

22 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. I am also a member of the Writing Australia Council, but this submission reflects my personal views, not those of the Council.

My bookshop, Fullers Bookshop, has operated in Hobart for 106 years, where we employ 20-something booksellers. Like many independent bookshops, we are not merely a retail business, but rather part of the local cultural infrastructure: we run a range of monthly reading groups (with hundreds of attendees each month), connecting readers to books and to each other; we run one or two events each week (with thousands of attendees annually); and in the last few years our literacy program has given away thousands of books to local kids to boost their love of reading. Bookshops like mine are a place where people gather and connect with each other, while also being one of the primary places new Australian writing gets discovered, in a world dominated by algorithms that favour overseas content.

We do all of this while operating on the tight margins of book recommended retail pricing. It is sometimes still said that books are expensive in Australia, but this hasn't been true in some time: decades of downward pressure (from the likes of Netflix, on the one hand, and Amazon, on the other) has meant that book prices have lagged considerably behind inflation. It is hard to argue that the increased affordability of books is a bad thing, but the reality is that downward pressure on the retail price of books has not been matched by downward pressure on the costs of writing, producing or selling those books, and the upshot is that authors, publishers and bookshops are all finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, so much so that the sector is on the verge of crisis.

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 be taking a serious look about the best form support could take here.

I urge the government to act. Local bookshops are irreplaceable — but without support, more will close. The submission by the Australian Booksellers' Association contains modest, internationally proven measures that would deliver significant cultural and economic returns.

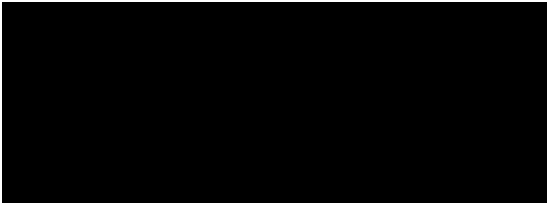
I also support the submissions from the Australian Society of Authors, the Australian Publishers' Association, Books Create Australia, and Australia Reads; and I urge the



government to give full consideration to the needs of authors, publishers and readers, as well as booksellers, to ensure the health of the Australian literary ecosystem.

Finally, I commend the creation of Writing Australia as being a terrific investment in Australian writing, and note that Writing Australia is well placed to deliver expanded support for authors, publishers and booksellers.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Jarvis
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Hobart, Tasmania