

Sent: Monday, 19 January 2009 5:32 PM
To: Books (Ex email)
Subject: Parallel Importation of Books

Attachments: submission-cover-sheet.doc

Parallel Importation of Books
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam,

AUTHOR SUBMISSION: PARALLEL IMPORTATION OF BOOKS

When I think about why I oppose the introduction of parallel imports of books in Australia, I think about why I write. I think about what inspires me, and what I hope to inspire in others. And I realise that, for me, the debate is very much about the opportunities for writers in Australia, but even more so about the opportunities for readers.

As a children's writer, I am also a reader of children's stories. We are lucky in Australia to have such a great range of kids' books available. We can read books from all around the world, as well as those set and based in our own Australia. We can expand our knowledge of the world, as well as ground our feet in our own culture.

There is something special about picking up a home-grown book. I get a real kick if the setting is somewhere I've been, or plan to visit. I can relate to a character who is going to a typical Australian high school, or experiencing drought, or fighting a cane toad invasion. I can have a laugh at something that someone in the US just wouldn't understand - we have our very own brand of humour over here. I'm thrilled to see my new high-schooler reading an Australian historical novel for class this year, as well as a book of short stories by Australian authors. At 12 years old, she is already in love with writing, and is inspired by authors of the books she loves.

But what are we risking in the future?

If authors are financially threatened by parallel importing, what happens to their ability to continue writing for a living? If they have no choice but to write for an international market, what happens to the Australian 'voice'? If emerging authors lose their opportunities, what happens to our next generation of authors? Yes – we will still be able to teach our kids about the rest of the world. But what of our own backyard?

We need protection from parallel imports to keep our Australian publishers competitive. We need our Australian publishers so we can get our stories out there.

And we need to get our stories out there because they inspire our children, and give them their sense of place in the world.

As a writer, I would hate to see the parallel importation of books allowed in Australia.
As a reader, I am terrified.

Yours Sincerely,

Kim Smyth