

SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RE COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON THE PARALLEL IMPORTATION OF BOOKS

14 January, 2009

As a peak Australian voluntary organisation whose membership represents authors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, teachers, librarians, teacher-librarians and parents, the Children's Book Council of Australia would like to express its objection to changes to present provisions of the Copyright Act that restrict parallel importation.

Australia has a vibrant book industry, including the publication of many books for children. We see these books as a major enculturating force – they help Australian children to discover and celebrate who we are and what is important to us; they tell us our own unique stories in our own language/s, asking us to critically examine ourselves and our way of life.

Every year, in schools around Australia, tens of thousands of Australian children celebrate the best of Australian children's literature, culminating in the CBCA Book of the Year Awards followed by Book Week. Australian award-winning books are written by new as well as established authors. With some of these books, Australian publishers have taken a chance in their publication; a chance which may not have been taken if parallel importation restrictions had been lifted.

Australian authors feature prominently in international awards and honour lists because of the high quality of their work. Before succeeding overseas, all of these authors have first been published by Australian publishers. Some (but not all) award-winning Australian children's books reflect such a particular Australian viewpoint that they may never have been published under 'parallel importation' legislation. Or if they were, they may have been published with essential 'Australian' elements changed or missing! Could you imagine a range of Australian children's books which did not include:

“The Australia Book” by Eve Pownall, illustrated by Margaret Senior (CBCA Book of the Year 1952)

“The Sun on the Stubble” by Colin Thiele (Commended, CBCA Book of the Year, 1962)

“The Nargun and the Stars” by Patricia Wrightson (CBCA Book of the Year 1974)

“Possum magic” by Julie Vivas and Mem Fox (CBCA Highly Commended Picture Book of the Year 1984)

“My place” by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins (CBCA Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, 1988)

“The Rabbits” by John Marsden and Shaun Tan (CBCA Picture Book of the Year 1999).

We have a literary cultural heritage that is beyond 'market value' and well worth protecting. The marketing strategies of some major chain retailers already discriminate (albeit sometimes indirectly) against small print runs of quality Australian publications. How much worse would it be if copyright legislation were

changed as well! The cultural and economic longterm effects of changing the present restrictions on parallel importation are largely unknown and could be disastrous. We believe that the publication of quality Australian children's fiction is far too important to jeopardise.

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