

Office for the Arts
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My name is Alison Evans and I am an award-winning author. I have had three young adult (YA) books published – *Ida* (2017), *Highway Bodies* (2019) and *Euphoria Kids* (2020) with Echo Publishing. My shorter work has been in the anthologies *Avast!* (2024), *Everything Under the Moon* (2023), *Hometown Haunts* (2021) and *Kindred* (2019). In 2024, I co-edited with Michael Earp the first all-transgender Australian anthology of fiction, *Avast!*, published by Fremantle Press. I have won a Victorian Premier's Literary Award (VPLA), the Verandah Prize for Genre Fiction, and have been shortlisted and longlisted for many other awards. I work as a specialist children's bookseller and also in public libraries.

Authors in this country are not paid enough. Despite my success as an author, I work two casual day jobs to support myself. I'm earning well below the median income, and this financial year will be the lowest my author earnings have ever been since before my first book was published in 2017.

Artists cannot survive on grants. Applying for a grant is a gamble – the last grant I applied for (Creative Australia) only funded 17% of projects. Even if you're lucky enough to get a grant, you're only funded for a very short amount of time, in the scheme of things.

We cannot survive on tiny advances for our books. For example, for my third book *Euphoria Kids*, I signed a contract for \$3000. This was paid over three instalments – when I signed the contract (2018), when I delivered the final draft of the manuscript (2019) and upon publication (2020). Even if an author's advance is high, it is paid over 2-3 years.

I remember going to a VPLA awards night and the minister saying that this award supports writers as it is Australia's richest literary prize (\$100,000). This is a lot of money, but it only goes to one lucky author a year. One author is not an industry. The winner also has to pay tax on this amount.

At the start of my career, most of my income would come from running workshops in public libraries and schools. Nowadays, public libraries have their budgets stripped bare and many schools don't even have a library, let alone a staff member to bring authors in to speak to the students.

My situation as an author is precarious and I know this is true for so many other people like me. I am low-income and working class and every year becomes more difficult to be an author financially. The whole industry is operating on a shoestring and I cannot see how it can continue like this in ten, twenty, thirty years. It is not sustainable.

The arts are hugely undervalued in this country – take for example, the fact that this letter won't even be read by human eyes but instead by an AI to summarise. Real change is needed – authors need to be paid more and they need this from government schemes.

A writers' basic income would be the first step in supporting Australian writers. As seen in the trials of this in Ireland, a basic income was a huge success. The scheme generated more than €100 million in social and economic benefits.

Many publishing houses are too small to offer a meaningful advance to authors. I propose that a government scheme be put into place that could essentially “top up” an advance to authors, so that we can make meaningful money from our work.

The Lending Rights (LR) scheme is a life saver every year for me. I would urge the government to increase the amount of money in the scheme to keep in rise with inflation.

I am a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and I support its submission.

Regards,

Alison Evans

