

Submission to National Cultural Arts Policy

**To consider support for the telling of Australian stories and Australian writers in all languages.**

(note: rephrased from original email to Tony Burke's office 28 July 2022)

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Proposal: to Hon Tony Burke MP , Minister for the Arts – (National Cultural Policy)

**To consider support for the telling of Australian stories and Australian writers in all languages.**

That is, support and funding for the translation of Australian literary works into world languages including the many Australian languages.

Our stories are the record of how we all live, think , what our values are at a particular time or a place and more. As a multicultural and multilingual country translating our stories from English to languages from all over the world would allow for a richer understanding of our own culture.

For example, migrants , whether newly arrived or those who have since retired , could read books in their native or mother tongue about Australia or Australian literary works, better understanding the country that is their home and hopefully, a richer engagement with Australian life.

Most recently, the work of well-known Australian author Charmian Clift was translated into Greek . Her book Mermaid Singing , set on the island of Kalymnos in the Aegean sea during the 1950s, translated into Greek (Το τραγούδι της γοργόνας) , was launched on the island of Kalymnos last month (June 2022). Guest of honour , was the celebrated author and award-winning biographer of Charmian Clift, Nadia Wheatley. This event was highly celebrated in the Town Hall of the island, locals stating that it was important to read this book which depicted life on the island of Kalymnos in the 1950s and was also a record and legacy of how people were living at that time , following a lengthy period of war (WW2 Occupation and Civil War) and deprivation. There were very few , if any, records of cultural life about the island at the time. The surviving locals were trying to survive. If Charmian Clift had not written this book , many of the stories of the Kalymnians and how they lived simply would not have been recorded. The translating of this Australian classic travel book , possibly a very early book of the travel genre, allows readers of Greek to read about Kalymnos and how the island and their way of life was perceived by an Australian author at that time. It is worth noting also, that Charmian Clift and her husband , George Johnston (My brother Jack) , took a huge risk moving their family firstly from Australia , to the UK , then to a poor and recovering remote Greek island of Kalymnos. (link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/mermaid-singing-charmian-clift/book/9781838110130.html> )

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charmian\\_Clift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charmian_Clift) ; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadia\\_Wheatley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadia_Wheatley)

The translating of Australian stories into other world languages allows for many more people in Australia and around the world to enjoy and learn about our stories, learning more about Australia, our lives, our writers, our values, reading and learning about other people's perspectives in a more familiar form.

In Australia, we are in a unique position where we are a multicultural nation and we could also be multilingual. I imagine that it would also be helpful for Australians learning another language to read a more familiar Australian text in that language. For example , a student of Italian, reading the classic A B Facey's A fortunate life , which was on the HSC Syllabus many years ago, translated into the Italian language. A truly multicultural and multi lingual Australia.

To consider support for the telling of Australian stories and Australian writers in all languages. That is, support and funding for the translation of Australian literary works into world languages including the many Australian languages. (Inclusion in the National Cultural Policy).Thank you.