

Intellectual Property Arrangements Draft Report

Response by Susanna Rogers

To the Commission

I'm a writer and a consumer of fiction, so my response is directed at copyright and other issues as they relate to writing. I strongly oppose several aspects of the Intellectual Property Arrangements Draft Report.

Copyright longevity changes

Reducing the length of copyright to a length of 15-25 years (total) is insulting to writers. If a writer produces a work, then they should be the one to benefit from it. It is outrageous to consider the possibility that someone could write a novel (that may take years to write) that would then be out of copyright after 15-25 years. If the book is not in copyright anyone can legally take that work, re-publish it and make money from it. Why on earth should someone other than the author benefit? I know writers who have backlists going back 20 years. This needs to be protected.

Parallel importation restrictions

The current laws protect Australian writers and the Australian publishing industry. The proposed plans in the draft report do not. This should not be allowed. New Zealand removed parallel importation restriction laws and their publishing industry died. I have no doubt the same would happen in Australia.

The proposed changes would also have a detrimental effect on Australian writers. Aussie writers would receive reduced royalties. I wouldn't have a problem with this if writers received enormous sums of money – but they don't. I'm sure you're aware the average Australian writer makes about \$13,000 from their writing per year.

I'm also a consumer of books and feel that as a consumer, the proposed changes are unnecessary. I buy e-books on Amazon, order books postage free on Book Depository (because they're cheap) and buy titles from my local Dymocks and other stores. As a consumer, I already have options. I do not need these proposed new laws.

In closing

Perhaps it truly was time to review intellectual property arrangements. I'm not saying it wasn't. I'm saying we need to protect our writing industry or it will fail. Writers don't make millions of dollars like mining companies and they don't expect government subsidies or tax breaks. We do, however, expect a fair go.