

## OFFICIAL

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as an independent bookshop customer to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

My local bookshop, **BEUMARIS BOOKS** has operated in the Melbourne Bayside suburb of BEUMARIS for OVER 24 YEARS.

I worked for 17 years as a Teacher Librarian at a local secondary college and regularly consulted with Andrew and Cheryl (and in fact all of their staff) about books which were suitable for my students. Many of the books our library purchased from Beaumaris Books could have been bought more cheaply elsewhere but the customer service is definitely not something we could have received online.

Personally, I have also bought many books from Beaumaris Books both for myself, for family members and for gifts. The owners and their children were all prolific readers who were able to offer unparalleled advice on suitable books.

Local bookshops are not merely retail businesses. They are cultural infrastructure - community gathering places where Australian stories are discovered, where children fall in love with reading, and where literary careers begin. Yet every year bookshops close, undermined by online giants and discount department stores.

Australia lags behind comparable countries in protecting its book retail sector. France, Italy, the UK, Germany, and more have introduced proven measures - discount caps, tax offsets, and rates relief - that have stabilised their independent bookshop sectors. Australia should do the same.

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 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.

In my career as a Teacher Librarian I understood the power of being able to give a student a book which I thought they might enjoy and I cannot express the joy it brought when the student did enjoy it and went on to become a "reader". Known simply as "putting the right book in the right hands at the right time," was a catch phrase for Teacher Librarians in regards to their students but our local independent bookseller (Beaumaris Books) is doing exactly the same work for our local community.

I urge the government to act. Local bookshops are irreplaceable - but without support, more will

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close. The measures proposed by the ABA are modest, internationally proven, and would deliver significant cultural and economic returns.

Yours sincerely,

Bernadette Kean

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