

Dear Minister Burke,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am the owner of Collins Booksellers The Pines. My store has been part of the local community for 6 months, employing 5 staff members and serving readers across Doncaster and outer East Melbourne. The book industry has been my home and passion for 5 years now, and it's been an incredible privilege to help everyone find their perfect book.

Bookshops are not just retail businesses. They are cultural spaces where people discover stories, connect with ideas and engage with their community. In my store, we see this every day through conversations with customers, children discovering books, and local events such as storytelling, community competitions, crafts, and local independent author sales.

Reading matters deeply to our community. It supports literacy, wellbeing and connection. It is an innately human experience to open not just a book, but one's eyes to experience the another's perspective. Each day we see the passing down of beloved words, stories and worlds from author to reader, elder to child, and even stranger to stranger, people who reach out and say to each other *this is important, this is a story that you need to hear*. Reading asks of us to understand and learn, but also to feel. Lives are enriched, not just mine and my staff member's, by picking up a book to read.

However, there are real challenges. The cost of running a small business continues to rise, while competition from large online retailers makes it difficult to compete on price. At the same time, reading rates are declining, with many Australians not reading regularly.

Without strong local bookshops, access to books and reading culture in communities like mine becomes much more limited.

I support the calls from Australia Reads and the Australian Booksellers Association for the Government to invest in reading and support bookshops as cultural infrastructure.

I would like to see the National Cultural Policy include:

- National reading campaigns to encourage Australians of all ages to read more regularly

- Stronger investment in school libraries and support for educators and families to build reading habits
- Programs that improve access to books in the community, including author events, book clubs and local initiatives
- Promotion of Australian stories, including contemporary authors and First Nations voices

In addition, I support practical measures to strengthen bookshops, including:

- A Bookselling Tax Offset to help cover key operating costs
- An Australian Book Voucher Program to encourage children and families to buy books locally
- Funding for in-store events and community programs
- Support for training and career pathways in bookselling
- Fairer market conditions, including looking at pricing and discounting practices

Bookshops like mine play an important role in our communities. We provide access to books, support Australian authors and create spaces where people can connect.

With the right support, we can continue to do this work and ensure that reading remains a strong part of Australian life.

Kind regards,



Collins Booksellers The Pines