

Sunday 24th May, 2026

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a bookseller to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

My bookshop, Potts Point Bookshop has operated in Elizabeth Bay for 22 years. The Potts Point Bookshop is considered to be the beating heart of our community. Over the years we have hosted events and launches for many local authors, and run free weekly story time events for pre-school children. We work closely with local schools to help enrich their literacy programs - beyond just supplying books. 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. We are under constant pressure as the overheads increase all the time. We have abandoned nearly all off site events because we cannot find an affordable venue to work with.

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.
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- 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 have been a bookseller for more than 30 years, and the satisfaction from getting the right book to the right person never diminishes. When someone tells you that you were responsible for helping their child to learn to read, it makes you feel immensely proud. Bookshops maintain and develop culture, creative and critical thinking and help sustain an engaged, thoughtful world. Bookshops are essential for a modern democracy. My greatest fear is that we slide into a world dominated by online giants and discount stores and there is a further erosion of cultural capital. This policy will help ensure the life of the bookshop at the intellectual heart of every community.

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,
Anna Low
Owner

Potts Point Bookshop

