

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Attention Mike Woods and Louise Sylvan

I am an Australian author of almost 60 titles, primarily for children and teenagers, published both here and in the UK and US. I am a primary producer, a working author in a very difficult industry, and I am appalled that my own government would be the one to deliberately undermine that industry. Yet, by considering an action that would effectively cut the lifelines of every Australian working within that industry, this is exactly what will happen.

Is culture not important to this government? Does it not care that the Australian voice may be in danger of extinction if these plans for parallel importation go ahead?

I believe this is exactly where we will be headed if the current Labor Government refuses to support and nurture the Australian publishing industry.

Parallel Importation will mean limited financial expectations for each book published in Australia, which in turn will mean fewer books will be accepted for publication. Fewer books will mean fewer authors, and fewer overall sales. This in turn will precipitate a domino effect, toppling publishing houses unable to sustain operation within Australia. It is not scaremongering to predict that many smaller publishing houses will have to close. Or, that larger publishing houses will be severely shackled.

Is this what the government wants?

- To cripple our industry to the extent that it becomes filled, almost exclusively, with foreign content?
- That our children, already subjected to a diet of overseas television programs and film, will also then be subjected to, and educated by, literature generated by a foreign culture?
- To see our children deprived of the right to experience their own culture? Humour? History? *Spelling*?

Is this government prepared to risk all this simply to make multinational booksellers wealthier?

Having been involved in cooperative programs for US and UK educational literacy, my publishers and I have experienced many examples of oversensitive censorship that impinge upon the simple innocence that Australian children are still able to enjoy. Topics such as pigs, dragons, lizards - and heaven forbid

**Tasmanian Devils – have all been disallowed (had to be written out) on the basis of cultural, spiritual or satanic implications.**

**Is this the kind of extreme censorship we want to inflict upon our own children?**

**The Australian publishing industry needs to be nurtured and supported – not stabbed in the back. We need to continue to build a thriving, healthy industry that celebrates us as Australians; that supports and celebrates its creators.**

**It is a difficult industry. For those creators it is one of uncertainty, of insecurity and relatively low pay and poor conditions. Yet it is an industry that every day chronicles the times, the voice, the history and the humour of the Australian people.**

**As Australians we all need these creators.**

**And we, the creators need to work. We need our publishing houses to grow strong and sustain the industry. We need strong sales so that they can build our careers, be encouraged and have the confidence to invest in us.**

**We need to believe our government supports us, and it appalls me that we should have to ask for something that should be an absolute given.**

**Please, please think carefully and return a decision that doesn't sell out an intrinsic part of who we are as a nation.**

**Sincerely,  
Kerri Lane**