

It is very difficult not to start this submission with an incredulous 'are you crazy?'

Australia has a valuable but precarious literature industry that brings in millions- probably billions- of income into Australia each year. This income needs very little infrastructure- we are exporting ideas rather than the books themselves, and is far more recession proof than, say, income from mining.

Yet this is a vulnerable industry. Profit margins are low, for both publishing houses and authors. Even a small drop in income could make both non viable. Most authors aren't full time writers, but I suspect most of the export income generated comes from the few who ARE full time. My income is a healthy one. But if the restrictions of parallel importation are removed I will get not the 10 cents in every dollar for each book sold that I get from Australian publishers, but the 1 cent to 3 cents per copy that I get from the Chinese or Indonesian or Philippine editions of my books- if I'm lucky. I'll also be vulnerable to pirated overseas editions where no income at all comes either to me or to my publishers. Even more likely, overseas copies which have failed to sell can be dumped here, at below cost price- and again, if that happens, contractually neither I nor the Australian publishers receive any royalties whatsoever.

In addition, it is difficult- or even impossible- for an Australian writer to get royalties from overseas firms who don't bother to forward them. Who has the expertise- or the resources- to chase royalties from Greek, Indonesian or Korean publishing houses? My books are printed and published in all those countries. Yet I have never received royalties, nor have I any way of finding out how many copies have either been printed or sold. The only way I know that the books are still being sold is from letters and emails from readers in those countries.

This is not supposition. This is fact. My income will be reduced 100 fold- and I will no longer be a full time writer. Once I am no longer a full time writer, I will no longer be writing books.

Once Australian publishing houses have to compete with overseas editions, they will no longer be publishing books either.

It is naive to expect that dropping the restrictions on parallel imports will lower the price of books in Australia. Anyone making that assertion knows very little about the Australian publishing industry. All of the large publishing houses in Australia are owned by overseas companies. Once parallel importation is permitted, it will be more cost effective for those companies to bring in their own U.S. editions, instead of going to the expense of having separate editions - but there is no reason to think they will lower the price on any books that hasn't been remaindered. (Please contact me if you don't know what remaindering involves.)

Popular books will cost the same. Remaindered books will cost much less- but remaindered books are by definition ones that no one wants much. The parent companies of Australian publishing companies will make more profit. But why on earth should they lower prices to the

Australian public? Yet Australian publishing as it exists now will vanish- and so will our literature industry.

I am sure that many other submissions have covered the importance of Australian culture- of books that speak to us, as well as for us. Yes, I could publish directly with Harper Collins US. But the US editions of my books are 'Americanised'. They don't just contain 'mom' instead of 'mum.' They can be dumbed down, or the more radical themes removed in case they offend anyone. More importantly, Harper Collins US only want the books that will sell in the USA. They have no interest in any book that doesn't speak to a US audience.

If you work for a US publishing house, you produce the kind of books that sell in the USA. If you publish with an Australian publishing house, you can write books that speak mostly to Australians. But to do that, you need a viable Australian publishing industry.

Why on earth do you think that our culture still lives and is transmitted mostly in our books? The movies we see, and most of our tv shows, are made overseas. Only our art and our books are still Australian.

To summarise:

No, removing the restrictions on parallel importation will NOT lead to cheaper books, except for remaindered books.

Anyone who believes this will happen needs study the corporate structure of Australian publishing more deeply.

But removing the restrictions on parallel importation will destroy my livelihood, and that of many other authors. It will also destroy an industry that is valuable in ideas as well as dollars.

I can earn the dollars elsewhere. But I am not sure how to survive the death of our culture.

Jackie French