

Dear Minister Burke,

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

My bookshop, The Rose Read Bookshop, is just about to open in Summer Hill.

The Rose Read Bookshop is an independent bookshop [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] built from a love of books, community, and the women who inspire us. Rose Read is more than just a bookshop; we strive to be a place of gathering, where people with differing experiences can come together in a safe space and connect through a shared love of books. Our booksellers are passionate about celebrating diverse voices and championing books that surprise, challenge, and inspire; books that provide a gateway to understanding different perspectives, feelings, and ways of being. Rose Read is a space for readers, browsers, gift-givers, families, and anyone who believes stories can change the way we see the world.

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.

Our team has experienced this first-hand having all been a part of the book industry, working in bookstores for over 15 years. We have seen the financial pressures that have continued to put a strain on independent bookshops. We have experienced the cost of books increasing and discounts for independent sellers decreasing whilst large corporations, such as Kmart and Big W receive extra discounts, making it impossible for independent stores to compete with their margins. Many regular customers who attended book clubs or events in-store used to say that they had to buy their books through Amazon or Kmart/Big W as it was more affordable for them during the current financial climate. Whilst these corporations provide accessibility to books, they do not provide curated expertise of passionate booksellers. They do not provide the cultural infrastructure or place of gathering that local communities so desperately need to feel a sense of belonging and foster a love of reading and learning.

Starting our own bookshop, we have already encountered many unforeseen financial pressures related to bank fees, council fees, membership fees, and legal and administrative fees. It is only with the support of extended family, friends, and industry connections that we have been able to get our endeavour off the ground!

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 an **Australian Book Voucher Programme**, redeemable at local bookshops nationwide, targeted at children or retirees. An existing mechanism for this recommendation is ABA Gift Cards, redeemable at bookshops Australia-wide and online.
- 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 closing, I believe that bookshops are not just retail spaces, but integral parts of the community as they foster safe and creative spaces for people to come together. They are an important part of giving voice to people from diverse and marginalised backgrounds, and provide the cultural infrastructure that local communities so desperately need to feel a sense of belonging and to foster a love of reading and learning. If financial pressures continue to cause bookstores to disappear or to become too expensive for the average person, I fear that are at risk of losing spaces that encourage freedom of speech and community engagement.

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,



Owner of The Rose Read Bookshop, Summer Hill