

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am writing as an author to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy. I am a debut author who launched two books at Mad Hatters Bookshop, Manly, Brisbane in July last year. I am also planning to be part of Book promotions at Books@Stones, Koorong and Mad Hatters this year. I truly value the contribution that independent bookstores play in the cultural landscape. At Mad Hatters I saw regular book club members coming in to purchase their latest read, and families finding out about school holiday activities. The bookshop provided morning tea for customers potentially purchasing my book. I also value the fact that independent bookstores pay a premium for our books, allowing publishers to pay us our full royalty for books sold in their stores, unlike books sold to standing order companies or discount department stores like Big W. They also carry a wider range of books covering the full cultural spectrum of reading matter rather than just the 'popular' reads carried by the large discount stores. 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. 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. As an Australian author, I appreciate the local stores that support local authors. Australian authors are not fully represented in the large discount stores. Losing these stores, means losing a large chunk of our Australian literary culture.

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. 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.

It is vital that we support independent bookshops as they are the backbone of our literary landscape. They have supported authors, illustrators and educators for years. It is time we supported them. 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.