

19<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2008

**Re: Parallel Importation of Books Study submission**

To whom it may concern,

As one of the fortunate few Australian children's authors able to make a full time living from my craft, I am deeply concerned about the possibility of a reform of the current parallel import restrictions on books.

While I am generally supportive of the benefits of competition and aware that only the fittest books survive in the market place, I think there needs to be a measure of common sense applied if we are to allow our local publishing industry to survive and grow in the face of the obvious advantages of scale that much larger industries in other countries have in being able to produce books at a lower price.

My perspective is from that of a new writer faced with the problem of gaining a recognisable profile in order to build an audience.

I have never been the beneficiary of any sort of government funded writing grant, and instead relied on the author speaking circuit for the first ten years of my career to fund the crucial few months at the end of each year to write.

The process of building an audience and buying the time to write was greatly assisted by Pan Macmillan Australia who signed me in 1998 as a new author and funded an extensive annual national tour to promote each new title as well as taking care of general promotion.

Their investment, for which I am deeply grateful, obviously paid off as each year the audience doubled, providing royalties which allowed me to spend less time on the author circuit and increasingly more time developing and writing new titles for different segments of the market. On the strength of my Australian track record, my books were acquired by Scholastic US in 2001 and my current sales, both locally and internationally, currently total over 4 million.

Since 1998 to the present, Pan Macmillan Australia has continued to fund national tours—sometimes two in a single year—and the audience continues to build in both numbers, enthusiasm and sheer gratitude for the opportunities provided to be able to celebrate books with a home-grown author. Bookshops also value the events that these tours create both for the booksales generated at the event and the chance to build ongoing relationships with customers.

My concern is that if the parallel import restrictions were lifted, that my Australian books would be competing with cut-price US & UK copies, thus reducing the incentive for Pan

Macmillan to put up the resources for touring and promotion, as many people would naturally—and understandably—be attracted to the lower price copies. (Due to economies of scale a print run in the US is normally 3 to 4 times the size of a comparable Australian print run, hence, the books are comparatively cheaper to produce.)

A situation in which restrictions were lifted would correspondingly make it even harder for new local authors to begin the crucial audience-building process given the lower returns that local publishing houses could expect to make given the relative cheapness of titles from established authors such as myself and/or if their fledgling author was fortunate (!) enough to be signed by an overseas publisher and had to compete against themselves.

While I would encourage any child to read widely and well no matter where the book was written, I don't think the importance of Australian school children having access to books written for them by Australian authors can be over-estimated, particularly in the crucial early stages of developing a reading habit which relies on finding books that speak directly to them.

I urge you not to endanger the health of our local industry by relaxing restrictions on imported books.

Yours faithfully,  
Andy Griffiths