

Intellectual Property Arrangements
Productivity Commission Draft Report
Submission from James Knight (Author of ten non-fiction books)

June 2, 2016

G'day,

I do not wish this to be a 'dry' submission in response to the Productivity Commission's draft report into Australia's Intellectual Property arrangements.

Firstly, I would ask you to understand the value of stories, in all their many shapes and forms. Stories, both fiction and non-fiction, help us make sense of the world. Indeed there has never been a people anywhere in the history of humankind that has existed without them. There is an abundance of academic research that suggests stories do nothing less than define who we are as human beings. One aspect of this defining, is cultural identity, one of any individual's most important foundation stones. This identity is in danger of being eroded if the proposed changes to Australia's book publishing industry occur. As an author of Australian non-fiction books, and much more importantly, as the father of a five year old son, I am deeply concerned about the effects that the removal of parallel importation restrictions will not only have on Australia's publishing industry (authors, publishers, sellers) but our readers. Yes, books may become cheaper, but what cost do you put on a reduction in the number of Australian books being published for Australian readers? It is impossible to measure that cost in columns of dollars and cents; this is not a question that should be answered by cold statistical analysis but an awareness of books (and stories in general) as irreplaceable tools in contributing to the education, development, and well-being of our society.

Undoubtedly, you will read many submissions about the economic cost that the 'open market' will have on Australia's authors. The cost to me and my stable-mates will, collectively, be significant. This cost will only be greater if copyright laws are changed. Copyright is a fundamental right of anyone who burrows deeply into their own mind to create material that enters the public domain. These people deserve to be rewarded for this, not penalised. More so than ever before we live in an age of 'user pays', so why should authors be treated any differently?

As you would have noted, authors generally aren't well paid. My annual income for the financial year 2014-2015 was \$35,000. During this time I wrote two books, *Spirit High* and *Henry & Banjo*. I worked, on average, 70-85 hours per week during much of this period. So why do it? Because it is both a privilege and an obligation. It is a privilege because I can inform, entertain (bore!), enlighten, amuse, sadden, EDUCATE.....a reader; it is an obligation because storytelling is simply what I do. What I love to do. What I believe I was meant to do. You would find that the vast majority of authors think similarly. I am lucky because I earn more than many other authors. But.....the proposed changes by the Productivity Commission will, most likely, force me and many others out of the industry. At a time when one of the biggest buzz words in politics and policy is 'creativity' it does not make sense to target creators who have the capacity to stimulate millions of minds. And it's this stimulation that we will need if Australia is to retain a strong and proud identity in tomorrow's world.

Yours Sincerely,

James Knight

Author