

In response to the Productivity Commission's Report on Australia's intellectual property arrangements:

I'm a female writer, having quit formal employment a few years ago in order to pursue my dream of writing fulltime. Prior to that, I was the chief breadwinner for my family. I had published three books whilst holding down a job, but it was becoming increasingly hard, if not impossible, to balance writing, family and work. Something had to give. It was *not* going to be my greatest passion. And of course, family is non-negotiable.

Writing, for me, is not just about an income. It's about my health. Writing gives me peace. It's what I was meant to do. *I am a creator*. Thus, I'm the sort of person who will shrivel up and die without the opportunity to write. I decided to take the chance and personally invest in my future, as has my husband who supports us. It's heartbreaking to me that there are many other writers out there who'd like the opportunity I have, but cannot financially sustain it. Writing should *never* be solely the act of a privileged few.

So write, you say, there's nothing stopping you. But what's the point if what I write will not be published? Your changes will ensure that. The Australian industry will quickly sink if what's happened in New Zealand is any indication to go by. My earnings may well be meagre, but they go some way to supporting our total family income. I need to earn.

Yes, to the corporate suits out there, I earn peanuts. Most authors do. But my writing (when published) translates to countless jobs in the publishing industry and *those* people are paid an income. There are thousands of indirect jobs too. The courier driver who delivers the boxes of books, for example. The supplier of the cardboard that makes the boxes! The restaurant owner who allows her venue to be used as a staging post for a book launch. The vineyard that sponsors the event. The catering staff serving the drinks. The cleaner who cleans up after... I could go on.

My financial reward comes in dribs and drabs through various avenues, none of which are possible if I can't be published in the first place. The industry, as it currently stands, supports me to write. I had hoped that in the future I would have worked hard enough (and been lucky enough!) to establish myself as a successful 'earning' author, but if your changes take place, this will never eventuate. Moreover, I've been out of the traditional workforce long enough that I'm probably more or less unemployable. And those budding young writers out there who haven't even been published yet may as well give up now.

For me, writing is a long term investment. How dearly I'd love to bolt from the gates with an international bestseller and score a million dollar contract deal thereby setting me and my family up for life. Because such success stories are often celebrated in the media, the general public has developed a perception that *all* authors must be rolling it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Potentially, I can work for years with little or no financial reward, and then all of a sudden

it can take off. Yes, I do it for the love of it, but somehow *somewhere* there also has to be a financial pay-off. Like anyone else, I have bills to pay too. There *has* to be an income in some form or another to keep up my spirits and keep me on track.

I fail to see how these changes will encourage creativity. The majority of writers are essentially a small business. Any business would think twice about investing in a product with little or no shelf life, wouldn't they? The Productivity Commission says: 'Long periods of copyright, coupled with no form of registration, results in excessive search costs for users wishing to identify the copyright owner, and the common extreme of causing works to be 'orphaned.'" Last time I looked, I could find just about any title I wanted via Google. Australian authors shouldn't be held to ransom for a handful of books that can't be found this way. As a consumer, I can see why parallel importation is appealing, but it is short-term gain for long term pain. I worked damn hard to create what I do. Why shouldn't others pay for it?

Storytelling is a way of understanding each other; of climbing into someone else's skin and knowing how it feels to be that person. If our children cannot read and experience Australian stories, Australian heroes and Australian culture, what will become of their identity? Already they are inundated with American pop-culture via books, television and movies. (Perhaps one of America's greatest exports: its culture and world view through storytelling.) Australia can do the same—but only if it continues to support its creators.

I implore you to think about the many creators out there like myself *and* their families. Think about the indirect jobs I mentioned and what your changes will do to those people. Think about what you will be sentencing us to if you make these changes. If you make these changes, you will decimate a healthy industry.

So many other Australian industries have gone by the wayside in the name of progress and change. Jobs are being lost in industries across Australia. Unemployment is at an all-time high. **Do you *really* want thousands more standing in the dole queue?**