

SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSION BY SUSAN JOHNSON, AUTHOR

I am an Australian citizen and author, currently resident of Britain, and I would like to strongly protest against the concept of parallel imports. In effect, parallel imports will mean that indigenous Australian writing and books will be severely compromised by the markets of other countries, and in particular America. English speaking countries, and non-English speaking countries, around the world have already witnessed the effect of the might of Hollywood on film, television and consequently popular culture, leading countries such as France to develop policies directly supporting and protecting indigenous French culture. So far, books in Australia have been largely protected by this cultural swamping, and indeed in the last twenty years Australian indigenous publishing has flourished.

In large part this has come about for two reasons: financial support from (mainly) Labor governments through generous arts subsidies and because Australian books have been protected by the 30 day rule, allowing Australian publishers to distribute books within its own territory, but if Australia becomes a surrendered market, what policies are in place to encourage Australian publishers to keep publishing Australian books, in a market flooded by cheap imports? Indeed will Australian publishers (those that survive) be interested at all in publishing books by local Australian authors who do not already sell internationally?

Being a fiction writer already means a perilous financial existence for most Australian writers, and if the government introduces this legislation it will mean an even harder existence. Many Australian writers supported the election of the Rudd government, and were aware of the long tradition of Australian Labor governments support of the arts, and indeed the Whitlam government's establishment of the Australia Council, which has effectively provided a financial backbone for the Australian literary community for many years. It will be a very great disappointment indeed if a government committed to the arts and to the development of this nation's cultural capital takes such pragmatic and cynical steps to prevent many of its artists from practising.

Thank you,

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