

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, [REDACTED], support the local community in South and Port Melbourne.

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.

We have been so lucky with the presence of [REDACTED] that my children grew with a passion for reading. In an environment where screens are the norm, my children through exposure to books since young (thanks to our proximity to a bookstore) are well-read and ahead in their learning. They have been so lucky to meet local authors in events organised by the bookshop. The experience of meeting these authors have been so amazing for my children. One that also inspires my children to want to write their own books. Each event that we go to create special memories for the children and these are experiences that cannot be replicated through online purchasing or discount department stores.

While people say they can buy books online, the local bookstore staff members are a wealth of knowledge that the experience of going to a bookstore is significantly different to just buying books online. The algorithm of book recommendations is different to the recommendations made by a staff member at a local bookstore. A person who has read a book can give book recommendations so much better than an online algorithm.

Our local bookstore also host mystery reading nights and book clubs. Our local bookshop provides a community of practice for readers for my children and myself. The bookshop is a place where readers of all ages can come together and feel at home.

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 sectors. 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,

[REDACTED]

A parent, raising readers.