

ANONYMOUS

Dear Minister,

We are the owners of [REDACTED] Bookshop, a small, family-run independent bookshop in Townsville that has been operating for over 40 years. We specialise in curated literary fiction, thoughtful non-fiction, and children's books, and we regularly host author events, partner with schools and community organisations, and champion Australian voices.

Independent bookshops are a vital part of Australia's cultural infrastructure. We are places where readers discover Australian stories, where communities gather, and where authors connect directly with their audiences. However, these spaces are increasingly under pressure.

After more than four decades of trading, we are now finding it increasingly difficult to keep our doors open. We have recently been forced to leave our long-standing location and relocate to a more affordable tenancy simply to continue operating. This reflects the broader challenges facing the sector — rising costs, tight margins, and increasing competition from online retailers and large-scale discounting.

The current retail climate is very subdued. Customers are more selective, and sales are increasingly driven by social media trends rather than steady, long-term engagement with books. This makes it difficult to support a diverse range of titles, particularly Australian works that may not have large marketing budgets behind them.

What matters most to us is the ability to continue operating as a community space — to host events, support local authors, and provide a place where reading and ideas are shared. Without targeted support, these opportunities will diminish.

We would like to see the new National Cultural Policy recognise and support independent bookshops as essential cultural infrastructure. Practical measures could include tax offsets to assist with core operating costs, support for in-store events and community programming, and policy settings that address the impact of deep discounting on new-release titles. Improving accessibility to books — including consideration of pricing structures and broader affordability — would also support both readers and booksellers.

I support the Australian Booksellers Association's call to support local bookshops as cultural infrastructure, creating audience engagement:

- Establish an Australian Independent Bookshop Tax Offset (AIBTO): a refundable tax rebate on core operating expenses including wages, rent, and capital expenditure would deliver significant cultural and economic returns.
- Fund establishment of a skills training and certification programme development and delivery to professionalise the industry, creating recognised career pathways
- Enable accessibility to books and bookshops for all Australians. Study pricing and

discounts; examine the feasibility of restrictions on deep discounting of new-release Australian titles, aligned with established European models, and investigate the case for GST reduction or exemption on books, consistent with international precedent.

- Support an Australian Book Voucher Programme, redeemable at local bookshops nationwide, targeted at children or retirees. An existing mechanism for this recommendation is ABA Gift Cards, redeemable at bookshops Australia-wide and online.
- Support and expand ongoing grants for events in bookshops including author events, book clubs, workshops, story times, and other community programmes. Grant funding in this space benefits audiences and authors and the wider community.

We believe strongly in the role bookshops play in Australia's cultural life. With the right support, independent bookshops can continue to foster reading, support Australian authors, and contribute to vibrant, connected communities.

We urge the government to ensure this policy delivers meaningful, practical support so that independent bookshops like ours can continue to operate and thrive.

Yours sincerely,

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Bookshop, Townsville