

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a picture book author and illustrator to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

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.

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 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.

Many picture book creators and all workers in the publishing industry would benefit from these measures, It is a struggling industry right now and we could all do with a boost to the sector. 2024 data indicated a wide literary crisis - with a significant decline in reading for pleasure. The costs involved in creating a book keep getting higher leading buyers to choose discount options which does not offer the same valuable real world experience of your local bookshop.

Sincerely, Jenni Barrand