

National Cultural Policy Submission



This Submission: Books Create Australia congratulates the Minister on initiating the national cultural policy process. Reading and books* are vital to modern Australia: they make the nation happier, smarter, and healthier. They ensure we understand ourselves and the world. In turn, our stories offer others the opportunity to know us. Books Create Australia makes this submission in order to maximise the benefits to the nation of the authorship, production, sale, lending and reading of published accounts of all aspects of our world.

Who we are: Books Create Australia (BCA) is the representative coalition** of the key industry organisations: the Australian Booksellers Association (ABA); Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA); Australian Publishers Associations (APA); the Australian Society of Authors (ASA). BCA champions reading, books, library use, bookshops, Australian stories and research, and literary culture – including via Australia Reads, the campaign to get more Australians reading more books more often. Our component associations represent more than 200 publishers, 800 bookstores, more than 1600 public library service points and over 3500 authors.

Centrality of the literary sector to Australian life, the economy, and social capacity

Australian stories, books, learning materials, and high levels of reading participation are integral to our success as a modern democracy:

- 92% of Australians read a book each year (more than 16 million people!),
- 9.5 million Australians are public library members, and
- 30,000+ people work in the book industry as writers, editors, publishers, booksellers, and librarians in an industry worth more than \$2 billion a year.
- throughout our lives, all Australians encounter the Australian stories, information, and cultural materials that originated in the book sector

Response to the 5 pillars: the need for a plan, a policy forum, and for funds:

The five pillars as proposed by the Minister are all vital to the management and development of Australian cultural life and industries. In responding to these, particularly **Pillar 4: Strong Institutions**, BCA emphasises the need for a cohesive approach, including a sector plan, and a forum/mechanism or body for structured ongoing conversation between the book sector and government to improve policy making.

Recommendation 1: A national strategy for reading, writing and literature. Literature is the only major art form without a cohesive national framework/strategy to guide its development. A framework/strategy should incorporate a formal agreement between the Federal and State and Territory governments that define the sector's objectives and establish a funding framework to invest in reading levels, writers and illustrators, global markets, digital infrastructure, service organisations, writers' festivals, literary journals, and First Nations' publishing.

Recommendation 2: Create appropriate capacity within the Australia Council or elsewhere to oversee the development of literature, books and reading. This may take the form of an ongoing committee, unit, or even dedicated instrumentality that would ensure strategic priority is given to literature, books and reading

Recommendation 3: Increase funding for literature, publishing, and reading in keeping with recent Australia Council modelling of needs under a national framework

*We use the term books as a shorthand for all published items such as print books, ebooks, audio books, digital learning materials and research journal articles

**Books Create Australia is a peak body of industry bodies representing authors, publishers, booksellers and libraries. It is an unincorporated association of its members which are themselves NGOs.

approach. The 40% drop in Australia Council funding for literature has had a catastrophic impact on authors and illustrators.

Response to Pillar One: First Nations

Recommendation 4: Targeted financial support by government for First Nation writers, mentorships, employment, publishing, and rights/export development. Aboriginal and Torres Strait writers and illustrators tell the stories of Australia. They face cultural and structural barriers to success, which Government support would help to address, such as:

- direct support for First Nations authors whether they are at entry-level, emerging, or established career stage;
- Mentorships and development for new and emerging First Nation writers;
- Indigenous-led publishers to ensure First Nations' control and to bring more titles to market;
- support for First Nations Australia Writers Network (FNAWN) and other Indigenous literary organisations;
- support for First Nations people to undertake training and education in the book industry, such as creative writing, legal and business skills, and related professions such as library and information services;
- the exploration of a First Nations-led cultural rights regime to address the limitations of existing copyright laws to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP); and
- investment in rights and export sales which might feature First Nations titles (see *submission from Jan Zwar & Paul Crosby*)

Response to Pillar Two: A place for every story

Recommendation 5: More Australian content in schools Australian students learn who we are through contact with Australian stories. BCA endorses the recommendation of the recent House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Arts that there be a minimum threshold of Australian authored literary texts in the Australian curriculum. Australian stories and content, in all their diversity, must be core to the teaching materials for Australian students.

