

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing on behalf of Collins Booksellers, a national network of independent, locally owned bookstores operating across Australia. Our franchise group supports communities in metropolitan, regional and rural areas, employing local staff and serving hundreds of thousands of customers each year. Our stores are deeply embedded in their communities, providing access to books, hosting events and supporting Australian authors.

Bookshops are not merely retail businesses. They are essential cultural infrastructure. They are places where Australian stories are discovered, where children develop a lifelong love of reading, and where communities gather around ideas, creativity and shared experiences. They play a critical role in connecting readers with books and authors, particularly in areas where access to cultural activity is otherwise limited.

At the same time, we join Australia Reads in calling for the Australian Government to invest in building a reading nation. Reading underpins education, employment, wellbeing and social connection. Yet reading rates are in decline. Thirty per cent of Australians did not read or listen to a book last year, one in three students is not reading proficiently, and a quarter of Australian children are not being read to at home.

These challenges are deeply connected. Without strong local bookshops, access to books and reading culture diminishes. Without investment in reading, the entire literary ecosystem is weakened.

Margins in bookselling are tight, and we face increasing pressure from global online competitors such as Amazon, whose scale and pricing practices cannot be matched by local businesses. Australia currently lags behind comparable countries such as France, Germany and the UK, which have implemented policy measures to support their book industries and protect cultural access.

We support the Australian Booksellers Association's call for meaningful structural support for bookshops and recommend that the National Cultural Policy include:

- A **Bookselling Tax Offset**, providing a refundable rebate on core operating costs such as wages, rent and capital investment.
- An **Australian Book Voucher Program**, redeemable at physical bookshops, to encourage children and families to engage with reading and support local businesses.
- Ongoing and expanded **funding for in-store cultural programming**, including author events, book clubs, workshops and community initiatives.

- Investment in a **national skills training and certification program** to strengthen bookselling as a recognised cultural profession.
- Measures to improve **fair market conditions**, including examining pricing practices, the feasibility of limits on extreme discounting of new-release titles, and consideration of GST settings in line with international approaches.

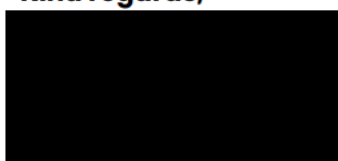
In addition, we support national reading initiatives, including public reading campaigns, stronger investment in school libraries and partnerships that connect bookshops, schools and communities. Bookshops are a critical delivery channel for these initiatives, providing trusted, local access to books and reading experiences.

Collins Booksellers stores see every day the impact that access to books and reading can have on individuals and communities. Without viable local bookshops, Australian stories become harder to discover, community connection is diminished and opportunities for emerging authors are reduced.

We urge the Government to recognise bookshops as cultural infrastructure and to take practical steps to support their sustainability. The measures outlined above are modest, internationally proven and would deliver significant cultural, educational and economic benefits.

A strong National Cultural Policy should ensure that every Australian has access to books, stories and the spaces that bring them to life.

Kind regards,



Collins Booksellers Group

