

To the Commissioners

I write to express my concerns over the proposed changes to Australia's copyright law.

I have been writing and publishing books for children and adults for more than 25 years. In that time, my career has grown from a childhood hobby, writing stories in exercise books on my bed, to the receiving, last year, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, a Swedish-based international prize for contributions to the field of children's literature – after the Nobel, the highest paying literary prize in the world. When told that I would be receiving this Award, the first thing I thought of was the people who, over the years, have helped me reach a position where such recognition was possible.

Among these, and indisputably most important, are my long-time publishers, Penguin Books. The Award belongs to them as much as to me. Over the course of 20 years Penguin have taken me from being an unknown Australian writer, to one whose work was recognised alongside the ranks of Philip Pullman and Maurice Sendak; having never had an agent, it is Penguin who has brought me from being a writer whose work sold a handful of copies inside Australia only, to one who sells internationally, able to support myself solely on my work.

It has always been enormously important to me that I am seen, internationally, as an Australian writer. First and foremost, I write for the people and country I know. I want the books to achieve their greatest success within Australia. And my loyalties will always lie with my Australian publishers, who have not only nurtured myself, but so many of Australia's literary names, under the difficult conditions of a small population and the constant competition of larger, wealthier international publishers.

I will not pretend to know much about the proposed changes to Australia's copyright law. But I do understand that they bring with them the likelihood that writers in the future might struggle to find the success that I have, because they may not have a local publisher to put the time and care into developing their career. More than anything, I know that the changes threaten to destabilise what is a precarious and precious industry, full of people who have devoted their lives to furthering Australian literature.

It disturbs me when I see this country making changes that so often are to its detriment. In Australia, the arts are forced to fight tooth-and-nail for every small advancement. For 25 years I have watched Australia's publishers working unbelievably hard to promote local writing, and to develop an industry that holds its own in the international arena. I ask the Commission to think carefully before making decisions that would damage this industry. We are Australia's writers, and we need a strong, protected and secure Australian publishing industry to work alongside us. If

Australia's territorial copyright law is diminished, comparatively little good will come from the change; but we will risk losing something which is precious, and of which this country should be proud.

I thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Sonya Hartnett