

I am a children's author, and I believe that allowing parallel importation of books into Australia will be detrimental to Australian writers, publishers and readers.

My reasons are outlined below:

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF ALLOWING PARALLEL IMPORTS INTO AUSTRALIA

1. Flooding the Australian Market with cheap inferior product.

An earlier study by the Productivity Commission indicates that allowing parallel imports will force Australian authors to write for a more global audience, and this would reduce the 'Australianess' of both themes and content.

It could create a situation where writers are not meeting the demands of Australian readers, but are forcing them to 'make do' with what is available.

Even though parallel imports will allow cheaper books to be available, Clare and Dan McKenna of leading booksellers Aesop's Attic have expressed their concerns for both authors and readers. They fear that, 'Allowing parallel imports will make Australia a dumping ground for remaindered books from the USA.'

Clare says that, 'Although stock will be available cheaper to booksellers, it will have an adverse effect on the quality of what's available in this country'.

2. Affect on publishers

How will Australian publishers contend with cheaper imports? Due to economies of scale, some of the smaller publishers will not be able to compete on price, and will be forced to close their doors. This will not only result in increased unemployment within the industry, but may affect the quality and diversity of what is published in Australia.

3. Loss of Australian Culture

Our current prime minister, the Honourable Kevin Rudd MP is adamant that more Australian history should be taught in schools, but if we are forced to write for a more global market, who will publish the necessary books to help our young learners find out about their country? Overseas publishers will not have the same knowledge or commitment to Australian history as those found in our own country.

The Commission has conducted prior studies which look at the 'precise nature of the cultural benefits arising from books'. It claims that 'these benefits do not appear dependent of the nationality of the author'. I'm unaware as to what evidence they have collected to support this theory, but question how Koori dreamtime stories or even a reflection of multi-cultural Melbourne could be drawn accurately by an overseas author who has not experienced it.

4. Language differences

Removing parallel import restrictions is supposed to benefit readers, yet we will be imposing American culture in an Australian context, and this will surely diminish representation of our own culture and language in our books. Some changes our readers might be subjected to include the use of:

- faucet instead of tap
- diaper instead of nappy
- bro instead of brother
- Mom instead of Mum
- ketchup instead of tomato sauce
- drugstore instead of chemist
- jello instead of jelly
- jelly instead of jam
- gasoline instead of petrol
- spyglass instead of telescope

In a country that already laments the deterioration of grammar in our schools, we may be subjected to *y'all* instead of *all of you/everyone*, *off* instead of *off*, and other gems like *gotten* and *putten* and *winningest* (having the most wins).

5. Less opportunity for local authors

The productivity commission asks the question, *'To what extent is it important for Australian authors to have access to an Australian publisher in order to develop and promote their work?'* Australian writers would know that this is essential!

I attended the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators conference in Sydney in February this year where I spoke with an American publisher on her attitude to Australian authors. She admitted that while her company admired Australian writers, it was difficult to take them on because they were not available to do the school circuit in America (the publishers will understandably not foot the bill for a writer who does not already have a high international profile). As school visits are a major source of promotion for children's books, lack of access to the author is obviously a factor considered by the publisher in estimating potential sales and consequently, agreeing to publish the book.

The introduction of parallel imports is likely to reduce the pool of Australian publishers, so opportunities for Australian writers will be reduced even more.

6. Less income for local authors

Allowing parallel import of overseas versions of Australian books will mean less income for local authors as they will receive overseas instead of domestic royalties, and these are paid at a significantly lower rate.

WHAT DOES HISTORY SHOW US ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF PARALLEL IMPORTS?

Japan and New Zealand both currently allow parallel imports. No other country is in a position to dump large numbers of Japanese-language books into the Japanese market so allowing parallel imports has not had a significant impact on its local industry.

The New Zealand experience has been quite different, and there is evidence to suggest that its local industry is far from thriving, and that opportunities for new talent to emerge have been reduced.

A NZ Trade and Enterprise report carried out in 2004 stated that that 'New Zealand publishers face an inherent problem in that the domestic market is swamped by imports.' In particular, the 'dumping of children's books' was seen as a significant factor.

In conclusion, I believe that introducing parallel imports into Australia will have the same detrimental outcomes now being experienced by New Zealand:

- **less publisher choice**
- **less reader choice**
- **less opportunity for local authors and publishers**
- **less income for local authors and publishers**
- **a reduction in quality and diversity of reading materials**
- **the imposition of American language and culture on our readers**
- **reduction in use of local themes, language and culture in literature available in our country**

For these reasons, I urge you to protect copyright holder's interests and not allow parallel importation in Australia.