

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a passionate supporter of independent bookshops, to urge the government to include meaningful support for bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

Mary Martin Bookshop (Melbourne) supports the local community in a number of ways. 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.

From a personal perspective I have greatly benefited from several of the reading orientated social activities initiated and organised by Mary Martin Bookshop. These have included book clubs, devoted both to recent literary fiction releases and to classic books. The book clubs have been patronised by a diverse range of readers with respect to age and background fostering community spirit and social engagement. The discussions are respectful and informed and allow us to learn from others experience. In one case we meet in a local wine bar which brings that business additional custom which would otherwise not have occurred. I have also had the pleasure of taking grand children to events organised for younger readers which have helped encourage them to take an interest in books.

Australia lags behind comparable countries in protecting its book retail sector. France, Italy, the UK, Germany, and more have introduced proven measures that have stabilised their independent bookshop sectors. Australia should do the same. I support the Australian Booksellers Association's call to recognise local bookshops as cultural infrastructure. Local bookshops are irreplaceable - but without support, more will close. As a reader and community member, I ask you to stand up for these vital spaces before they are gone.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]