

Dear Productivity Commission

I am an Australian Writer. I would like to remain one.

Certainly New Zealand allows parallel imports and this may make it seem like a good idea - but you can't find a decent writer under 50 years old in that country. Why? Because since parallel imports were allowed, New Zealand has become more of a distribution country for overseas publishers than a publishing country in its own right.

It is no longer in the interests of any remaining publishers in NZ to nurture and take a chance on new and emerging writers, since the return on such an investment is likely to be miniscule - consumers can buy a cheap, mass-produced copy of a book by a well-known overseas writer for less than they would pay for a story by one of their own. The quality of writing and any expression of the New Zealand voice are immaterial in the buyer's mind at the time of purchase - it's a bargain: it's cheap.

Increasingly then, the idiom of New Zealand's language is slowly changing (as it is in Australia) to the ghetto speech of hip hop and the Bronx among young people. They have nothing which allows them to immerse themselves in their history and culture and establish a national identity of their own. This country once produced some of the best writers in the world, and had an imaginative and vibrant literary scene. Not now though.

And yes, the Japanese also allow parallel imports. They can afford to. Where else is there a major overseas company producing Japanese works in the Japanese language which competes with the home market? Nowhere! The Japanese have a virtual monopoly on works in the Japanese language. It's no skin off their nose if works in English are imported by overseas publishers - the percentage in terms of their publishing industry is insignificant.

It is also not in the interests of booksellers (apart from the overseas owned chains which are pushing for it) to allow parallel imports. Fly by night entrepreneurs without any overheads or permanent staff will buy cheap books in bulk, take a short term lease near a major bookstore during peak selling times such as Christmas, Easter, Mother and Father's Day, and undercut them. This is already happening, but established bookstores can keep some of their margin on new books because they can stock locally published books first. And that's the only thing that protects them - and us.

Please keep to the present arrangement. No other English-speaking publishing nation has any intention of relinquishing their intellectual property, copyright and territorial publishing rights. It is inimical to the Australian publishing industry and Australian authors for any government to even consider allowing parallel imports, particularly given our small publishing industry and home market.

Facts and figures verifying these propositions have already been produced by the Australian Society of Authors, of which I am a member. Consider that they act for me.

This email constitutes my personal statement on this matter and the attached document in Word that I have prepared for you sums it up in a nutshell.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

LOIS MAY