

Dear Minister Burke,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am the owner of Collins Booksellers Warrnambool and President of the Warrnambool Storytelling Festival. My bookstore has been part of the local community for more than ten years, currently employing 13 staff and serving readers across the Great South Coast region. The festival is in its sixth year, has recently obtained charity status, and is greatly supported by my bookshop not only in terms of financial sponsorship, but also as a volunteer base and community hub.

Bookshops are not just retail businesses. They are cultural spaces where people discover stories, connect with ideas and engage with their community. In my bookshop, we see this every day through conversations with customers, children discovering books, and local events such as our book club, storytime, and author talks. We also see this through the festival events we support such as Get Lit, Story Kids and Writes of Passage; the school workshops we facilitate; and the many community groups we sponsor and promote through our networks.

Without the bookshop, not only would the events directly led by the bookshop cease, but so too would the collaborative events we work on with schools, theatres, festivals and other organisations within the region. Our entire communit

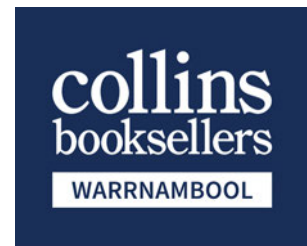
Reading matters deeply to our community. It supports literacy, wellbeing and connection.

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 Warrnambool