

1 June 2016

I want to add my voice to the chorus of Australian authors and book-lovers urging the government to reject the draft recommendations made by the Productivity Commission in regard to Intellectual Property Arrangements.

Long before I became a full-time writer, I was a reader. As a child growing up in South Australia, I read a diet of mostly English and American stories. It felt rare and thrilling to be given a story with Australian settings, characters and lives. To see the rich diet of Australian stories now available to my nieces and nephews in Australia is a marvellous thing. My sisters and brothers, my mother, my cousins, my friends in Australia have all seen our lives reflected in the novels now available to us. Australian stories are more than mirrors. They inform us, entertain us, give us pride in our country, teach us about Australian lives different than ours, challenge us, amuse us. They make us feel, we, as Australians, have a place in the world.

I feel that same pride when I go into a bookshop in Dublin, or London, or America, or Europe and see Australian writers on the shelves. There are so many – Hannah Kent, Tim Winton, Kate Morton, Liane Moriarty, Garth Nix, Graeme Simsion, Richard Flanagan, Geraldine Brooks, Peter Carey, Thomas Keneally, among others. All are writers whose careers began in Australia and who now reach worldwide audiences, with their distinctly Australian voices.

All of these writers and many more were nurtured and published at home in Australia, before they sold internationally. I am one of them. A publisher at Penguin Australia took a chance on me in 1999 with my first manuscript. It was clear to me from the beginning that my publisher was determined to help me as a writer, encourage me to develop my storytelling, to stay with me for the long haul. Since then, I have written twelve books, all of which have been bestsellers in Australia, been published internationally, been translated into more than a dozen languages, won and been shortlisted for awards. Those twelve books have not only allowed me to make a living as a full-time writer, but also created employment in Australia for editors, designers, marketing people, sales people, booksellers, distributors.

Writing and publishing are not the same as selling foodstuffs, or cars. What we create isn't a product made on a conveyor belt or by a machine. It is an object that exists because of a single spark of a writer's imagination, that with time, patience and hard work becomes a finished book. The irony is that a lack of imagination and lack of understanding about the value of cultural life is now endangering our thriving publishing industry in Australia.

I believe there will only be negative consequences if the recommendations of the Productivity Commission are accepted. Our bookselling market will be flooded with imports from overseas, for which our writers will receive few if any royalties. This will affect not only the writers, but also local booksellers and publishers. If Australian publishers have no guarantee that they can sell their books competitively and fairly in their own market, why would they take a risk and nurture a new or young writer?

Why are we being asked to operate under copyright conditions that two of the biggest publishing markets in the world - the UK and the USA - don't ask of their writers, publishers and booksellers?

There is no guarantee that book prices in Australia will be cheaper if PIR are changed as recommended. New Zealand's example of what can happen to book prices and a publishing industry should act as a warning. Books published elsewhere are already freely available to any consumer in Australia via the Internet.

The possibility of the lifetime of copyright being changed from 70 years after an author's death to 15 to 25 years after publication has already - and rightly - been soundly criticised. Any other investment of a person's time, talents and discipline would not be treated in this way. Books should not be the exception.

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