

ELECTION 2022

VOTE FOR BOOKS AND READING



Reading and books are vital to modern Australia: they make the nation smarter and healthier, and ensure we understand ourselves and the world. In turn, our stories offer others the opportunity to know us.

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.

It's a time of great change in the book industry, education, and public debate. Australia's writers, publishers, booksellers, and librarians ask candidates to support reading and the sharing of our stories.

OUTCOME *A national plan*

RECOMMENDATION 1

Government develops a national plan for books and reading

The 2021 Federal Parliamentary inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries concluded that we need a national cultural plan to coordinate 'practical action to support industry growth and community access to Australian arts and culture'. The book industry supports the introduction of a national cultural plan with books and reading as a focus.

Literature is the only major art form without a cohesive national approach to sustainable arts funding and industry development. COVID has disrupted the book industry and Australia Council funding for literature has declined by more than 40%. We need a formal agreement between the Federal and State and Territory governments that defines the sector's objectives. A plan would 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.

OUTCOME *A reading nation*

RECOMMENDATION 2

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.

OUTCOME *A pipeline for new Australian stories and sustainable careers for our writers*

RECOMMENDATION 3

Grant funds for new writing, new talent and First Nations' stories

Australian stories are the DNA of the nation: they are the bedrock of our identity and of public debate. Stories define us and sustain us over time, 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.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Reform of Lending Rights and a boost in funding

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. An improved scheme will support creators and library users across the country.



OUTCOME

Modernising the Australian book industry to meet local and international needs

RECOMMENDATION 5

A whole-of-industry digitised supply chain and data solution

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. One-off federal government support to retool the national supply chain infrastructure will future proof the industry and grow reading participation.

RECOMMENDATION 6

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.



OUTCOME

Access to quality Australian education materials

RECOMMENDATION 7

More Australian content in schools

Australian students learn who we are through contact with Australian stories. Every child should have access to a well-resourced school library with qualified staff who can find the right Australian story for each child. Books Create Australia endorses the bipartisan recommendation of the recent House of Representatives Standing Committee of Communications and the Arts that there be a minimum threshold of Australian-authored literary texts in the Australian Curriculum.



Australian Library and Information Association

