

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submission on National Cultural Policy

I am an emerging author of one debut novel with a second to be published next year. I am also holding down a full-time job while caring for a toddler with my full-time-working husband.

Being in the business of telling Australian stories to an Australian audience, it is disheartening that our country is still consuming primarily English and American cultural products when there is no shortage of talent in this country.

My first novel sold extremely well by all accounts and yet is nowhere near buying me more free time to develop my craft.

What there is a shortage of, is structures and support to develop the industry when currently being a writer costs the artist dearly, both personally and financially, rather than making them any money to speak of.

It is a privilege to be in a life and financial position stable enough to withstand this in order to pursue a meaningful secondary occupation that I love, creating cultural products that help make up our national story and identity, but artists in other occupations can at least expect to make a basic living from it. This is denied writers despite their commitment to a job that is universally valued and respected.

This new government is making many bold changes in vital areas of our lives. Why not take this rare opportunity for a paradigm shift in one of Australia's most culturally valuable yet lowest paid arts profession?

Particular challenges and opportunities as I see them:

- First Nations: writing takes time and a secure place. This equals money. Without supporting First Nations peoples, many of whom are born into disadvantage, their voices in our national literature are disproportionately silenced.

- The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture. Many Australians feel a greater emotional pull to the landmarks and traditions and classic characters of the American and English landscapes purely because they have experienced them in stories. Those stories, whether filmed or printed, begin as writing. Imagine if Australians saw themselves as worthy of their own classic tales and world-recognised locations and landscapes, because they were represented in a robust national literature on a world stage. Strong novels means more film adaptations at home and abroad; more excellent new novels would mean more of Australia on-screen as well. Imagine if Australian TV was not niche but mainstream.
- Strong institutions, Reaching the audience: The Australian Society of Authors has ably pointed out the lack of support given to writing through institutions in its submission and the opportunities of bolstering and rethinking this. All of its points I support.

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.

I would like to voice wholehearted support for all the ASA's stated policy positions.

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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Emma Young