

Submission to the Productivity Commission

In response to

Copyright restrictions on the parallel importation of books

Please may I voice my opposition to the proposed changes to the Copyright Act to allow the open parallel importation of books? First, let me start by saying I am not an economist, a lawyer or political commentator. I am a picture book author. My opposition comes based purely on my practical experience with children while conducting school visits, preschool visits, book store signings, library storytelling and author workshops. We have an amazing groundswell of unique and eloquent Australian stories that will be lost if you pursue the proposal to turn our country into an open market that would allow booksellers to import overseas titles without restrictions. It is for the next generation of story tellers, the ones still in school who are the future of our nation, that I make the request for you to reconsider the Parallel Book Importation changes.

When was the last time you had a conversation with children who are still finding out what it means not only to be Australian, but finding a voice and being brave enough to speak out and share their story? They really are an amazing bunch of kids. Parallel Book Imports deny Australian children the right to celebrate story in their own culture. If we lose the ability to pass story down from generation to generation about what it looks, sounds and feels like to be part of this great diverse nation that for so long has prided itself on the ability to spin a yarn, we begin to lose a very important part of our national identity.

From the independent research I have conducted and the information I have received from the groups I am a part of, including the Australian Society of Authors, the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and by speaking with fellow authors around the suggested changes to shortening the author's copyright protection and expanding fair use in the educational context, I can only come to the conclusion that these changes would damage not only the careers of so many aspiring Australian authors, but the Australian Publishing industry itself. Furthermore, I can see no evidence of the changes actually making the savings to the Australian consumers that you propose based on comparisons to the changes made in New Zealand.

In conclusion, people of the book are not an easy bunch to ignore. We are passionate about sharing our stories, the future of our industry and the legacy we are leaving for the next generation. I lend my voice to the many others that oppose the proposed legislation changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to your inquiry,

Michelle Worthington

Author of Empowering Picture Books for Children of All Ages