

Intellectual Property Arrangements
Productivity Commission Draft Report
April 2016

Submission from Kristin Weidenbach
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I am an Australian author. I write popular non-fiction books focused on Australian history. One of my books, *Mailman of the Birdsville Track: the story of Tom Kruse*, has now sold more than 100,000 copies. One of my children's picture books, *Tom the Outback Mailman*, won the Eve Pownall award for Information Book of the Year 2013 from the Children's Book Council of Australia. I specialise in Australian stories for Australian readers.

My book, *Mailman of the Birdsville Track*, has been likened to AB Facey's *A Fortunate Life*. Facey's classic book was first published in 1981. It has now sold more than three quarters of a million copies and Facey's estate will still be earning royalties from his work.

My book, *Mailman*, was first published in 2003. In 16 years it has sold 120,515 copies—a huge bestseller in the Australian market. The royalties I earn from sales of *Mailman* help to fund my continued writing career.

If copyright is reduced to 15 years, as suggested by the Productivity Commission, then my book would be free of copyright and available for anyone to exploit in any fashion they choose. My ownership of my own work would cease and the royalties I continue to earn from *Mailman* could disappear.

Subtracting the average annual amount of \$6,000 that I earn from *Mailman* royalties would represent halving my average annual income—most Australian authors earn an average income of \$12,900 from their writing according to the recent study by cultural economist Professor David Throsby of Macquarie University.

This is a single example of how loss of copyright and the other changes proposed by the Productivity Commission report will affect a single Australian author.

But the implications are so much broader.

Without the creative protection that the current measures afford, I will have no financial support to create new works.

I would not have been able to tell the story of pioneering Australian geologist Reg Sprigg (*Rock Star: the story of Reg Sprigg*, East Street, 2008) nor introduce Banjo Paterson to a new generation of Australian children (*Meet Banjo Paterson*, Random House, 2015).

Without the financial foundation provided by lengthy, fair, territorial copyright I will not be able to write new Australian stories for Australian readers.

As a practicing Australian author trying to make a living from my creative work, I say: Please don't make it any harder to make ends meet. Please reject the changes proposed in the Productivity Commission report.

Kristin Weidenbach