



Alex Adsett Literary

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National Cultural Policy Submission Alex Adsett Literary

About Alex Adsett Literary

Alex Adsett Literary (AAL) is a full service Australian literary agency, representing a dynamic and diverse range of more than 50 authors and illustrators, who write everything from children's picture books through to genre fiction, to literary and narrative non-fiction. Our stable of authors includes Miles Franklin award winning Melissa Lucashenko, bestselling children's author Isobelle Carmody and journalist Peter Greste, along with many more.

The agency has been managed by principal agent Alex Adsett since 2008 and includes full and part-time staff of five. As well as her role as an agent, Alex is a publishing consultant helping authors who do not have an agent negotiate their publishing contracts, and she regularly speaks on copyright, publishing, and contracts around Australia. Alex has more than 25 years' working in the book publishing industry, sits on the board of the Small Press Network (the peak body for independent publishers in Australia) and is an alumnus of the Australia Council Arts Leadership program.

SUBMISSION

This submission focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing Australia's arts and cultural industries as it relates to the literature sector.

As one of the more dynamic literary agencies operating in Australia, AAL is committed to being part of and building a vibrant, strong and sustainable publishing industry. We see this as defending the rights of Authors, advocating for Australian stories here and overseas, and amplifying the voices of First Nations authors, and authors from underrepresented backgrounds. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the National Cultural Policy, and hope that meaningful Government support, to address some of the challenges the book industry faces, is forthcoming.

Specifically, AAL's role in Australian publishing puts it in a position to respond to each of the five pillars identified as a focus of the consultation.

Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.

Our agency is proud to represent a diverse range of authors, including a strong cohort of remarkable First Nations authors. While it is heartening to see an increase in First Nations authors being published, book publishing in Australia is still predominantly white and middle class – both the authors who are published, and those working within the industry.

To address this challenge, we need government support for affirmative action to promote pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders into publishing. This includes data collection and reporting on the diverse backgrounds of new hires, looking at meaningful wage

increases to new publishing starters, a support network for new hires so that they are not left feeling isolated and exploited, and most importantly, paid internships for First Nations workers to enter the publishing industry. Not just one or two, but a concentrated multi-year project to build a cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island publishers, supported for 12 - 24 months.

Paid internships for First Nation pathways into the publishing industry is a vital step to recognising and celebrating the importance of First Nations voices, and ensuring these voices are the decision makers in promoting new authors and voices to be published.

Ensure that government support reflects the diversity of Australia.

The status quo of white and middle class decision makers on which authors are published needs to be challenged by welcoming in new and diverse publishers with different lived experience. We need paid internships to encourage all underrepresented backgrounds – culturally and linguistically diverse and lower socio-economic – to join the book publishing industry.

Further, additional funding for writers' centres to support emerging writers from underrepresented backgrounds, and increase the number of mentorships, scholarships for writing development courses, and paid writing opportunities for authors coming from areas where we have not yet seen their stories told.

Support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators.

Authors are at the core of the literature sector, and yet their income is often tenuous and paltry. A key part of an author's income is the Lending Rights scheme for educational and public lending rights, currently only applicable to print books. To support authors and truly value the creative work they deliver, it is vital for the Government to extend the ELR and PLR schemes to include digital ebook and audio book lending. As these parts of the sector continue to grow, authors need this share of income more than ever.

Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.

The cultural sector desperately needs more support for the key writing and publishing organisations – the writers' centres in each state, the Small Press Network (SPN), Australian Society of Authors (ASA), Australian Booksellers Association (ABA), and Australian Publishers Association (APA).

While the Australia Council has been doing a sterling job supporting the industry, literature is one of the smallest portions of their budget. The Australia Council needs an overall budget increase, with dedicated increases for literature – targeting authors and small to medium organisations.

Ensure Australian creativity thrives here and abroad in the digitally enabled 21st C

Australian publishers and agents work tirelessly to bring new Australian voices to the fore, showcasing them to Australian readers and the world. During the last two years of the COVID pandemic, Australia's publishing industry has been resilient in its survival, and yet our access to the global publishing industry has been badly damaged.

As powerful as technology has been to keep existing international networks running, nothing is as effective at forging new opportunities as face-to-face meetings. The literary sector needs continued and increased Government funding for international travel for Australian publishers and agents to markets overseas, with a particular focus on returning and increasing the international delegations to the USA, China, India, South America, as previously organised by the Australia Council, and increasing these to markets such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the book fairs in Frankfurt and Bologna. Partnering such delegations with DFAT would also provide valuable cultural diplomacy, as well as economic opportunities.

For more than 10 years, the Australia Council has delivered the incalculably valuable Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program, which brings international publishers to Australia for meetings with industry professionals here. This program has resulted in strong measurable successes each year, and a growing network which pays dividends for years into the future. This vital program needs to be valued and continued.

SUMMARY

The literature sector of the Arts is made up of an intricate eco-system, delivering a world class commercial publishing industry that is respected on the world stage. With increased government support and funding, the publishing industry could grow and thrive in the digital age, and repay any investment in the sector multifold.

1. Paid internships of at least 12 – 24 months to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to work in the book publishing industry.
2. Increased mentorships and writing course scholarships for emerging authors from underrepresented backgrounds.
3. Extend educational and public lending rights programs (ELR and PLR) to digital ebooks and audio books.
4. Increase funding for the Australia Council across the board, but particularly the literature sector, and small to medium organisations.
5. Increase funding for writing sector key organisations (state based writers centres, SPN, ABA, APA, ASA).
6. Increased funding for international publishing delegations to key overseas markets
7. Increased travel funding for publishing industry professionals to target new sub-licensing markets.
8. Continued support for Australia Council Visiting International Publishers program (VIPs).