



The Little Bookroom  
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Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a bookseller to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

My bookshop, The Little Bookroom, is the world's oldest children's bookstore, operating for 65 years since it opened in 1960. In that time, its ownership has been passed down to staff, making me the fourth successive owner, having rescued it from closure last year. I reopened in a new location in Brunswick East in October 2025, in time to celebrate our 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

As a children's specialist bookstore, we offer a greater range of choice for young readers than most general bookstores can. Our staff all have long histories of working with children's literature, as teachers as well as writers and other facets of the literature industry, so we prioritise expert advice when it comes to looking after our community and supporting schools in finding the right books for their readers. We host an extensive events program, including storytime, book launches, book clubs, education information evenings and sessions for adult readers focusing on children's literature. We have hosted up to 22 events in a single month. This is all with a very small staff of 6 people whose shifts rarely overlap. Providing a platform for local authors to showcase and share their work is an important element of what The Little Bookroom does, but connecting readers with books they'll enjoy and growing a love of reading is core to our ethos.

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.

This is exacerbated in the world of children's books due to the significantly lower average price point of books for younger readers. We need to sell 2-3 books to make the same amount as most general book sales. This means that staff hours are kept to a minimum and many of the tasks that could lead to growth or further engagement of community are delayed much longer than would be possible if the profit margin was higher.

The previous owners of The Little Bookroom had to close due to financial strain. I was only able to save the store through a crowdfunding campaign which saw us raise \$45k in two weeks to help cover moving/set up costs. This proves that the nationwide community cares about bricks and mortar bookstores existing as cultural touchstones.

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:

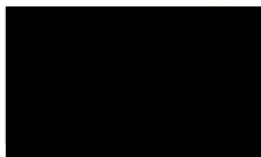
- Fund establishment of a skills training and certification program development and delivery to professionalise the industry, creating recognised career pathways.

- 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.
- 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 personally have worked as a children's specialist bookseller for over 24 years between retail and publishing. I have a teaching degree and a Masters in Children's literature. I was the manager of The Little Bookroom for five years before I became its new custodian. In my time here, I have seen toddlers grow from attendees at our storytimes to eager school-age book club members. We have shoppers travel from interstate with a visit to our store a key part of their itinerary, and I have developed strong working relationships with teachers and librarians who keep The Little Bookroom as a supplier even when they take up positions elsewhere in the country. Authors and illustrators of children's books actively seek us out as a location to launch their books regardless of being established or debut. Almost daily a customer tells us of their memories of being taken by parents or grandparents to one of our previous locations at some point in the last 65 years. By making it easy and enjoyable to find a book for every kind of reader is what inspires me to keep doing what I do, despite earning the least I've earned since my mid-twenties.

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,



(Owner)

**The Little Bookroom**

