

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing as a person both involved in the creation of books in Australia, as a reader of books and as an educator with a passion for Australian creativity and literacy. I am an award winning children's author and illustrator who has worked hard and will continue to do so in order to develop my craft and to make an income from what I do. I need this income to be able to continue in this career as I, like everyone else, has to pay a mortgage or rent, run a vehicle, feed a family and pay my bills.

I am a member of numerous literary focused organisations, including being state representative in Tasmania for the Australian Society of Authors.

Despite my success in this industry, I cannot yet claim to make a living out of it. Currently it provides a small income boost to my household and it covers most of my overheads, with my required materials and equipment consuming any potential profit. If I were to earn less than I currently do in my role as author/illustrator, I will be forced to seek other employment and that would not enable me to continue with what I am passionate about. This would certainly be the case if parallel imports were approved and the copyright laws changed for Australian authors. It would not only affect my career but the careers of all other creators.

The current proposal to reduce our term of copyright and to allow the introduction of parallel import is not only immoral but would make my and other authors careers as creators unsustainable. Our books would be involved in an unfair competition with copies of foreign editions coming into the Australian market at greater volume than our Australian publishing houses could sustain and the market would kill the chances of local publications having any success in the flooded market.

The term 'you get what you pay for' is very relevant in this debate. Aside from undercutting the local production of books in Australia as we do not have the population numbers to support the printing of large volumes of books as they do overseas, which makes our print runs more expensive as an end product, as we are unable to 'mass produce', with mass market print editions from overseas being allowed to sit in the book store alongside the Australian produced copy, the Australian books will not be purchased and the industry fails. We will ultimately, with the death of our local publishing industry as demonstrated in New Zealand, end up with non Australian content in our books. For example, terms and words would be Americanised (or should I say Americanized!) such as mum becoming mom, s becoming z. As a children's illustrator who has illustrated for the American market, I have been instructed to not allow children to be shown sitting on a man's knee, to have lips that are not too thin or too fat on the face of a person from a different ethnicity, too include a person from as many ethnicities as possible so as not to exclude rather than what is suitable to the story. I have friends who are told not to put udders on cows in case they offend someone; because udders are obviously rude and when we drive down past the farms, the cows, in real life are fully clothed!!! I know I might sound like I am making light of this issue but seriously, do we want our children and youth growing up with such examples of the arts and these restrictions, with these unfounded ridiculous extremes of political correctness and fear supported in literature?

To argue that the cost of a book is more important than the support of the creator and an industry that employs thousands in this country is equal to saying that what is currently happening with the dairy farmers and the cheap milk production is acceptable. To allow parallel imports into our market is to cut off your nose to spite your face. Even America does not allow this to happen in order to

protect its publishing industry and its creators. A market where creators can actually earn a living from writing and are still protected. If you reduce our copyright terms and introduce parallel imports, you destroy the livelihood, minimal as it is, of our creators. No Australian creators means no Australian books, no Australian books means no Australian culture represented to our children, youth or adult readers.

For regulations to be changed knowing that it will result in the destruction of an industry that is alive and well and supports our heritage and unique culture is short sighted and highly immoral.

Whilst I earn very little I am working hard to establish my career long term and hope that my efforts will eventuate in an income that supports my skill and knowledge and what I offer as a creative and industrious Australian worker. Please do not take that possibility away from people like myself. Do not undermine Australian culture, do not take our creative and literary heritage for granted and give our future a chance.

Yours sincerely,

Christina Booth, author/illustrator Tasmania