

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist

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Submission on National Cultural Policy

To whom it may concern

My name is Andy Griffiths. I am an Australian children's author and since 1997 I have written 35 children's books which have been translated into 36 languages and sold more than 12 million copies around the world.

During my self-funded writing 'apprenticeship'—which lasted for a period of at least a decade—I kept my head above water and bought myself time to write (and an invaluable opportunity to meet my audience every day) by working in schools as a visiting author throughout the year. Many of the schools funded the programs themselves, but sometimes Commonwealth and State funding made these visits—and writing festivals— possible, for which I was—and remain—truly grateful. These programs made all the difference to me being able to hang in there as I slowly developed the skills and acquired the experience to learn to write books that connected powerfully with my readership.

I receive letters every week from readers who tell me about how they have been inspired to become writers and illustrators as result of reading my books which gives me great encouragement & hope for the future of original Australian writing. I do fear, however, that without a national plan or funding framework through Australia Council that their road to publication—a challenging road for any emerging author—is being made more difficult than it needs to be.

Authors are at the heart of our national culture but most 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.

Government could greatly assist both emerging and established authors by

a. Introducing a Commonwealth fellowship and grants program to directly invest in authors and make a substantial increase to overall literature funding through Australia Council to provide significant resilience to the literary sector as well as service organisations which support authors, and to literary festivals and journals.

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

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

d. Rolling out a 'Living Wage' pilot scheme over 3 years similar to the Basic Income for the Arts scheme currently being run in Ireland.

e. Removing tax from literary prizes and Commonwealth grants to authors.

f. Introducing a minimum threshold of Australian-authored content in schools.

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

My experience—and a number of other Australian authors—has shown that both Australian and International authors are hungry for quality Australian writing. Please consider giving this industry the support it needs to fully encourage and nurture the talent and enthusiasm of the next generation of writers, and of course, the current one—the majority of whom are fighting hard to make ends meet.

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

Yours sincerely,

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