

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister Burke,

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

Children's literature plays a pivotal role in supporting children to understand themselves and the world. Research has proven that reading with children strengthens the parent-child bond, and aids in the development of emotional regulation skills, empathy, and of course, literacy.

I am very concerned that local bookshops could soon begin to disappear from Australia's cultural landscape. I recently attended the KidLitVic conference in Melbourne and publishing professionals there spoke openly about the enormous influence that discount department stores (Big W, K-Mart, and Target) have on the acquisition of new children's books. Publishers are already reluctant to acquire books unless they will appeal to the discount department stores. If we begin to displace independent booksellers from the market, soon publishers will become even more reluctant to publish diverse, ground-breaking, artistic, and literary stories from a range of authors, including marginalised groups. Market forces will begin to seriously limit creative expression.

Local bookshops are part of our cultural infrastructure. They support emerging and established authors to launch books and they connect parents and children with a wide range of reading materials. The range of books is crucial, there is an enormous difference in range between a bookshop like Gleebooks, Sydney, and my local K-mart store. As an emerging author, I rely on independent booksellers to support and champion my work. We know that if a child learns to love books when they are young, they are likely to carry that passion for reading forward into the rest of their lives, becoming reflective and educated citizens.

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 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 signature]