

# National Cultural Policy Submission

Terri-ann White

In all of the political shenanigans of the past decade in Australia and the demonising act of starving artistic and cultural work of financial support and the oxygen to use their voices, there have been very few winners across all artforms and areas of artistic work. But I want to say a few words about writing and publishing.

The Australian publishing industry is surprisingly young. Until the 1960s, most Australian literary writers were published in London or New York. The extraordinary flourishing of writing in the 1960s and particularly the 1970s into the 1980s realigned our society and communities: a big call, but one that is evident if we look at books from that time. The complexion of authors shifted from largely men from similar class and age ranges to an increasingly diverse cluster, mirroring the various social movements of feminisms, First Nations activism, the recognition of other-than-English multiculturalism, and a recognition of the fervour of life, that we *contained multitudes* within our identities and how we chose to live.

I am a book publisher and have watched over the last decade and more as the opportunities for writers have withered. For a time, if you were lucky, the university system replaced arts grants with scholarships to write creative works as PhDs but after a while there were fewer and fewer publishers for these works of fiction and narrative non-fiction.

It is a bit simplistic, my request here for your consideration, but once a stronger pipeline of funding support is directed at the writing and publishing sector, a great deal will be achieved with books released, time bought for writers to build and develop their craft, and attention paid to encouraging readers (and booksellers) to pay attention to Australian writing.

Perhaps a living wage for writers might work if anyone was bold enough to give it a go, but what is needed right now is, simply, support for writers, publishers and advocacy groups to build a new generation of readers. Another thing: an old chestnut but reshaped during our pandemic years—find a way to follow other democracies and implement a subsidised postal rate for books. It's been off the agenda for so long, but it'd make a huge difference to small and independent publishers and readers across the vastness of our continent.

I am so delighted that a new cultural policy is on its way to being developed. Thank you.  
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