

To the Productivity Commission

I am an Australian author of eighteen published novels, the majority of which are published and contracted in Australia by Harlequin Australia. As an author who writes for a living and relies on my book royalties to provide for my family, many of the suggestions in the recent Productivity Commission on Intellectual Property Arrangements gravely concern me, in particularly the following two:

*DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 5.2*

*The Australian Government should repeal parallel import restrictions for books in order for the reform to take effect no later than the end of 2017*

*DRAFT FINDING 4.2*

*While hard to pinpoint an optimal copyright term, a more reasonable estimate would be closer to 15 to 25 years after creation; considerably less than 70 years after death.*

Let's first focus on what repealing parallel import restrictions for books means for me as an author and therefore my Australian readers.

My books as I mentioned above are predominantly published by an Australian company – this company is able to contract Australian content because of the income it also gets from publishing international titles within Australia. In the last five years we have seen a boom in Australian publishing, with many new authors being bought and readers loving that they can finally read books with an Australian narrative. I've published a number of books in the Aussie rural romance genre – these books are rarely picked up overseas – but the Australian readers have a huge appetite for them ([www.australianruralromance.com](http://www.australianruralromance.com)).

Should current parallel importation restrictions be lifted, it would enable overseas publishers to import cheaper printed versions of books here to be sold at cheaper prices for the consumer. This may appear a good thing – you can get a cheaper edition of Danielle Steele or Stephen King, but what about those books that are only published in Australia? What about our Aussie narratives that (along with Aussie film, art, music, etc) shape who we are as a nation? These books will quite possibly become extinct if Australian publishers lose the cash flow that comes from being able to publish overseas titles in Australia.

This worries me as a reader who wants to read Australian stories; it worries me as a mother who wants her children to grow up with Australian literature, and it worries me as a writer who is making my living through being published in Australia **and** is paying tax on this income without any need for handouts or assistance from the Australian government.

As I see it, lifting parallel importation restrictions will encourage Australians to buy overseas products rather than support industry within our country. It will be detrimental to publishers and therefore printers, authors, editors, booksellers,

and, most importantly, readers. I cannot understand the reasoning behind discouraging Australians to buy Australian made and owned products. Shouldn't our government be protecting the Australian publishing industry in the same way the UK and US books are protected?

I am also appalled at the suggestion to DRASTICALLY reduce the copyright term on intellectual property. The report claims that a book's commercial life rarely extends past five years and that most authors aren't motivated to write by making money, and those that do make money earn such an insubstantial amount that protecting their commercial rights is ridiculous.

I refute all of these ludicrous assumptions. For one, my first book will have been out five years in 2017 and is still selling a substantial number of copies per year. From that one book I am making money, helping to pay my mortgage, household bills and school fees. But from that and subsequent books I am making a good living and contributing tax to this country. Income may not be my sole motivation for writing – I'm lucky enough to have a job I love – but I DO earn a living from writing full time and there are a number of other authors in the same position.

As a self-employed person, I do not have an employer paying superannuation on my behalf and therefore I would be eventually relying on royalties for my retirement. Should the copyright term be reduced as the report suggests, I would not have this possible income and would therefore become more reliant on government handouts in my old age. I have put years into my career, and to have someone decide that all my hard work will be taken away from me probably within my lifetime is tantamount to theft.

I'm am deeply worried about the future of the Australian publishing industry if the report's suggestions go ahead. I have a son who is also passionate about the book industry and wants to work in the publishing sector one day. If things continue strongly as they currently are in Australian publishing, then I feel confident that this is a goal he will be able to achieve. But if the Productivity Commission's recommendations go ahead, I suspect there will hardly be any such opportunities for our next generation in publishing. There will be no Australian publishers, therefore there will be few Australian books and few Australian authors. I cannot comprehend why any government would think this is a good idea.

Yours sincerely

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