Recommendation 6: Appropriate library services to support learning and the encounter with Australian content. Every child should be able to explore and enjoy Australian stories in their school library. Support is needed for well resourced school libraries with qualified staff who can find the right Australian story for each child (See *ALIA submission for further information*).

Response to Pillar Three: The Centrality of the Artist

Recommendation 7: Reform of Lending Rights including introduction of digital lending rights Public Lending Rights (PLR) and Educational Lending Rights (ELR) payments for the use of printed books in Australian libraries remain one of the mainstays of Australian author income. In a sector where authors on average earn only \$12,900 a year from their writing, PLR and ELR are one of the few certainties and often make the difference in the viability of a writing career. As patterns of library borrowing and use change, the current exclusion of ebooks and audiobooks from PLR and ELR schemes cuts off authors and publishers whose books are borrowed electronically. Australia needs up-to-date, world-class lending rights schemes that extend PLR and ELR to digital formats and increase the overall pool of payments to authors and publishers. (See *ASA & ALIA submissions and correspondence for further information*)

Recommendation 8: Grant funds and living wage for writers

Australian stories are the DNA of the nation: they are the bedrock of our identity and of public debate, and they also fuel the broader arts through their adaptation for our stage and

our screens. Despite the importance of story and new writing, authors and illustrators are among the most underpaid of all creators in Australia. Writing compelling stories takes time, and Australia's best writers, most promising new writers, and our First Nations' writers need more government support. We must invest to support a diversity of Australian stories and in turn drive the creative economy of agents, editors, designers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers and festivals. (See ASA submission for further information)

Response to Pillar Four: Strong Institutions:

In addition to **Recommendations 1, 2 and 3** above, we make the following recommendations in relation to strong institutions.

Recommendation 9 A whole-of-industry digitised supply chain and data solution via one-off federal government support to retool the national supply chain infrastructure will future proof the industry and grow reading participation. The digital revolution has opened up new possibilities for authors, publishers, booksellers, libraries and readers. But due to limits of investment, the Australian industry is yet to maximise the potential of new business-to-business and business-to-consumer solutions. Better technical infrastructure for small and medium enterprise will circulate Australian books and materials further into the community and better project the Australian story globally. (See APA submission for further information)

Response to Pillar Five: Reaching the Audience:

Recommendation 10: Australia Reads: an ongoing national reading campaign A nation that regularly reads quality books, serials and learning materials is healthier, happier, and smarter. The growth of social media over the past decade has established that the quality of the information, media, and entertainment we consume is of vital importance in maintaining social bonds and our sense of community. Australian authors, publishers, booksellers and librarians need support to engage new readers in a lifelong habit and to make Australian books and writing more discoverable. A national reading campaign – that supports writers in libraries and bookshops, research into reading, digital book clubs, and online promotional platforms – is key to ensuring we remain a nation of readers.

Recommendation 11: Taking Australian voices to the world and the development of global markets Recent buying trends and subsequent research point to the potential of regional and global markets for Australian cultural and educational content. Whether it be the sale of overseas publication rights for novels or promoting digital access to Australian learning materials, the federal government has a vital and expert role to play in facilitating overseas market growth. Government investment – through support for residencies, exhibitions at book fairs, funding for Australian publisher delegations or training programs for overseas rights sales – will strengthen the profile of Australian authors and writing in international markets. (For further information see the submission from Jan Zwar and Paul Crosby)

Name: Dr Stuart Glover (as secretary of)

Organisation: [Books Create Australia](#) is an ongoing unincorporated coalition of four NFP peak bodies:

- Australian Booksellers Association
- Australian Library & Information Association
- Australian Publishers Association
- Australian Society of Authors

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***We are happy for our submission to be made public.**