

June 1, 2016

From: Markus Zusak

To: The Submission to the Productivity Commission Draft Report  
(April 2016) – Intellectual Property Arrangements

To the Commission,

My name is Markus Zusak, and I'm writing in regard to your plan to lift restrictions on parallel importation. Nothing has changed since similar plans were drafted in previous years; as a culture, we need a strong Australian publishing industry.

As it stands now, I'm the author of five books, all published internationally, and one in particular, *The Book Thief*, is published in over forty languages; it's one of the most successful and highest selling books to come out of Australia. That said, a book like *The Book Thief* would not have been published without a strong Australian publishing industry – an industry that gave me my first shot when I published a book called *The Underdog* (and a very Australian book at that) when I was twenty-four years old.

My point is that parallel importation restrictions have kept Australian publishing strong. They've given rise to new and young Australian voices like mine. They've given aspiring writers in Australia a chance to garner their talent and then make leaps throughout the world, just as I have – and I strongly believe that if parallel importation restrictions had been lifted in previous decades, there wouldn't have been the kind of support for authors like me. I wouldn't have got that first shot here at home; there wouldn't have been room for me. Australian publishers would have had a hard time simply *existing*, let alone taking a punt on a kid like I was. Moreover, there wouldn't be Australian children reading books by Australians anymore. We would have an imported literary culture. We would never allow something like this to happen to our sporting culture, so why do we constantly threaten books with it?

I'm not going to comment on the suggestions that were made on the subject of copyright. Since some commonsense and respect has been forthcoming there, I'm extremely grateful; I thank you for it.

I do, however remain concerned that a short-sightedness is at the heart of crippling the Australian publishing industry by lifting parallel importation. It's a proud industry. It's an industry that thrives against all odds, really. It's an industry that thrives against a fashion that says people don't read anymore – and ours is one of the few book markets in the world that stood proudly up to the Global Financial Crisis. It survived and came back. Consumers were never short-changed. Our readers were and *are* reading books from all over the world, but were and *are* aware and hugely supportive of books that are written by us, published by us and *read* by us – and the *us*, of course, are Australians.

Please, keep Australian publishing strong.  
Our writers deserve it.  
Our publishers deserve it.  
But above all else, our readers deserve it.