

Dear Minister Burke,

23 May 2026

I am writing as an author and customer of local independent bookshops to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

My local bookshop, [REDACTED] has been a great way for me to connect to my new community and a great support to authors with launches, events and book clubs for the local schools. Prior to moving to this area, I lived on the [REDACTED] and frequented Farrell's Bookshop which also supports the local community with a variety of events including launches I have travelled over 50 kilometres to attend.

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. I would be devastated if these bookshops had to close because of this sort of competition.

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.

Local independent bookshops are the lifeblood of the community and a vital piece in the puzzle of encouraging children to read.

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,

[REDACTED]

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