

# National Cultural Policy Submission

Contact name: Ann James AM

Contact details:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

My submission can be made public.

## My background

I've been involved in the Australian children's publishing industry for over 40 years, working in many capacities: personally, as an author illustrator; and with partner Ann Haddon, as Books Illustrated (established in 1988), promoting Australian picture books and their creators through our children's book shop, exhibition program throughout Australia and internationally, workshop programs for school children, and collaborating on initiatives and projects with organisations and individuals. My comments below are informed by being part of a strong and successful children's book industry, the foundation of the Australian publishing industry which both reflects and informs our culture.

From 1980, as illustrator and art teacher working with adults and kids in city, country and remote areas (with ILF since 2014); Books Illustrated 1988 to present; Promotional exhibitions of Australian picture books and illustration in South Korea, China, and Japan 1996 – 2016.; Assisting with management of the *Hello from Australia* Stand at Bologna Children's Book Fair, 2009 to 2019; Pixie O'Harris Award.2000; Dromkeen Medal 2002; Leila St John Award,2002 (all jointly with Ann Haddon); ASA Board Director '96 to 2016; Founding Board ACLF 2010 to 2018; Medal of the Order of Australia, 2016; ILF Ambassador, from 2018;. Hans Christian Andersen illustrator nomination, 20/21.

Thanks for this opportunity to submit my ideas and thoughts for the new National Cultural Policy. I've been made aware of the disappointing and puzzling statement above through the Australian Society of Authors, on the Board of which I represented creators of youth literature for 20 years. I commend and endorse all the points and recommendations as outlined in the ASA submission especially relating to addressing the plight of professional freelance artists' incomes, protecting their copyright and work in a changing publishing world - especially the need to include Digital Lending Rights alongside PLR and ELR. I add my suggestions in my submission, particularly relating to children's literature, its authors and illustrators in particular.

## **National Cultural Policy Submission - August 22, 2022**

### **Literature is the only major art form without a national plan or funding framework through the Australia Council**

Two main, over-arching, changes I would like to see in a new National Cultural Policy are:

#### **1. The implementation of a nationally funded framework for Literature through the Australia Council.**

If we as a country are serious about developing a strong culture into the future, the recognition of the importance of Literature must be made now. This would allow for a national vision, coordination between State and Federal governments, related organisations, and result in improvements across the literature industry including support for authors and publishers, to engagement with audiences nationally and internationally.

#### **2. Developing a framework that recognises and promotes Children's Literature as the foundation for developing a strong and rich national culture into the future.**

Too often children's literature and its creators are overlooked and overshadowed by literature for adults and its creators - positioned on the fringe of Fringe Festivals and Awards. In fact, publishing for children in this country, so vital, energetic and successful, is, in fact, the foundation of publishing in Australia – its success literally supports the whole industry! It's not recognised or noted that children's books are the introduction to children of literature – story and art.

In fact, the five pillars are well and truly supported by our industry. Some of the most important organisations and initiatives in recent years are inspirational, including the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, the Children's Book Council of Australia, StoryBox Library and the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL). I have worked closely with each of these organisations and am inspired by their national reach, integrity and potential.

The children's literature network in this country is extraordinarily active, collaborative and inventive, realising important projects and developing initiatives that have resulted in a continuing strong and successful industry. **However, without a National policy and framework a concern is the likelihood of duplication of similar projects and wasted energy and funds.**

#### **Develop a National Centre for Australian Literature**

For many years, I and others have worked within the enthusiastic collaboration across the Australian Children's book industry and have considered that the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature should be developed into the world class cultural hub it has the potential to be.

#### **Archives of Archives – the importance of our Literature's history to Culture**

Underfunded and mostly run and managed by volunteers, the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature is a national treasure. In fact it's a treasure trove of Australian literary culture, housing the Lu Rees Archives and every children's book published in this country – and internationally. Countless manuscripts and illustrations donated by creators over many years – and all meticulously catalogued for students and experts of children's literature. Highly respected, it is sourced by international and national students, runs workshops for schools, curates major exhibitions of book illustration and so much more. I believe it should be recognised nationally as the key institution and expanded with Federal funding to develop into The Australian Children's Literature Centre. For years, many of us have been inventing and planning for its potential as hub, museum, exhibition gallery, studio and workshop space, archive and inspirational home for Australian Children's Literature.

The fact that it's already in Canberra is perfect. It's where so many other National Centres recognise their areas as being important to developing our National culture eg. The National Portrait Gallery,

National War Museum, Museum of Australian Democracy, Questacon: National Science and Technology Centre. When established it will be recognised alongside the great similar international institutions for Children's Literature (many with a special focus on illustration and picture books) including Schloss Blumenberg (Munich, Germany), The Bilderbuch Museum (Troisdorf, Germany), Seven Stories (Newcastle UK), Sir Quentin Blake's Illustration House (London UK) and the Eric Carle Museum (Amhurst USA).

