

As a proudly Independent Australian bookseller, part of one of the most vibrant and successful bookselling industries in the world, I am deeply concerned about the recommendations of the Productivity Commission to remove the Parallel Importation Restrictions (PIRs) on books.

Australian Independent booksellers are the greatest champions of Australian authors and their work. We are also deeply supportive of new Australian writers and the commitment made by publishers in supporting emerging writers. Independent booksellers do this by reading, selling and promoting these authors and their books within our local communities and in the wider literary culture online. Without the magnificent depth of Australian writing we enjoy we are subsequently at risk of demise ourselves.

The proposed changes will negatively impact on nurturing and promoting our Australian literature and culture at large, destroy a publishing and bookseller industry employing thousands of people; and detrimentally impact on Australian creativity and diversity, with little or no change to book prices and availability of product to the Australian reader.

Negative impact on Australian literature, culture and creativity

If the recommendations are introduced it will decimate our Australian literary culture by reducing the investment by Australian publishers in the works of established and emerging Australian writers, who in turn will see copyright protections for their own works reduced and/or withdrawn, resulting in the death of our rich and diverse literary legacy and those author voices yet to emerge.

The vast majority of our readers are content with current book pricing and are deeply committed to supporting new and established Australian voices, as well as their local bookstores, who are often the hub of local communities and who generously support local libraries and schools through donations, events and the promotion of literacy and reading. Much of this support is also focused on introducing young readers to books written by Australian authors.

The changes are sure to impact on the amount of Australian content taught and made available within Australian schools and the range of Australian children's books available. We currently enjoy a wonderful interdependent relationship with our local schools because of our shared commitment to children's literacy and love of reading and it would be devastating to undermine this by the proposed impact of these recommendations.

Negative impact on Australian book industry and independent bookselling businesses

The recommended changes will undoubtedly endanger one of the largest and ever growing book cultures in the world, one which employs more than 20,000 people Australia-wide.

Between the writer and the reader there are literally dozens of others: agent, publisher, copy and line editors, formatters and type setters and proof readers, printers, suppliers of paper and ink, the people in the warehouses and drivers of delivery trucks, marketeers and sales representatives, the list goes on... and of course the booksellers putting the books in the hands of the reading public.

It's a thriving industry, the Australian book industry. It employs thousands, turns over billions of dollars each year, it doesn't ask for subsidies and contributes to the life and soul of the nation.

The proposed changes will have a domino effect upon local communities throughout Australia if author and publisher protections are affected.

Removing of PIRs would not lead to cheaper prices

We see no indication that the overriding push to introduce cheaper books into the Australian marketplace is based on any form of current economic modelling or indeed, any consultation with the Australian reading public or the community of booksellers they are engaged with. In fact, book prices in NZ where the market has been opened since 1998 are higher with the range of books sold fallen and publishers' capital withdrawn from the market.

The argument about availability and access of books does not stand as Australians can buy books from anywhere anytime under the existing PIRs. Since 2009 the Australian book industry has self-regulated, shortening the publication and availability window in this market with most of the internationally renowned authors and publications available in Australia simultaneously.

As independent small business owners, we are greatly concerned about our futures and the families and communities we support if these recommendations are supported. As a result, I would urge you to maintain the current PIRs on books to ensure the survival of our brilliant and flourishing Australian book industry, our bountiful and rich literary legacy and culture and the generations of readers to come.