

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as an Australian literary creator to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

The careers of Australian literary creatives rely heavily on bricks-and-mortar shops; they not only sell our works, but provide outreach opportunities such as signings and book launches, often hand-selling our works to customers over the 'big shiny' overseas Authors. Bookshops also provide us with texts for personal development, market knowledge and, honestly, the dream of being on those very shelves in the first place. They put books in the hands of new readers, which is so very much needed with the global reading crisis and literacy struggles.

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.

Without bookshops, we lose not only a valuable community and support network, but the very real pleasure of going and talking to a real human being about what good books have come out. We lose the pleasure of seeing and feeling those tomes before we buy them. We

lose the heart and soul of our literary nation. Support them while they're still here, because if we lose them, it will leave a hole in our country. And frankly, it's not one Amazon can fill.

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, Deborah McDonnell.