

Duncan Ball
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Books (Ex email)
No parallel importation of books to Australia

To the Productivity Commission:

Along with other Australian authors I am concerned about the present move to abolish territorial copyright for books in Australia. Territorial copyright is a vital protection for our intellectual property and without it we are exposed to major threats to our income and our basic rights as authors.

The abolition of territorial copyright would amount to the expropriation of our intellectual property. Please reject the move to "parallel importation" of books to Australia. Australia has a unique heritage in its literary culture which will be greatly damaged if these changes are adopted.

I've been a full-time author since 1982 and have, after the first eighteen years of getting my career going, enjoyed a reasonable amount of success with my books and relatively strong sales. But, to put things in perspective, even with the good sales I've enjoyed in the past eight years and the receipt of payments under the PLR and ELR schemes it has still been necessary to do school talks and run writing workshops for kids and adults to earn what might be considered to be a reasonable wage.

My books have had few overseas editions and, at the moment, there are none in print in English outside Australia so, unlike some other Australian authors, I wouldn't be effected by cheaper foreign editions of my own books being sold here in Australia. But parallel importation will lead to books being cheaper. That's why the big book chains are so strongly in favour of it. For them it's a matter of increasing the volume of books sold rather than helping to maintain the unique culture of Australian produced books---which will suffer.

Cheaper imported children's books will make it much more difficult for my publisher to produce my books. And certainly with the pressure of competition my royalties will be reduced, assuming my books continue to be published. I don't believe that reducing the price of my books, for example, will result in a significant increase in sales as has been argued by some of the book chains. The market is small. I know that my publisher's Marketing staff, as is the case with every other Australian publishing house, plays around with "price points" in order to maximise their profits. If they could make more money from selling them at a lower price they would. Australian children's books are expensive but they are expensive because it is a small, but culturally very important, market.

So I would implore the Commission not to make the proposed changes which would allow parallel importation. It would be a disaster for authors like myself. The American book market had the worst year in its history last year and this situation is about to flow on to the Australian book market. Australian authors and publishers desperately need a measure of protection in order to maintain what has been a vibrant and important industry.

Many thanks,

Duncan Ball