

## National Cultural Policy Submission

1472804

Public

Organisation

University of Melbourne (School of Culture and Communications, Publishing and Communications Program)



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

We write as staff of the Publishing and Communications program at the University of Melbourne. Our long-standing program is deeply embedded in the book industry, and we are proud to train the next generation of creative sector professionals who are eager to step into an industry that defines Australia's culture.

But increasingly students are questioning their career paths as they see the industry shrink – writers and artists threatened by AI, bookshops closing, independent publishing houses subsumed by larger ones, fewer literary journals.

We are grateful for the initiatives introduced in Revive to assist with the sustainability of author and illustrator careers. However, since the introduction of Revive, authors and publishers have been facing increasingly precarious conditions. Australian authors earn an average of only \$18,000 per year from their writing – well below the national average income and well short of a living wage. We have seen three independent Australian publishers bought out over the past two years, leaving fewer avenues to find and nurture writers who can someday join the ranks of our great national storytellers, such as Jane Harper, Trent Dalton, Alexis Wright, Evelyn Araluen, Charlotte Wood, Anna Funder, Tim Winton and Helen Garner. Without immediate support, we risk the viability of the book industry and the potential loss of the critical engine that drives the creation, production and dissemination of Australian books.

We are calling for:

- Support to face the challenges to copyright posed by AI
- Funding for initiatives that support emerging editors, writers and illustrators
- Support for independent publishing initiatives that help to grow opportunities for emerging writers and publishers
- Funding for initiatives that build reading culture, in particular encouraging reluctant, lapsed and non-readers to become active readers.

Our students need to know that their education investment will lead towards sustainable and rewarding creative careers, or we will lose them to other sectors. Support for literature is support for community, literacy, empathy and creativity.

As a program, we support the submissions made by literature advocacy bodies including the Australian Society of Authors, Australian Booksellers Association and Australia Reads.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Bec Kavanagh

Dr Claire Parnell

Dr Fiannuala Morgan

Dr Hollen Singleton

Dr Katherine Day

Dr LJ Maher

Professor Mark Davis

Dr Matt Holden

Dr Nicola Redhouse

Sharon Mullins

Associate Professor Sybil Nolan

Tim Coronel

Tim Fluence