

As a children's book illustrator with predominantly Australian themes, it has taken me 28 long, hard years to build my career (and not in a straight line) to a point where I am able to do what I love and have time to spend with my family. I studied at University, I paid my HECS debt. Through my Australian publisher my illustrations bring joy into the lives of young Australian children every day and night, teaching them about our animals, nurturing their imaginations and bringing that bond between a child and parent even closer - it's not just about reading. It's not just a book. Like many Australian authors and illustrators, I speak to thousands of school children every year inspiring them to read, draw, explore their imaginations, chase their dreams and have belief in themselves, not to mention all the other messages and teaching opportunities we weave into our books.

The proposed changes to Copyright Laws and lifting the Parallel Importation Restrictions by the Productivity Commission, threaten to take all this away, and not just from me. This will be a snowball effect to Australia's most successful creative industry for decades to come. How important is Australian literacy to our government? How important are our school children and the influences they have in those early years? How important is our culture and the need to support our own? It's not just a book.

It's been quoted many times that the average author income is \$13,000. It's fairly obvious we don't do this for the money but we do need to make a living to survive. My books are solely published in Australia. Lifting the PIR will increase the risk to Australian publishers dramatically. If they can't invest in local authors and illustrators, there won't be books for us to promote and speak about in schools. There in itself is one example of the social impact, part of the snowball effect. They will have to make do with the flood of cheap imports.

Although the Arts Minister, Senator Mitch Fifield, has finally made a statement denying that the government has any plans to reduce the term of copyright down to 15-25 years from creation of work, that statement makes no reference to the far bigger threat of lifting the parallel importation of books and "fair use" exceptions to the copyright act. As many other authors have said, you only have to look at the damage caused to New Zealand and Canada when this was done.

You ask 'Do IP rights encourage genuinely innovative and creative output that would not have otherwise occurred?' Absolutely. Without it, from my perspective, I would be crippled without it. Creating a book can take years from the initial manuscript draft, through to the illustrations and publishing until it finally hits the shelves. Income from this is then earned in drips over many years unless you instantly have a best seller on your hands and if we knew the secret to that we wouldn't need to fight so hard for this. Why put in all that effort for someone else to reap the benefits. That is not fair use.

If introduced, these changes would devastate our industry, by further reducing author income, increasing publisher risk and generally derailing one of the largest industries Australia has – the creative one... and I will be looking for another job. Please don't.