

22nd May, 2026

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, Thesaurus Books, supported my local community in Brighton, Victoria for 48 years and me, personally, for 20yrs until its forced closure in April 2026. It could no longer compete with high discount books sold at BIG W and the like, for less than half the recommended retail price. Furthermore, their rent in a local shopping strip increased by 50%.

Local bookshops have been vital to the success of emerging authors and illustrators like me. (I have ten published books with more under contract.) Thesaurus books had sold my books at all of my local book launches, as well as providing (free) promotional window displays and hand-selling to the local schools, preschools and community. BIG W and the like only sell a tiny fraction of books printed each year, and rarely those by debut authors or small publishers. If were starting out today as a debut author, my chances of building a career in Australia would be significantly hindered by not having a local bookshop.

Without a vibrant independent bookshop community in this country we will be at the mercy of the discount chains like BIG W and will no longer foster new and emerging voices to our cultural landscape. The discount chain stores do not care about supporting diverse local voices or Australian stories. They just care about selling books as massive discounts and high volumes – irrespective of content.

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. I have spent the past month of May going to nine different independent bookshops in the greater Melbourne area and conducting 'Story Time and Craft' sessions to promote my new picture book's release. These have been hugely rewarding and well attended events, where I have engaged with dozens of local parents/carers and children, via their local independent bookshop, and fostered an early love of books, pictures, words and storytelling.

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 writer, reader and community member, I ask you to stand up for these vital spaces before they are gone.

Yours sincerely,

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