

To the Commission,

I wish to object to your Productivity Commission's recommendation that copyright be reduced from 70 years after death to 15 years after publication. As an Australian author I am deeply concerned that your report has recommended this reduction. It is unfair and unjust to restrict an author's ability to earn an income with this severe decrease. It is hard enough to earn any money at all in the publishing industry with the vast majority of revenue going to publishers, and now you wish to restrict my right to fair remuneration even further?

As an author am I not entitled to continued income from my years of training and hard work? Are my children not entitled to inherit this income in the event of my early passing? Writing is not something I do in my spare time as a hobby- it is something that enables me to pay my mortgage, my children's education fees and to put food on the table for my family.

Should this recommendation be passed as law you will be responsible for a severe loss of income for hard working, creative individuals who, more often than not, earn very little money anyway. No other worker in Australia, creative or otherwise, is under threat of having their entire income destroyed after 15 years, so how is this fair? Who will this reduction benefit? The publishers make the majority of the revenue from a published book will no longer have to pay royalties to authors, which means they will collect all proceeds from the sale of a book. How is this fair and reasonable?

Authors are not asking for excessive intellectual property protection, merely to retain what is already in place, protection for 70 years after death. I wonder how many of the commission's staff have actually written a book? Until I began writing, I had no idea of the amount of work- years of work- that goes into the creation of one book, even though I was an avid reader. Once I became published I realised that the work doesn't stop with a book sitting on a shelf- the promotion, marketing and publicity continues for years afterwards. Are we to be paid nothing for this ongoing work?

I am also objecting to the proposed lifting of parallel importation restrictions. The Australian publishing industry should be protected, in the same way the UK and US books are protected, against overseas editions being flooded in. The cheaper US editions may flood back into the Australian market, and the author gets a much, much lower royalty for these copies (if any), and the Australian publisher gets nothing.

The Australian publishing industry needs to be protected from this parallel importation if it is to continue to exist. Australia has produced some incredibly talented writers since colonisation. These writers have been paramount in promoting Australian identity, culture and personality via their literary efforts. To allow cheaper versions of books into our country is to limit revenue for both the publisher and the author- yet another blow on top of your recommendation to reduce copyright to 15 years after publication. Do you not like authors?

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Sandford-Bell

Writing as Sarah Belle with Escape Publishing.