



SHANE W SMITH

GRAPHIC NOVELIST

Attention: Productivity Commission

Submitted online via <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/intellectual-property/make-submission#lodge>

My name is Shane W Smith, and I am a writer. Four of my seven books have been published here in Australia, with another one due out by the end of the 2016 calendar year. I currently supplement my writing income with a full-time job, but it is my intention to one day become a full-time writer, and utilise ongoing royalties of a substantial catalogue of creative work to fund my retirement. Or, I suppose I should say: it was my intention. The proposed amendments to the copyright laws, removing an author's copyright after a mere 15 years, is forcing a lot of writers to revise their long-term plans.

But let's leave the long-term aside for the moment. I am in a fortunate position to have had a number of books released within a relatively short timeframe, but many writers do not have that luxury, and will quite legitimately take several years to research, write, and publish new works. Over the course of a career, that can amount to a significant number of titles, but these proposed amendments to the copyright laws will see those authors able to obtain royalties for only a couple of books at any given point in their career.

To deny authors the right to enjoy the royalties of their back catalogue is going to force many writers - not all, certainly, but many, myself included - to remain in stable paid employment separate from their writing careers. This will, of course, result in fewer full-time authors, and a reduction in the number of quality titles being written.

For my part, I am quite happy to discuss the principles of fair use of my work on a case-by-case basis while I am still alive. There is no need to forcibly remove me from the process before my death, and it seems like an oddly punitive recommendation of the Productivity Commission. This is a step that no other country with a robust publishing industry has taken, and if we're out on that limb by ourselves, we are just begging to be exploited - not just locally, but by the entire world.

Is Mem Fox really no longer entitled to enjoy the financial benefits of having written classic children's books like *Possum Magic*? Thomas Keneally no longer entitled to *Schindler's Ark*? John Marsden no longer entitled to any of the multi-award-winning books he wrote in the 1980's and 1990's?

To strip the authors of their own copyright prior to their death is tantamount to an admission that the government considers their work to be ethereal and fleeting, and the writer themselves tragically disposable.

When this compounds with the reduced publishing opportunities that the removal of PIR will bring, brought about by a hugely increased risk for local businesses and considerable competition from overseas imprints, the end result is quite simply devastating for Australian art.

Our voice is important. Our art is integral to our history. The arts are a significant contributor to the economy, too. The proposals outlined in the Productivity Commissions draft report will devastate the creative landscape, affecting individual artists, and the publishing field as a whole.

I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to allow Australian authors to continue to make their way in the current system. It's already hard enough to build a self-sustaining writing career. Is it really necessary to make it harder still?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shane W Smith