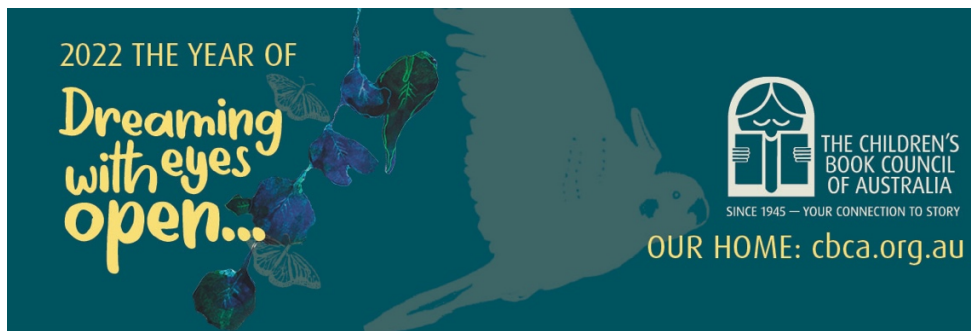


National Cultural Policy Submission



NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION

We are thrilled to submit during our CBCA Book Week for 2022— dreaming with eyes open...

Our 2022 theme, we believe, aligns with our request for a National Cultural Policy for Literature that combines inspired thinking informed by openly listening and seeing.

We submit this submission *on behalf of our not-for-profit arts organisation.*

The Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) is a not for profit, volunteer run organisation which aims to engage the community with literature for young Australians. The CBCA presents annually our **Book of the Year Awards** to books of literary merit, for outstanding contribution to Australian children's literature. These Awards are one of the few literary awards in Australia that directly translate into good sales and inspires further confidence in our creators' abilities.

Since 1945 across Australia, the CBCA brings children and books together celebrating **CBCA Book Week**. Throughout the year, the CBCA and its eight State Branches work in partnership with authors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers and other organisations in the children's book world to bring words, images and stories into the hearts and minds of children and adults.

Australian children's literature enriches our culture and reaches children across the world through international editions.

Our Vision: Creating a community that celebrates quality Australian literature for young people.

Our Mission: We promote and advocate for the sharing of quality literature for young people across Australia. We showcase Australian creators and collaborate widely to foster a love of reading.

The CBCA endorses the original 5 goals of the 2013 Creative Australia National Cultural Policy and believe we have a strong alignment with your direction. We welcome collaboration and offer our expertise.

1. **The CBCA recognises, respects and celebrates** the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.
2. **The CBCA applauds government support** that reflects the diversity of Australia.
3. **The CBCA Book of the Year Awards** supports excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators.
4. **The CBCA affirms the importance of** strengthening the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.
5. **The CBCA invites support for our transformation** so that we can join other organisations ensuring Australian creativity thrives here and abroad in the digitally enabled 21st century.

ADDRESSING YOUR PILLARS: CBCA CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

• **First Nations** Over our lifetime the CBCA has successfully delivered the premier children's literary award in Australia. With this honour comes challenges and responsibilities. It is important to us that our (<https://cbca.org.au/>) *Book of the Year Awards lists* always reflect the cultural values of our community. Our Notables Books (our long list) and Shortlist are a time capsule of stories for our young readers, **so we seek equitable opportunities and support for our First Nations storytellers** to be published and entered into our awards. With our awards First Nations creators have the opportunity to be valued, respected and celebrated. Our 2022 Shortlist included close to 2% First Nations works. With our Book of the Year Awards, First Nations creators' stories are more likely to remain at the heart of our culture and have their values transmitted to our young. With sustained access to these stories—through home, school and community institutions we are consolidating their importance. It is critical First Nations stories receive the accolades they rightly deserve, and therefore their creators, like all Australian creators, are affirmed and feel confident to continue to contribute to our repository of cultural artefacts—their stories. Our awards create income (through sales) within the publishers and creatives ecosystem. The CBCA Book of the Year Awards therefore require ongoing tangible support. **We see opportunities for a continuing rich culture, the continual challenge is for us to flourish and offer equitable and sustainable rewards for creative output.**

• **A Place for Every Story** A culture survives, thrives and evolves with stories. Stories need to be written, illustrated, told, heard, translated and reshaped—continually. At the CBCA we strongly believe that the work we do in celebrating and promoting quality literature and reading for young people, is fundamental. **A National Cultural Policy for Literature, the CBCA advocates, must place children's stories and their creators at its heart. Our creators—writers and illustrators—must be offered the very same opportunities as creators of stories for adults.** An indicator of how healthy and strong a culture is, is how well values are embedded and transmitted through to our young. If quality children's literature is affirmed, in a National Cultural Policy for Literature, *as important*, then unequal assumptions surrounding literature creators for children will be erased. Writers are writers—regardless of audience. As well as a change in hearts and minds we need physical representations of this salience. Our stories for the young need places that are accessible—in homes, in schools, in libraries, and in purpose-built cultural institutions. If young readers perceive literary works are valued and celebrated then that drives an impetus to seek them out in these places and relish them. Every year the CBCA works hard to promote a reading culture through our CBCA Book of the Year Awards and CBCA Book Week—**we require support (organisational and communications)** to drive our promotional endeavours across an entire year, and for decades to come.

