures of 'garage bands' that 'end up 'making it' in the music scene. A National Cultural Policy should include support for this area of grass roots cultural production.