

SUBMISSION FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

I have just published my first book for Random House Australia having spent the past 6 years working in web development for a national media organization. This has afforded me a rare insight into both worlds – the online and the written word. I believe now more than ever the latter is important as a deluge of free online content is never a replacement for well researched thought out books. The time taken to perform this research requires the author to be paid to survive.

This industry, the jobs it contains and its ability to grow, would be under threat if the draft recommendations from the productivity commission were adopted. The removal of parallel import restrictions is a direct attack on already struggling publishing houses and their ability to remain solvent. They provide a voice for Australian authors in the long written form that cannot be found anywhere else and they rely on the revenue gained from grey imports (as they are known) to continue to operate.

Allowing local works to be reproduced under the highly ambiguous “fair use” and reducing the copyright to 15 years is also harmful to a flourishing Australian literary community as there is less incentive to write works that could simply be stolen and reproduced without adequate compensation to authors. The analogy is obvious. Why would pharmaceutical companies invest in researching life-saving medicine if someone could steal this research and simply reproduce the medicine? They would not. As the pharmaceutical companies are protected so should Australian writers.

Nor is it beneficial for Australian consumers for the nation’s literary world to shrivel and die. An appreciation for the unique Australian voice, our ability to document the Australian identity and our collective experience cannot be successfully performed by a foreign publisher. Australians deserve to have a literary culture they can proud of and for this reason it is necessary to retain the current protections afforded to the Australian publishing industry.