

Dear Minister Burke,

3rd May 2026

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

My business, [REDACTED] Bookshop has operated in the small town of Mansfield in North East Victoria for 6 years. I bought an existing bookshop at the start of 2020 which had been operating for 12 years previously. 2020 was BLOODY TOUGH!!! But the incredible local community rallied around and with a lot of hard work we survived those crazy couple of years. Since then, [REDACTED] Bookshop has gone from strength to strength. It has almost doubled the turnover of the business, and it has become a vital and vibrant focus in the main street of Mansfield.

I employ four staff members and often have young junior staff that we are training up in the retail space. I have a loooooong list of people who would like to work at the shop and even have people who volunteer to help because they love being in the space so much.

We hold popular events – usually about once or twice a month in the bookshop and at other venues around the town. Any ticket sales we take for our events goes to the charity of the visiting author's choice. We have collaborated with other local businesses and organisations in the town. Most recently we teamed up with a Fat Farmers (a fitness program for farmers) the local swim club and brought 'The Desert Swimmer', [REDACTED] to Mansfield to speak about his mental health challenges, and how he went on to swim the English Channel. It was a sellout event. [REDACTED] Bookshop is also a major sponsor, and contributor, to the biannual Mansfield Readers and Writers Festival.

We champion Australian, and especially local authors. [REDACTED] is a local woman and the author of Vessel published by Upswell. [REDACTED] has backed her and her beautiful book 100% - introducing her work to other writers and bookshops. Through us she had a very popular event at the [REDACTED] bookshop in Melbourne city.

[REDACTED] is a young regional author who had a bestselling novel with us, Over This Bone, published by Ultimo. Again we have championed her book and [REDACTED] herself, introducing her to authors and giving her advice and introductions to writers festival gigs.

We are a special space in a small country town that people feel super happy to be in. People know they can find what they want without judgement and we go out of our way to order titles for our customers that we might not have in stock. The bookshop is a safe place for people to share opinions and be unjudged. We are accepting of everyone. We service our local library, and the four primary schools and secondary college in the area. We donate books and vouchers to local causes weekly.

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 chains that sell books at 40–50% below recommended retail price. We have a [REDACTED] next door that sells popular titles for less than what I can buy them wholesale for.

I don't think these big chains donate to other community events. I don't think they give personalised service. I don't think they discount their stock for school and library accounts or hold events where they give their ticket sales to charity.

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:

- Fund establishment of a skills training and certification program development and delivery to professionalise the industry, creating recognised career pathways.
- Establish an Australian Independent Bookshop Tax Offset (AIBTO): a refundable tax rebate on core operating expenses including wages, rent, and purchases of Australian-authored titles.
- Examine the feasibility of restrictions on deep discounting of new-release Australian titles, aligned with established European models. April 2026
- Investigate the case for GST reduction or exemption on books, consistent with international precedent.
- Invest in refreshing legacy data systems across the Australian book supply chain.
- Support an Australian Book Voucher Program, redeemable at local bookshops nationwide.
- Fund ongoing grants to support bookshop event delivery including author events, book clubs, workshops, story times, and other community programs.

I adore my business and I adore my community. I love books and the creative arts and supporting the authors and the industry that gives so much to society in terms of culture, understanding and open minded human thinking. I work so hard to provide a really special place in my bookshop – and it is so much more than a money-making enterprise. 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]

[REDACTED]

Owner, [REDACTED] Bookshop

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]