

SUBMISSION to Productivity Commission on parallel importation of books.

My first novel was published in Australia last year. It is a dark fantasy set in Australia, with Australian characters.

My concern about changes to the parallel importation laws is that watering down the copyright requirements will make it even harder for aspiring authors such as myself to be published. Why would an overseas publisher be interested in such an Australian story as mine? Or for that matter, *Johnno* or *Last Drinks*, *My Brother Jack* or *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*? And why would an Australian publisher be interested in taking a risk on new Australian voices if foreign titles can be imported into this country for much less? Sure, we could still write. But could we write *Australian*?

It would be ideal if books in Australia were cheaper, but not if the price is sacrificing Australian voices. The economies of scale afforded overseas publishers makes unachievable any notion of a level playing field in this industry. Importing cheap books from other cultures, however similar, is not the answer. Publishing is not just a business; it has a strong cultural component as well. I need to read stories from all genres that reflect and record my own country from the inside. A cheap book from the United States or Britain is not going to deliver that.

It is unrealistic to expect an Australian publisher to act altruistically in service of Australian culture. The current rules give local voices a chance to be heard where it needs to be heard most: at home. From here, we hope to see our stories find an audience overseas, but the domestic market is the first step.

I got lucky. An Australian publisher decided to take a chance on Australian dark fantasy stories, and four of us were chosen to get our manuscripts into print. That's four Australian writers who now have a publishing credit, the elusive beginning of what they hope will be a long career. I can't help but wonder, if the copyright laws are changed, how many such opportunities will be afforded others who also share that dream.

Yours respectfully,
Jason Nahrung