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GST rollback on books

Update on the ABA 'grass roots' campaign

The Australian Bookseller's Association (ABA) is about to launch a campaign calling for a roll-back on the GST on books. The GST rollback campaign working group met recently to review progress and finalise the timeline for the campaign. After careful consideration of all relevant factors — lead time for printing and distribution of the materials, the likely timing of the election — it was decided to postpone the postcard petition campaign until October. However, the working group urges booksellers and libraries to visit local federal Members to lobby them on the issue of the GST on books soon.

The postcard petition campaign launch date — 10 October 2001

As part of their campaign, the ABA will supply postcards (to be signed by library users) and supporting materials to participants urging the federal parliament to remove GST from books.

The campaign will be officially launched at a selected bookshop in each state. The bookshops will be in locations designed to attract maximum media attention (for example, those located in marginal electorates).

The petition campaign will run for approximately six weeks (or less if the election is held sooner than expected), culminating in the delivery of petition postcards to Parliament prior to the election.

Subject to sufficient funds being raised, the ABA will be printing 300 000 petition postcards, 1500 counterpacks for holding the postcards and another 1500 packs for collecting completed postcards. The postcards and packs will be distributed to all ABA bookshops and other interested bookshops. With assistance from the Australian Library and Information Association, the postcards will also be provided to interested public and school libraries. We will also be printing 300 000 'no tax on books' bookmarks for distribution throughout the campaign. The bookmarks will include details of the campaign website.

Penguin Australia have offered to support the campaign by distributing campaign materials to bookshops without charge. Many thanks to Peter Field, managing director of Penguin Australia, for this very valuable assistance.

ABA lobbying

The ABA has had positive discussions with the Democrats Leader, Natasha Stott Despoja, and the Opposition

spokesperson for the Arts, Bob McMullan, and with Simon Crean's office. They are waiting for responses to requests for meetings with the Treasurer, Peter Costello, and the Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley.

Website

The 'notaxonbooks' website will be activated on 1 October and will be linked with the ABA website. Members of the public will be able to sign and post an electronic petition postcard from the website, adding substantially to the overall impact of our petition campaign.

ABA members with their own websites will be encouraged to create links to the 'notaxonbooks' website.

Federal Member kits

The ABA have developed lobbying kits which outline how to arrange a meeting with local federal Members of Parliament and setting out the key points to be covered during the meeting. It is vital that a uniform message is delivered during these meetings, so the points set out in the kit will be carefully worded and very specific.

The postcard petition campaign will have far more impact if it follows a concerted effort to raise the issue of the GST on books with as many federal Members as possible. Non-member bookshops and libraries which would like to assist with this phase of the campaign can contact the ABA on 03 9349 5766 to request a copy of the kit.

Fundraising

The ABA is enormously grateful for the financial contributions received towards the campaign. Funds received to date total \$20 100.

The ABA's fundraising target is \$35 000. If the ABA is able to raise an additional \$25 000, they would then run a full page advertisement in *The Australian* to co-incide with the launch of the postcard petition campaign.

The ABA is grateful to DW Thorpe and in particular Lorien Kaye, editor of the *Weekly Book Newsletter (WBN)*, for providing publicity for their campaign in the *WBN* and for recording progress towards our fundraising target each week.

Donations from non-member bookshops and libraries would be gratefully received. If you would like to contribute, please contact the ABA, PO Box 1088 Carlton Vic 3053, phone: 03 9349 5766, fax 03 9349 5799, or e-mail: abaaba@aba.org.au.