



[REDACTED]
Date: 29-4-26

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a bookseller to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

Our bookshop, The Wondering Mind, has operated in Milton NSW for 7 years. The shop is an important community hub, offering local authors and artists the chance to meet and connect with the community. It is also a space for parents to discover new books with their children, grandparents to bring grandchildren and for visitors to support local businesses.

Local bookshops are cultural infrastructure - community gathering places where Australian stories are discovered, yet every year bookshops close, undermined by online giants and discount department stores. Managing a small business is always a financial challenge, especially juggling the pressure of overheads, tax obligations and cash flow with the desire to take risks by supporting new Australian authors and creatives. Making an income is difficult in any retail business, especially low margin businesses such as bookselling, Australia lags behind comparable countries in protecting its book retail sector. 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.
- Support and expand ongoing grants for events in bookshops including author events, book clubs, workshops, story times, and other community programmes.

I urge the government to act. Local bookshops are irreplaceable - but without support, more will close. The measures proposed by the ABA are modest, internationally proven, and would deliver significant cultural and economic returns.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Owners
The Wondering Mind