

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister Burke, As a regular customer of a local independent bookshop, I implore the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy. My local bookshop, BEAUMARIS BOOKS has operated in the Melbourne suburb of BEAUMARIS for OVER 24 YEARS. They bring knowledge and provide a service that cannot be mirrored in discount bookstores or national stores like Target or Big W. In a small space they have thousands more books to choose from, fact and fiction, than the big chains. The owners and staff know their products intimately. They arrange visits from authors to share insights about their books. During COVID when libraries were shut, they delivered to our homes, keeping a vital lifeline of reading accessible. As a teacher, I can ask them for a selection of resources to support my curriculum requirements and the staff know where to find exactly what I need. 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. 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.

Should BEAUMARIS BOOKS close, I would lose access to a breadth of reading materials that help me relax, unwind, escape the mundane every day. I will miss the personalised touch when I go into the shop and the staff suggest something they know I will enjoy – because they know me. I don't want to only read what the department stores are selling – I want a choice to read material that matters to me, not just easy to read 'best sellers'. Choice, and freedom to choose is the most important measure you can be offered as an individual. I don't want the options open to me to be reduced to department stores or online retailers. 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].