• **The Centrality of the Artist** As an important national cultural organisation, the CBCA acknowledges we play a critical role in promoting the value of having productive, excellent writers and illustrators of literature for young readers in our communities. **With the establishment of a positive and overt national reading culture, the ecosystem that supports our artists' wellbeing and their profession—the publishers, booksellers, writers' festivals, speakers' agencies, festivals, libraries, schools, and the curriculum—will be secure and supported.** This security and support will be evident within taxation, intellectual property and grants mechanisms. Our Book of the Year Awards reward high quality crafted works and promote the creators, **and secures the future supply of artists through their reading of quality literature.** Young readers must become artists—writers and illustrators— through access to further opportunities. **The opportunity to develop confident writers and illustrators within schools and community institutions must be part a National Cultural Policy framework.** In 2022 we have undertaken a national rollout of our Sun Project: Shadow Judging program (young readers shadow the awards judges and their process— seeded by a RiSE grant). This opportunity grows positive, engaged young voices who have a sense of agency. This sense of agency is a catalyst for growing a positive attitude to reading, and increases the likelihood of them becoming our artists of the future. We will be seeking further support for this project to grow— it requires

access to books and embedding creatives in schools and community organisations. Children’s literature creators, our artists, often don’t experience the same opportunities to be reviewed and critiqued as creators of adult literature. We need cultural policies that place them in the media, at writers’ festivals and events *on the same main stages* and embed mentorships, scholarships, retreats— and headspace— that affirm their value and provide opportunities to contribute to culture creation and become role models for the generation that follows.

Strong Institutions There are distinct challenges and real opportunities under this pillar. We emphasise that strong Australian cultural institutions *devoted to Children’s Literature* are not currently a dedicated focus of Federal or State support. Now is the time to establish a true National institution, that includes our esteemed National Centre for Australian Children’s Literature, in a place where we can consolidate and rationalise our resources while sending a very clear message to our nation that children’s literature is valued. Our educational (tertiary and schools) institutions must be supported with directives and funding to deliver quality teaching opportunities focusing on children’s literature, and the network of libraries in community and within schools must be foundational for a sustainable reading culture. Many not for profit organisations within the literacy and literature space currently do a lot of the heavy lifting and are operating on a shoestring. We know volunteering in Australia is in decline and our wide ecosystem relies heavily on volunteer skills and passion. Volunteers are crucial to community building. This is not sustainable. **Our organisations require substantial support to engage volunteers meaningfully and upskill and upgrade our organisations with technology and expertise so that we can effectively deliver our valued cultural impact.**

Reaching the Audience Our Book of the Year Awards, CBCA Book Week and now our Sun Project: Shadow Judging are all important outreach activities run from our national office for the benefit of a wide national audience. It is our core purpose to play our part in a thriving ecosystem of Australian children’s story-making. With a healthy ecosystem, and quality children’s literature made here in Australia we are ensuring a flow of exports. Our stories travel well and are highly translated reaching a wide international audience. Our artists and publishers must be supported through grants and trade support to be our ambassadors in this global market. Embedding a reading culture within the foundations of a National Cultural Policy for Literature is critical for this to remain sustainable. Our challenges and opportunities lie in our ability to build a contemporary digital infrastructure so we can amplify quality Australian-created stories for young readers nationally and globally. We dream of supporting our creatives to be able to have the studio space and skills to produce quality professional outreach programs and digital content to distribute and broadcast widely. We believe our creatives are not equitably able to do this and therefore some stories are not as widely accessed. There is a growing onus being placed on creators of children’s stories to be all things— creators, marketers, *and* educators. This is a very big ‘ask’ of them without support.

You may use some of our words as part of the National Cultural Policy Report.

We agree to our submission to be published on your website

	Name: Wendy Rapee, CBCA National Chair Organisation: The Children’s Book Council of Australia
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Sent completed submission to culturalpolicy@arts.gov.au 21.08.22