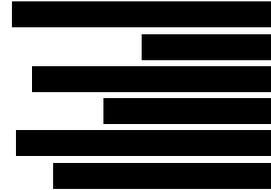


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Submission on National Cultural Policy

I have worked as a professional creative writer since the 1980s, when my first works were published; since then I've published numerous short works, along with 5 books published by esteemed publishers, radio dramas, a digital game and much more. I've been an industry leader in my field of teaching creative writing at a major university, work that I relied on to cover my living costs but which I struggled to combine with my creative work.

Despite my professionalism and my very high level of skills and international experience, I've struggled to make an income from my published and broadcast writing. I've earned royalties and PLR and ELR payments, but essentially fund my writing from my other income sources.

Yet people like me, a professional writer, who are at the heart of our national culture are struggling to make a basic living.

The literature sector needs Government support to reach its full potential and to nurture the talent of the future. There is an exciting opportunity to introduce policy settings to support authors' work, invest in the creative economy and enjoy the cultural, social, educational, health and economic dividends that follow.

A national plan for literature

Literature is the only major art form without a national plan or funding framework through Australia Council. Literary creators need a funding framework which coordinates funding between state and federal levels of government, defines the priorities for the literature sector over the medium and long-term and locks in multi-year funding. Similar to the Funding Frameworks administered by Australia Council for the performing arts, visual arts and crafts, and contemporary music, literature needs its own vision.

Direct investment in authors

- a. Introduce a Commonwealth fellowship and grants program to directly invest in authors.

As the most vulnerable individuals in the entire supply chain, we must prioritise direct investment in our writers. We call for a Commonwealth Fellowships and Grants program which includes a focus on diverse publishing and writing from outer-metropolitan, regional and remote areas designed to fuel the talent pipeline and build the creative economy of the future. We also request support for First Nations mentorships and investment in First Nations-led organisations to develop, publish and promote the work of First Nations writers and illustrators.

b. Ensure public funding is contingent on authors being paid minimum rates of pay

Authors do not fall under the protection of awards or industrial agreements and, as freelancers, have to negotiate on a case by case basis to be paid fairly. The government may assist by ensuring that public funding for projects that engage authors is always contingent on the payment of authors at or above ASA recommended rates of pay.

c. Modernise Australia's lending rights schemes to include digital formats

The Australian Lending Rights schemes (**PLR / ELR**) are world-leading and lauded by authors but, unfortunately, have fallen out of date and require urgent modernisation. Currently, lending rights payments to authors and illustrators are limited to print books and do not include ebooks or digital audiobooks. Changing technology and COVID has seen an enormous shift towards e-borrowing, and an increase in libraries' digital collections. The PLR/ELR schemes must be updated to reflect contemporary library collections which include digital formats in addition to print books. And the budget for PLR / ELR must be increased by at least 20% (\$4.4 million) to allow for existing digital books to be included in the PLR /ELR schemes and forecast growth in digital collections.

d. Roll out a 'Living Wage' pilot scheme over 3 years

We encourage the Government to think boldly about tackling financial insecurity for our authors. We support the introduction of a 'Living Wage' pilot to be rolled out in Australia, similar to the Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme currently being run in Ireland.

Increase support for the literary ecosystem

a. A substantial increase to overall literature funding through Australia Council will provide significant resilience to the literary sector, including to service organisations which support authors, and to literary festivals and journals.

b. An increase in funding for the Australian Bureau of Statistics would allow for much needed data on levels and type of employment, trends, and revenue across the book industry.

Legislative reform which supports creators

a. Establish a working party to examine and introduce author-protective provisions in the Copyright Act.

We encourage the Government to follow European examples of establishing author protections in legislation such as:

- principles requiring appropriate and proportionate remuneration,
- comprehensive and transparent royalty statements, and
- reversion of rights back to the author if the literary or artistic copyright work is not being exploited.

b. Remove tax from literary prizes and Commonwealth grants to authors

c. Maintain a meaningful copyright framework.

Educational policy settings

a. *Essential*: Introduce a minimum threshold of Australian-authored content in schools

b. Roll out an authors-in-schools program to increase income for authors, and deliver to students literacy skills, a deeper connection with books, and expertise on writing.

c. *Essential*: Better support tertiary arts education.

I do give permission for my submission to be made public and published on the Office for the Arts website.

Yours sincerely,

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The Bold Ink Creative Mentoring & Author Services

I live and work on Gadigal and Wangal land.