



SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY CONSULTATION

Australian Plays Transform (APT) is the only national body dedicated to the development of new Australian plays and playwrights. Formed in 2021 through the merger of Australian Plays and Playwriting Australia, APT carries forward over five decades of sector leadership, including the National Play Festival (est. 1973), more than a decade of First Nations playwriting retreats, and a living digital catalogue of over 2,500 plays representing 1,000 Australian playwrights. As CEO, director, dramaturg and educator, I write on behalf of an organisation that sits at the often-invisible heart of Australia's theatrical ecology.

THE CHALLENGES

Playwriting is a long game. A play takes three to five years from inception to stage, supported by multiple programs, collaborators and organisations along the way. Unlike other literary forms, it cannot be made in isolation; it requires time, space, and the room to work alongside directors, actors and dramaturgs. Yet our funding systems consistently reward production outcomes over this essential long-term development work. The result is a sector that undervalues its own foundations.

Sustaining a career in Australia as a playwright remains difficult. Mid-career playwrights, skilled, experienced, at the peak of their craft, cannot sustain a living wage and drain to screen or overseas.

If plays are not published and protected, they disappear entirely: cultural moments, stories and audiences lost. APT's publishing and licensing function is both a national archive and a source of income for writers, yet it remains chronically underfunded. Our catalogue is not a static database; it is a dynamic, living system that requires ongoing investment to maintain, update and ensure accessibility for diverse communities. Digital infrastructure faces neglect; like a building, it costs money to keep standing. Yet funding models rarely recognise this.

The audience of tomorrow is in school today. Teachers are the largest users of our digital catalogue. Creative education and supporting teachers in including contemporary Australian plays in the classroom are the foundation of a nation that values culture.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM — AND URGENCY

APT welcomed the *Revive* policy in 2023 and the establishment of **Writing Australia** as genuine signals of intent. But policy is not yet money, and for small organisations operating on thin margins, the pace of implementation is dangerously slow. We risk losing the very organisations this policy is designed to sustain while we wait.

OUR ASKS, ALIGNED TO THE PILLARS

First Nations First: Fund partnerships between First Nations companies and other organisations, forming a strong and connected platform for First Nations stories.

Support processes of creation that decentre Western models and honour the sovereignty of First Nations storytelling.

Centrality of the Artist: Establish commissioning models that support mid-career playwrights.

Protect and extend Playwright Intellectual Property and income.

Ensure artists have genuine representation on the boards and bodies that govern their work.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure: Explicitly recognise and fund digital infrastructure.

Engaging the Audience: Invest in drama education and age-appropriate Australian plays in classrooms.

Australia's stories on stage begin with the playwright. Fund the beginning.

Yours sincerely,



Erin Taylor
CEO/Executive Producer
Australian Plays Transform