

I am a writer with over 100 books (mostly for children and young adults) published, both in Australia and overseas. In my opinion, allowing parallel importation of books into Australia will greatly disadvantage Australian writers, publishers and readers.

Allowing parallel imports into Australia will:

- Reduce both Australian themes and content in books written by Australian writers. Australian writers will be forced to write for a more “global” market. I am highly aware of this when I write for the American educational market: not only do we get American terms (sidewalk, Mom, ketchup, jelly, gasoline), but any religious figures are banned (no priests, nuns, rabbis, imams), and even coffee and birthday cake are outlawed (junk food!). At present, we have a thriving publishing industry for children, but it wasn’t always so. As a child (in the 1950s) I honestly believed that all books for children were written in, and about, Britain. Thankfully, that situation changed and Australian children can now read about their own culture, in stories from brilliant, talented writers. This needs to continue!
- Possibly flood Australia with remaindered books from overseas. Parallel imports *may* make cheaper books available – but what sort of books? Australia may become, as New Zealand has, a place to dump remaindered books from the American market. (Evidence suggests that the result of parallel importation of books into New Zealand has resulted in a depressed local industry, and fewer opportunities for new writers.)
- Possibly result in fewer publishers in Australia. Some smaller Australian publishers may become unable to compete on price, and will close down. We need all the Australian publishers we can get.
- Result in fewer books with Australian historical backgrounds. Writing for a global market will certainly reduce the numbers of books with Australian historical backgrounds that writers produce. I have found a lack of interest from overseas publishers on my own books with Australian historical backgrounds. When it’s being promoted that more Australian history should be taught in schools, it’s important that there are books of this nature available for children.
- Reduce publishing opportunities for Australian writers. The first port of call for Australian writers is an Australian publisher. Overseas publishing is, usually, the icing on the cake. For Australian children’s writers, royalties are certainly not the only source of income. School visits provide opportunities for promotion and further income. The school visit circuit is far from accessible if a book is published, and promoted, overseas.
- Result in reduced income for Australian authors. Apart from lack of opportunity for school visits, overseas royalties are generally paid at a lower rate than domestic royalties. It’s hard enough to make a living as an Australian writer. Few manage to do it full-time, most have “day jobs”. Let’s not make it harder!

So – we may get books that are a dollar or so cheaper. (And I’m not totally convinced of this, as one of strongest pushers of this line just happens to be on the board of a major bookseller.) But what sort of books?

We need to protect our Australian publishers, writers, readers and culture – and say no to parallel importation.

Pamela Rushby