

Submission to the Productivity Commission

Intellectual Property Arrangements Draft Report – April 2016

From David Merrylees and Katherine Downey

Dear PC,

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to your draft report. We are currently looking for a bookshop in Melbourne and expect to be up and running in the next few months. We are new to this industry, but can see some glaring problems with what is proposed. The book industry in Australia has faced, and to a large extent overcome, some tremendous challenges in the last few years. The e-book revolution and the advent of online sellers such as Amazon using books as a loss leader just to mention a few.

The greatest impact of the proposed changes to intellectual property rights will be that new Australian authors will find it much more difficult to get a start in the world of writing. Any new author will need to compete with English speaking authors from other parts of the world. We may no longer get a chance to hear our Australian authors testing their voice, it will be drowned by the Trumpets from over the oceans. It is important to protect and nurture Australian literature. Changes to the rules are supposedly going to reduce the price of books for Australian readers, but what will the books be? Words matter, not just numbers.

You would get few that would disagree that the price of Australian books is higher than we would like. Although the economic rationalist would say this is always a bad thing, it is quite likely our higher prices have allowed the Australian book industry to survive the last few years. If there is a desire to have lower prices, then how about working with a carrot, rather than just the stick it to them? Encourage Australian Publishers to increase the export of Australian books perhaps? Why does Australia repeatedly diminish our advantages to benefit overseas big business interests; look at the wheat industry since the removal of the Australian Wheat Board.

We want to open a bookshop in the next few months. We have long wanted to do this and have put tremendous effort and our life savings into this venture. Just when the REAL book industry seems to be on a modest upswing, it seems very poor timing to be changing the rules.

Yours sincerely,

David Merrylees

Katherine Downey

3 June 2016