

National Cultural Policy Submission

1469503

Public

Individual

Rebecca Clarke



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

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.

My local bookshop, The Chestnut Tree, supports the local community of West Footscray and the surrounding areas. Since its opening I have had more opportunities to interact with and discover my home and truly made me love where I live.

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.

The community I have discovered since The Chestnut Tree opened has been insurmountable. Events such as monthly book clubs, visits from local and national authors, classes hosted by local community members and so much more has allowed me to get to know and appreciate my community like I never would have before. The personalised service that I have received from my local, and all independent bookshops I have been fortunate enough to visit, has lead me to the discovery of a world of new authors and stories I may never have known.

Local bookshops support their communities by giving us a space to learn, build new relationships with other members of the area, as well as a place to showcase local artists and creators by selling their works or having them host events and classes. For all they do for us, to be able to support them and show them how much they mean to us, by recognising them as cultural infrastructure is the least we can do.

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 sector. 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,

Rebecca Clarke

