

Dear Minister Burke,

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

My favourite bookshop, Gleebooks, has operated in Glebe for over 50 years.

It is such a unique shop in the neighbourhood and in the wider Sydney area. Not only is it an absolute treasure trove of fabulous books (with all the classics, as well as a wonderful range of new releases from both Australian and international creators), it hosts so many amazing community events. I have attended numerous book launches, where members of the public are able to meet the authors and illustrators behind the books. How often does someone have the amazing opportunity to do that?? There are very few places in the community that allow this kind of interaction to happen. And these are free events, which make them accessible to everyone! How incredible is that!

I get to go to wonderful events that have been organised by passionate book sellers, and because it is so accessible I can even take my kinds along. Together as a family, we get to meet the local Australian heroes who have made the books we have fallen in love with, and we get to learn about how these books were created, and we always leave feeling so inspired and proud of the amazing talent we have in this country.

The amazing book sellers help us to discover new books that we hadn't even thought of, and definitely wouldn't have been able to find on our own if we'd been looking online. They are dedicated, passionate, with a wealth of knowledge, and so incredibly warm and helpful.

They are what make our local bookstore special. These kinds of people do not exist in the big retail stores like Big W, and online? Forget about it!

(Actually the only other place we have experienced that degree of knowledge and passion about books, is at our local library!)

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.

It has been absolutely heartbreaking to see so many local bookshops close in recent years. It is such a struggle for them to stay afloat, while they're undermined by the soulless online giants and discount chains that sell books at 40–50% below recommended retail price.

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 love visiting independent bookstores, and believe they play such a unique and important role in the local communities. They are truly special places, where you can still have actual human interactions with people that are knowledgeable and passionate about books of all kinds, for all ages, who will go above and beyond to help you to find the right book for you. They care. The soulless online giants and big discount chains do NOT.

In a time when people are feeling more disconnected, lonely and searching for meaning, when literacy rates in children are plummeting, bookstores are one of those few remaining retail spaces which offer the opportunity for people to connect with actual human beings who generously share their knowledge and passion of books, where they champion local Australian creators, and foster a love of reading.

We need to support Australian independent bookstores and invest in them, because they give so much more back to the community than what is put in. They are more than just a store. They are a place of belonging, connection and inspiration.

I strongly 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,