I am keenly aware that in every State and Territory in Australia there are Libraries and institutions with precious Archives of manuscripts, illustrations and collections of Australian Children's Literature. Our precious collective literary culture. Many of us keepers of story are getting long –in-the-tooth. **There must be policy created to document where and what these works are.**

And there should be, and maybe are, archives of newer movements in our literature for children that should be gathered now. The history of Indigenous publishing, for example, including importantly, the story and work of Magabala Books, IAD Press, Allen & Unwin and now, the ILF, publishing books by and for Indigenous communities. And the story also of the waves of earlier Indigenous children's books, Dreamtime stories, many written and illustrated by non-Indigenous creators and published by Australian publishers for children. Our history, our culture.

The new era of digital publishing is very important to document also – right now, as it happens. I am concerned that, for quite some time now, drafts of both text and illustrations are rarely kept by creators – so the process is lost!

The more physical, hands on, traditional materials, tools and techniques also need to be kept alive – especially with children. Using their hands, making spontaneous discoveries, learning that process is an important creative thing. Accidents can be inventions and solutions, and recipes can be kept. Films of practicing illustrators creating their images should be part of the archives.

### **Literature for children – in everyday life and in schools**

*'Access to the beautiful work of our artists and writers is vital if we are to provide children with voices other than those of the prevailing so-called popular culture. The arts are not a lifestyle, they are a way of life. Who doesn't understand the importance of providing children right from the start with the ability to read and enjoy books, as well as music, painting and other art forms.'*

Noni Hazelhurst, Patron ACLF

A National policy would surely be that anyone and everyone working with children is concerned with nurturing their healthy and creative growth – from nursery to tertiary. In our schools and homes, we aim to grow strong, creative, confident individuals who know their own stories and open to others. Make it a national policy to put the Arts at the heart of curriculum. Art, Music and Books make stories sharable. The best turn on to books for kids is good story. We create great books for Australian kids, and we need to be sure they are introduced to them by people who love reading. But where are the libraries at the hub of the schools? Where are the Teacher Librarians? Where is Children's Literature study in teacher training courses? Policies to promote libraries in schools and and train a new breed of teacher librarians too.

There are some great initiatives to promote story and books in some schools. Make then National - like reading aloud to your class each day – great stories maybe beyond their reading level; visiting authors and illustrators give inspiring talks and workshops; Children's Book Week and its lead up; Indigenous Literacy Day and The Great Book Swap...Simultaneous Storytime. The Australia Council can get behind these collaborating with National education curriculum makers.

### **Making a living as a picture book illustrator**

Illustration is my work and picture books my passion. My life has been about proving the case of the importance of literature for children. Having people discover the best ways to share stories with

children and getting kids excited about creating pictures and... **to make a living from the work I love.** So, to underline the ASA's call about the grim income of authors I'll add a personal note. Many creators of picture books earn more of their income talking about their work in schools than in creating the work itself. The ASA has put strong cases for the need to insure the adequate and financial income for authors in their submission. I wish to make the point that writers and illustrators creating children's picture books are worse off than most. If co-authoring (which is common, many books illustrated and written by two different creators), we share 10% of the RRP, usually equally. And receive an advance each of, say \$5000. I spend anywhere from 8 months to two years (sometimes even longer) illustrating a book. If I write it as well, add another 2 or 3 months. As a book-seller I am well aware too, that the price of a picture book has remained the same for the past 15 years. And as a creator, I know that a large percentage of most print runs are heavily discounted to major commercial retailers or the publishing is considered not viable. So the RRP isn't relevant at all if the book sells for much less. Half my income is from PLR and ELR and the importance of including Digital Lending Rights now is absolutely vital.

**Picture Books are a unique form of literature.  
Illustration is a unique form of authorship.**

There's a lot that can be said about these statements but this isn't the place. What does need to be understood is that Illustrators of picture books are authors. Developing visual narrative for a picture book is time consuming and, I think, takes a similar period of time to writing a medium sized novel, or visualising a play performance, or directing a film. **Grants need to be created especially for illustrators.**

### **Australian Children's Books in the International Market**

Australian children's books are the most translated of all Australian books. Over the past 25 years Books Illustrated has collaborated with organisations like Asia Link, Australia Korea Foundation and Australian Embassies to travel internationally to South Korea, China and Japan with exhibitions we created to promote Australian picture books. The South Korean market has been perhaps the most marvellous success with well over 1000 picture book titles published. China too has been an enthusiastic publisher of our picture books. Many are translated and many published in English for educational purposes. I travelled to Korea nine times over 12 years or so and made many strong relationships which also resulted in great interest in Australian culture – and vice versa for me. Similarly, a trusted relationship with Oriental Babies (Phoenix Publishing in Nanjing) resulted in many business meeting at Bologna Book Fair.

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is the pre-eminent Children's Book Fair in the World, held annually in Italy.

From Books Illustrated's experience of assisting with management and design of the Australian stand from 2009 to 2019, we realise that **security of funding at a national level** is of utmost importance for this stand to be grown to serve our Literature industry. Publishers and creators can attest the enormous benefits gained attending this fair.

There's a cultural importance from attending the Bologna BF and also through international literature organisations like IBBY and the international Children's Laureates' programs. There's a growing camaraderie amongst countries to create links and initiatives to support the children who will be the next generation, despite current negative political strife in many countries around the world, through literature, stories and positive energy.

We in Australia need to recognise the importance of Children's Literature in developing our next generations and future culture and develop a national framework for Literature through the Australia Council.