

National Cultural Policy Submission 2026

School Libraries and qualified library professionals as essential cultural infrastructure.

For: Australian Government - National Cultural Policy Public Consultation 2026

I am [REDACTED] an experienced school library professional with more than 20 years of experience in librarianship, both in Australia and overseas, across school and academic sectors, including over 12 years as a Library Manager in a leading Australian school. I am a member of the Australian Library and Information Association Schools Committee and the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My submission reflects both my professional experience and my ongoing commitment to strengthening equitable access to school libraries for all young Australians.

The National Cultural Policy 2026 presents an important opportunity to recognise school libraries as essential cultural infrastructure and to commit to equitable access to qualified library professionals in every Australian school. School libraries are uniquely positioned to contribute directly to all five pillars of the National Cultural Policy.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

School libraries play a critical role in ensuring young Australians engage meaningfully with First Nations stories, histories, languages, and cultures. Through curated collections, literature, storytelling, and educational programs, school libraries help embed First Nations voices into everyday learning and reading experiences. Qualified library staff ensure these resources are authentic, accessible, and respectfully integrated into school communities.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

School libraries provide free and equitable access to literature representing diverse cultures, identities, experiences, and perspectives. For many students, particularly in regional or disadvantaged communities, the school library may be their primary access point to books, creativity, and cultural participation. Qualified library professionals create inclusive spaces where every student can connect with stories and feel represented.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

School libraries directly support Australian authors, illustrators, publishers, and creatives through book purchasing, literary festivals, author visits, workshops, and residency programs. Libraries help foster the next generation of readers, writers, and creative practitioners while also supporting students to navigate information and digital content critically and ethically.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

School libraries are an existing national infrastructure that has been significantly underfunded

and overlooked for many years. Alarming, some Australian schools no longer have functioning libraries or qualified library staff. A strong national cultural policy must recognise school libraries as foundational cultural institutions that sustain literacy, creativity, and lifelong engagement with culture.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

School libraries create lifelong readers and cultural participants. Qualified teacher librarians and library professionals understand students' interests and connect them with the right stories at the right time. Through reading promotion, literature programs, clubs, and creative initiatives, school libraries ensure young Australians actively engage with Australian stories, ideas, and culture.

With literacy levels and reading engagement declining nationally, school libraries are more important than ever. They remove barriers to reading and cultural participation by providing equitable access to diverse collections, technology, and creative opportunities regardless of postcode or socio-economic background.

The National Cultural Policy 2026 should include:

- a commitment to a well-resourced school library in every Australian school
- national funding for qualified teacher librarians and library professionals
- investment in contemporary, diverse, and culturally inclusive collections
- funding pathways and scholarships for teacher librarian qualifications
- recognition of school libraries as essential cultural infrastructure.

If Australia values literacy, creativity, cultural participation, and informed citizenship, then school libraries and qualified library professionals must be recognised as central to the nation's cultural future.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name and title]