

As an Australian writer, I am writing to you to express my dismay over the recommendations made by the Productivity Commission in their recent draft report on Intellectual Property Arrangements, and to ask for your support.

The Productivity Commission has proposed that:

- The term of copyright be reduced to 15-25 years from creation
- Parallel importation rules on books be removed
- Australia adopt US-style 'fair use' exceptions to our Copyright Act

I have written over 200 books for children and young adults. (My website is www.pamelarushby.com) I have supported myself as a full-time writer for children and young adults for the past 14 years. I may not be able to do this much longer.

If the draft Productivity Commission Report is adopted, Australian authors will lose significant income.

If copyright is reduced to the proposed 15-25 years, I would only receive income from my work for a maximum of 25 years. This is outrageous. A builder, a lawyer, a doctor, a plumber or an electrician receives payment at the conclusion of their work. Writers, however, normally receive a nominal advance on publication, and then royalties, a percentage of the cover price of their book, are paid as the book sells (*but* only after the advance is repaid) over a period of years. So, as I get older, my income would cease. Writers need that income.

If parallel importation on books is removed, the mass importation of lower-royalty and royalty-free foreign editions of Australian authors' books into the Australian marketplace would be allowed. (These books are cheaper because of the far larger overseas markets). At present, Australian authors are protected from this. *All major copyright territories around the world (including the UK and USA) protect their own markets.* Why is Australia even considering removing our protection?

But what is also highly significant, is that if parallel importation is allowed, Australian stories could cease to be told. Imported foreign editions have been edited for their home markets. So American imported books contain terms such as 'Mom' instead of 'Mum', 'sidewalk' instead of 'footpath', 'faucet' instead of 'tap', 'bathroom' instead of 'toilet' (or, indeed, dunny!). This is telling our children that Australian terms are not significant, or even correct.

Furthermore, foreign markets have little interest in our Australian stories. Many of my books are novels based on events from Australian history (eg Australia's warhorses, the Plague in Australia in 1900, the Vietnam War, the 1891 Shearers' Strike). My books win awards in Australia. They aren't published in, eg, the USA ("Too Australian for us").

The Productivity Commission has commented that 'Writers rarely write for financial reasons'. I do. I've supported myself for 14 years. I love my work, but if I'm not paid for it, do I go on the dole? The old age pension?

Treasurer Scott Morrison commented in the Sydney Morning Herald in 2012, 'I don't read international fiction. I just don't relate to it. I'm interested in our stories.' Yet he seems to be doing his best, by his announced plans to remove parallel importation restrictions on books, to get rid of our stories altogether.

From my point of view, if these changes are introduced they will very significantly affect Australian writers' ability to earn a living from their work.

Do I sound angry? You bet I am. I'm as mad as a cut snake (and that's a phrase you'll never see in an imported book). I want to keep earning fair income from my work, and I want to keep 'Mom' out of Aussie kids' books.

Please reject the recommendations of the Productivity Commission and uphold Australian artists' rights to their work and their right to earn fair pay from their work.

Yours faithfully

Pamela Rushby

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